

## SHAREHOLDER DISCUSSION PAPER

# Management arrangements for the commercial harvest of pipis in NSW

May 2017

## Background

The Professional Fishermen's Association (PFA) held a workshop on 20 January 2017 to discuss interim management arrangements, future management and industry development initiatives for the commercial harvest of pipis in NSW. The outcomes and recommendations from the workshop were released on 10 February 2017 and identified alternatives and/or alterations to existing management arrangements. These form the basis of this discussion paper, the purpose of which is to seek the views of shareholders on the existing seasonal fishing closure, use of implements to harvest pipis, implementing a radial length measurement for the minimum legal length of pipis and industry contribution to research.

## Management arrangements – options for comment

### Seasonal fishing closure

A six month fishing closure on the commercial harvest of pipis was implemented from December to May in each of the fiscal years 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15. The current seasonal fishing closure was implemented for a period of five months, from 1 January to 31 May 2017.

### Workshop recommendations

*Option 1 - A state-wide seasonal fishing closure applied to all Estuary General Fishery (EGF) regions*

Industry participants from each EGF region were asked to provide options for a seasonal fishing closure (refer to Table 1).

*Option 2 - Separate seasonal fishing closures applied to northern and southern regions*

In an attempt to address regional variation, an option to implement a separate seasonal fishing closure for the northern and southern regions was proposed. Implementing separate fishing closures would mean defining northern and southern regions.

**Table 1 Seasonal fishing closure options for each EGF region recommended by industry participants**

Region	Open	Closed
1*	1 May - 31 October	1 November - 30 April
	1 April - 30 September	1 October - 31 March
2	1 May - 31 October	1 November - 30 April
3	NO CLOSURE	
4*	1 May - 30 November	1 December - 30 April
	NO CLOSURE	

Region	Open	Closed
	1 May - 31 December	1 January - 30 April
6	1 May - 31 December	1 January - 30 April
	NO CLOSURE	
7	No preferred position presented.	
Northern regions	No preferred position presented.	
Southern regions	No preferred position presented.	

\*Note: Some participants provided multiple closure options for their regions.

### Departmental position

The Department considers a seasonal fishing closure for a minimum of five months is necessary to directly provide the pipi stock opportunity for recovery, assisting in the sustainability of the commercial harvest of pipis. The Department is supportive of a more rational approach to determining the appropriate time and duration for the fishing closure and attempts to address regional variation.

### Feedback required

#### *Please indicate your preferred option*

1. Please provide preferred length of seasonal closure -

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2. State-wide seasonal fishing closure -  Yes  No

If yes – please provide preferred seasonal closure (e.g. closed between November and April)

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3. Northern / Southern seasonal fishing closure -  Yes  No

If yes – please provide preferred regional split and seasonal closure (e.g. Northern: Regions 1 – 3 closed between November and April and Southern: Regions 4 – 7 closed between December and April)

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### Use of implements to harvest pipis

Hand gathering endorsement holders in the EGF are authorised to take pipis from ocean beaches by the method of hand picking. The definition of hand picking precludes the use of implements such as spades or forks for the commercial harvest of pipis.

Whilst not specifically addressed at the workshop, direct representations have been made to the Department seeking to allow the use of hand held implements (i.e. designed to be held in the hand).

### Departmental position

The Department supports the use of hand held implements to harvest pipis. Limiting the amount of effort a fisher can put into harvesting pipis by prohibiting the use of implements is no longer necessary given the current per fisher daily catch and possession limit of 40 kg directly restricts the total catch of pipis as will the total allowable catch and catch quota regime commencing for the commercial harvest of pipis in December 2018.

Hand held implements that may be used for the commercial harvest of pipis in other States and a description of these implements are provided in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 Implements permitted in other commercial pipi fisheries**

Fishery	Implement	Description
South Australian Pipi Fishery *	Cockle rake	A device designed to be held in the hand and consisting of a pole at 1 end of which is attached: (a) a cross-bar with teeth; or (b) a cross-bar with a net in the form of a bag or cone; or (c) a cross-bar with teeth and a net in the form of a bag or cone; The net of the cockle rake must not have a mesh size of less than 43mm.
Victorian Pipi Fishery	Dip net <sup>#</sup>	A hand-held net not exceeding 90 centimetres wide or deep and attached to a handle
Tasmanian Shellfish Fishery	The fishery includes clams, cockles, mussels and oysters harvested by hand. In some circumstance hand held non-mechanised implements to take shellfish may be authorised (e.g. limited use of a fork in a specific fishery zone is permitted for the harvest of <i>Venerupis</i> clams).	
	For the harvesting of <i>Katylisia</i> cockles, no mechanical aids or tools such as rakes or spades are allowed.	

