

ESTUARY GENERAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING OF 30 March 2007 A/CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The Ocean Hauling & Estuary General Management Advisory Committees held a joint meeting on 30 March 2007 at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre. The two Committees separated after lunch to discuss relevant fishery specific issues. It was determined at the EGMAC meeting that I chair that Committee's session. Below is a summary of the main issues discussed at the EGMAC meeting.

The Committee was advised that the Department will move the lawful Estuary General commercial gear provisions from the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* into the *Fisheries Management (Estuary General Share Management Plan) Regulation 2006*. A document outlining some proposed amendments relating to Estuary General fishing operations were provided to the Committee. A summary of the Committee's recommendations follow.

1. Hauling Net (general purpose)

The EGMAC supported the Department's proposal to increase the maximum mesh size in the centre piece of the bunt from 50 to 57mm and to increase the minimum mesh size in the remainder of the bunt from 50 to 57mm.

2. Square-mesh codends in prawning gears

EGMAC industry representatives raised concern with the implementation of square mesh codends in Estuary General prawning gears. The Committee acknowledged that the retention of suboptimal sized prawns occurs in certain gears and that the mesh in the codend of these prawning gears requires modification. Overall, the Committee recommended that estuary general fishers should have the option to either use (1) a square mesh codend with the mesh size between 27mm – 32mm, or (2) a diamond mesh codend with mesh size between 32mm to 36mm. The Department advised that it would consider their recommendations and acknowledged industry concern regarding the availability of square mesh material in NSW.

3. Prawning

The EGMAC supported prohibiting knotless mesh in the codend of estuary general prawning gears. Also supported was the regulation of (1) a modified method of prawn seining (clover leafing) in Wallis Lake only, (2) seine net (prawns) in Smiths Lake, and (3) prawn net (set pocket) in Lake Innes.

4. Meshing and Flathead nets

The EGMAC supported limiting fishers to a maximum of 3 mesh nets to be set overnight at any one time, with the total combined length of these nets not exceeding the maximum net length for the specified waters. A maximum of two flathead nets to be set at any one time was also supported.

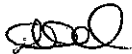
5. Crab Trapping

The Committee noted that there are numerous issues affecting trapping in the fishery and that further consultation is required with regard to permitted trap numbers, potentially linking trap numbers to shares, species that can be retained under each share class and strategies to minimise illegal trapping activity. Industry agreed to consult with fishers and discuss these issues further with the Department.

The Department advised the Committee that relevant closures are being regulated by placing them into the relevant fishery share management plans. Committee members were asked to identify any specific closure of concern for potential review and advise the Department out of session.

Research results from a sea garfish observer study presented to the Committee highlighted that the stock of this species has not shown significant improvement since the implementation of the recovery program. The Committee supported the continuation of the current permit system authorising the harvest of sea garfish in Port Stephens provided that additional management provisions are put in place for this fishery, including beach based hauling only, a weekend and public holiday closure and a maximum net length of 300m.

For a full summary of the outcomes from the combined Ocean Hauling and Estuary General MAC meeting, please visit the NSW Department of Primary Industries website at: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries or contact Darren Reynolds, Fishery Manager (Estuary General) on (02) 9527 8548.



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