

10 October 2022

Proposed amendment to commercial fishing regulations

Consultation paper 12

Estuary General and Ocean Trap & Line fisheries – set lines

Overview of the activity

Set lines are used by fishers in the Estuary General and Ocean Trap and Line fisheries:

Estuary General: The Estuary General Fishery operates in 76 of the 140 or so estuaries in NSW (tidal waters only) subject to marine park, aquatic reserve, and fisheries spatial controls. 128 fishers hold a handline endorsement authorising use of a handline, rod and line, set line or drift line. Catch in this sector may be managed by adjusting numbers of endorsements (or fishers) on a regional and as-needs basis or species-specific controls.

Ocean Trap and Line: The Ocean Trap and Line Fishery operates in continental shelf and slope ocean waters. 194 fishers hold a line fishing (western zone) endorsement authorising use of a handline, rod and line, set line or drift line within 3 nautical miles of the coast. Catch in this sector may be managed by adjusting numbers of endorsements (or fishers) on an as-needs basis or species-specific controls.

Current arrangement

A fisher may use up to 10 set lines each with up to 6 hooks attached in the handline sector of the Estuary General Fishery and the line fishing (western zone) sector of the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery.

Proposed change

Allow up to 10 set lines with a combined total of 60 hooks.

What is the problem being resolved?

In recent years, management of these fisheries has changed with endorsement numbers significantly reduced. Maintaining outdated controls that limit fishers' ability to reconfigure set lines imposes unnecessary restrictions that:

- Impose costs (each set line requires anchors and buoys with rope)
 - Impose inefficiencies (more time to set and retrieve multiple lines)
 - Present risk to marine mammals and navigation through excess anchors and buoys with rope
 - Impose a burden on fishers that does not benefit fisheries resources or the community
 - Impose a burden on government maintaining and enforcing the current rule
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Outcomes

The proposed change would deliver the following outcomes and benefits:

- Flexibility for fishers to configure set lines to suit their needs, including to reduce costs
- Reduced time setting and retrieving lines
- Reduced risk to marine mammals
- Improved safety through reduced navigational risks
- Total hook numbers permitted remains unchanged
- Redundant provisions removed, red tape reduced, and reduced burden on government
- No discernible impact on fisheries resources or the environment

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