



COMMERCIAL FISHERIES REFORM

Summary of reform options for the Spanner Crab component of the NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery

Reform Program

Five of NSW's major commercial fisheries are currently undergoing reform that aims to give greater meaning and value to commercial fishers' shares, by creating a stronger link between the shares and their access to the resource. It also seeks to improve efficiency by streamlining some of the current fishing restrictions, among other things.

The following information summarises the main options for the spanner crab component of the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery (OTLF). Additional detail on each of the options is included in the full options paper.

Option 1: Fishery-wide catch quota (ITQ)

To be eligible to fish in one or more sectors of the OTLF a minimum number of shares must be held, which then entitles the holder to an endorsement. In the OTLF there are two share classes for the spanner crab component, each with a corresponding endorsement:

- Northern zone spanner crab shares (OTLSCN endorsement).
- Southern zone spanner crab shares (OTLSCS endorsement).

The option involves:

- creating a new single state-wide spanner crab share class across which a catch quota (individual transferable quota) would apply, and
- setting an Interim Total Commercial Access Level (ITCAL) that would later become a Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC).



The proposed ITCAL (maximum catch level to be taken by all spanner crab endorsement holders) over an annual fishing period has been calculated using the total annual spanner crab catch, averaged over a 15 year period (from 1997/98 to 2011/12).

The proposed ITCAL is calculated at **169.2 tonnes** whole wet weight.

More detail about the principles and methods for setting the proposed ITCAL is provided in a separate technical paper titled "*Setting the Interim Total Commercial Access Levels (ITCALs)*".

A new state-wide share class would be created.

The shares would be issued after standardising the current shares for the two existing spanner crab zones, based on their proportion of the total reported landings averaged over a 15 year period (from 1997/98 to 2011/12) – see Table 1.

Table 1. Allocation of spanner crab ITCAL and quota per share for each fishing zone under Option 1

Sector	Average total landings over 15 years	Proposed ITCAL for each zone	Total shares	Quota per share
Northern zone	164,124 kg (97%)	164,124 kg (97%)	1,760	93.25 kg
Southern zone	5,076 kg (3%)	5,076 kg (3%)	345	14.71 kg

An arbitrary number of new spanner crab shares would be set, say 100,000, and these would be allocated to existing shareholders based on the percentage of the ITCAL each shareholder would be allocated (if using their existing shareholdings and taking account of the standardised allocation in Table 1). Table 3 in the full options paper provides more detail on the percentages for each level of shareholding.

For example:

In the northern zone, a shareholder with 5 shares would be allocated 466.25 kg of quota (5 shares x 93.25 kg). This represents 0.276% of the full 169.2 tonne ITCAL. The shareholder would therefore be allocated 0.276% of the total new spanner crab shares. If 100,000 new shares were issued in total, this would equate to 276 shares.

Feedback is sought on:

- What minimum shareholding should apply if a new state-wide share class and catch quota was pursued; and
- The preferred start date for an annual fishing period (i.e. 1 July, 1 August or 1 February) during which the quota would be allocated and then could be used by fishers or transferred.

Potential changes to current restrictions under Option 1

The key changes proposed under Option 1 are:

- Adjusting the maximum number of dillies that can be used under each endorsement without crew from 20 to 30.
- Removing restrictions on boat length.
- Removing fishery boundaries and opening the fishery to state-wide access.

Main advantages of Option 1 are:

- Provides the strongest link between shares and access.
- Promotes industry to self adjust their shareholding to suit their particular businesses.
- Allows trade of shares among all spanner crab shareholders across the entire state.

- Simplifies management and associated costs, with a single spanner crab share class managed uniformly across the state.
- Greater community confidence that catch can be directly and sustainably managed.
- Greater fishing area for all fishers through removal of boundary and Yamba and the southern boundary at Hat Head.
- No forced reduction in number of endorsement holders (provided a minimum shareholding is not introduced).

Main disadvantages of Option 1 are:

- Setting a total catch limit (ITCAL/TACC) may encourage high-grading and increased discards.
- More reliance on resource assessment and catch monitoring to appropriately manage and adjust ITCAL/TAC.
- Does not by itself address resource allocation issues with other sectors (e.g. Queensland, ocean trawling and recreational fisheries).

Relative cost of Option 1

It is expected that the cost of implementing and monitoring this option would be similar or lower than for Option 2.

Option 2: Catch quota for the northern zone and mixed controls for the southern zone

Option 2 involves:

- implementing a catch quota system in the northern zone (as per Option 1), and
- a mix of input and output controls in the southern zone, including:
 - reduced dilly size from 1.6 m² to 1 m²;
 - a fishing closure for spanner crabs from Sandon River to Yamba;
 - a daily catch limit of 150 kg of spanner crabs;
 - an annual cap per shareholder of 1 tonne of spanner crab per 20 shares (see Table 2);
 - removal of the southern zone fishery boundary from Hat Head to the Victorian border; and
 - increased minimum size limit for spanner crabs from 93 mm to 100 mm.

Table 2. Allocation of spanner crab ITCAL for each fishing zone under Option 2

Sector	Proposed ITCAL	Total shares	Allocation
Northern zone	151,950 kg (89.8%)	1,760	86.34 kg per share
Southern zone	17,250 kg (10.2%)	345	2 tonne cap for 40 shares 1.25 tonne cap for 25 shares

Potential changes to current restrictions under Option 2

The key changes proposed under Option 2 are:

- Adjusting the maximum number of dillies that can be used under each endorsement without crew from 20 to 30 (both northern and southern zone).
- Removing restrictions on boat length (northern zone only).

Main advantages of Option 2 are:

- No need to create a new share class and issue new shares.
- Stronger and more direct links between shares and resource access compared to the current minimum shareholding system.
- Greater opportunity for fishers in the northern zone to self adjust their shareholding to suit their particular business; less so for southern zone.
- Greater fishing area for all fishers through removal of southern boundary at Hat Head.

Main disadvantages of Option 2 include:

- High management complexity, with different regimes in two zones for single species.
- Potentially increased costs associated with quota management, along with administering two different sets of rules.
- Unlikely to lead to consolidation of shares in the southern zone as proposed annual caps exceed current landings.
- Reduces share or quota trading potential by maintaining two zones with different share classes.
- New area south of Hat Head would be open to all endorsement holders used to operating under different arrangements (size limits, catch quotas and daily limits), which complicates compliance.

Relative cost of Option 2

It is expected that the cost of implementing and monitoring this option would be similar or higher than for Option 1, given the complexity in running two separate management systems.

Have your say

Feedback is being sought on the options presented in the spanner crab options paper.

A submission form is available to assist in providing a submission, however they can be provided in any format.

The closing time for submissions is 8am on Monday 19 May, 2014.

Details on how to lodge a submission are included in the full options paper.

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Published by the Department of Primary Industries (OUT 14/9871)