\* Prescribed in the South Australian Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2007 and permitted under the Fisheries Management (Lakes and Coorong Fishery) Regulations 2009.

<sup>#</sup> Described in the Victorian Fisheries Regulations 2009

## Feedback required

**Please indicate your preferred option**

- Should hand held implements be permitted for the commercial harvest of pipis in NSW?

Yes

No

If yes – please provide a brief description of the type of hand held implement that may be permitted (e.g. a cockle rake)

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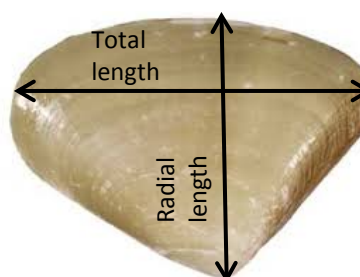
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## Minimum legal length – implementation of a radial length measurement

A minimum legal length of 4.5 centimetres (cm) total length (measured along the longest axis) currently applies to pipis.

### Workshop recommendations

Industry participants raised the possibility of including a radial length measurement (the total length of the shell measured from the umbo to shell margin) for the minimum legal length of pipis in order to use grading equipment effectively. The selection mechanism that occurs in the grading equipment is based on the radial length of pipis, with the majority of graders constructed with 3.2 cm circular holes.



### Departmental position

The Department supports the implementation of a minimum legal length that may be measured either by a total length (TL) or a radial length (RL). Departmental scientists have conducted a preliminary study showing that the current minimum legal length of 4.5 cmTL equates to 3.2 cmRL.

The current minimum legal length of 4.5 cmTL is implemented via a condition of the EGF hand gathering endorsement. This condition will be varied to include a minimum legal length of either 4.5 cmTL or 3.2 cmRL.

### No feedback required

### Future pipi research and industry contribution

As part of the Commercial Fisheries Business Adjustment Program a total allowable catch (TAC) for pipis will be determined and a catch quota regime will commence in December 2018. The TAC will be determined by an independent committee taking account of logbook data, biological information, research data and any other relevant information, including economic and social data.

Determining an optimal TAC is dependent on how much information is known about a stock, uncertainty about a stock means a precautionary TAC is likely. In NSW, pipis have been classed as 'Uncertain', meaning there is currently insufficient information to determine an exploitation status.

### Workshop outcomes

Industry participants identified a range of information gaps, research objectives and specific research needs for pipis including an independent survey and identifying the data necessary to develop a robust harvest strategy.

### Departmental position

Shareholders in the NSW Abalone and Lobster Fisheries contribute to the cost of research specific to each fishery providing robust information to assist their TAC determination process. Contribution is via a per share management charge. A similar approach could be considered for EGF hand gathering shareholders to address identified information gaps and improve the level of information used to determine a TAC for pipis.

An approximate cost for an initial independent survey of five reference beaches is \$85,000. This cost includes charter of fishers, research staff salaries and oncosts (e.g. travel and motor vehicle use), and data entry, analyses and reporting. Please note costs are indicative only and may be reduced with high levels of industry participation / contribution. Industry may also choose to adjust the scale of research surveys resulting in reduced costs.

### Feedback required

#### *Please indicate your preferred option*

1. Are you willing to contribute to the cost of research specific to pipis?  

Yes	No
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If yes – how much per share would you be willing to pay?

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### Have your say

The Department invites written submissions on the options from Estuary General Fishery hand gathering shareholders. **The closing date for submissions is Friday 30 June 2017.** Send your submission to:

Email: [dale.gollan@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dale.gollan@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

### More Information

If you require assistance in understanding the options presented or in preparing your submission please contact Dale Gollan, Fisheries Manager, on (02) 4916 3920

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