

10 October 2022

Proposed removal of endorsement condition

Consultation paper 4

Estuary General Fishery – hand gathering worm only condition

Overview of activity

Hand gathering is part of the Estuary General Fishery and permitted on ocean beaches and in 76 of the 140 or so estuaries in NSW (tidal waters only) subject to marine park, aquatic reserve, and fisheries spatial controls. 77 fishers are endorsed to hand pick or use hand implements to take Beachworm, Pipi, Cockle, Cuttlefish, Mussel, and Nipper. The quantity of Beachworm, Pipi, Cockle, and Nippers allowed to be taken is managed by quotas and the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for these species is reviewed annually.

Current arrangement

There are six endorsement holders that have a ‘worm only’ condition on their hand gathering endorsement. The condition limits the holder to taking beachworm only.

These worms only conditions were the result of government policy decisions in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s to allow a small number of people to enter the industry to take beachworms to satisfy recreational fishing demand for beachworms for bait.

Proposed change

The ‘worm only’ condition is removed from all six hand gathering endorsements.

If the worm only conditions are removed, these fishers would have the option to expand their businesses by investing in quota shares (or quota) for Pipi, Cockle or Nipper. They would also be allowed to take Mussel and Cuttlefish, which are not subject to quota.

What is the problem being resolved?

In recent years, management of the fishery has changed with endorsement numbers reduced and quota applied to key species taken by hand gathering. Maintaining these endorsement conditions imposes unnecessary restrictions that:

- Limit these fishers growing their businesses
 - Impose inconsistencies in the way these fishers are managed compared to others
 - Impose a burden on fishers and government maintaining and complying with old and new rules
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Outcomes

The proposed change would deliver the following outcomes and benefits:

- Social and wellbeing benefits for the fishers concerned
- Improved business opportunities for the fishers concerned
- Improved consistency by standardising arrangements in the fishery
- Redundant provisions removed, red tape reduced, and reduced burden on government
- No discernible impact on fisheries resources or the environment

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