

10 October 2022

Proposed amendment to commercial fishing regulations

Consultation paper 8

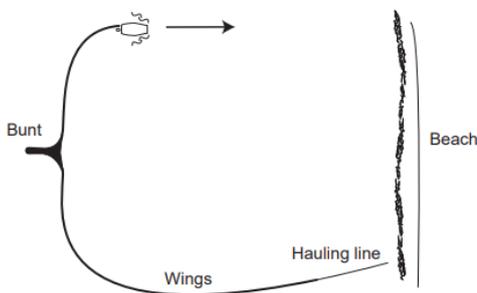
Ocean Hauling Fishery – general purpose hauling net mesh size (Jervis Bay)

Overview of activity

The general purpose (GP) hauling net is used in the Ocean Hauling Fishery from sea beaches and in Jervis Bay subject to marine park, aquatic reserve, and fisheries spatial controls. The GP hauling net has been used in NSW since post-colonial days and must be operated with the assistance of at least one other person. The GP hauling net is used to take species such as Mullet, Luderick, Yellowfin Bream, Sand Whiting, and Silver Biddy. Catch may be managed by adjusting numbers of endorsements (or fishers) on an as-needs basis or through species-specific controls.

A hauling net has various parts including hauling lines, wings and a bunt, which consists of a centre piece and two ‘shoulders’ located either side of the centre piece (Figure 1). The hauling lines and wings guide fish towards the bunt where they accumulate and where most of the selectivity¹ occurs.

Figure 1: diagram of a general purpose hauling net, showing a hauling line, wing, and the bunt



Current arrangement

A maximum mesh size of 57 mm applies to the centre piece of the bunt if the net is used in Jervis Bay outside of the ‘mullet season’.

Proposed change

Remove the maximum mesh size of 57 mm in the centre piece of the bunt so that fishers may use larger mesh to reduce bycatch or selectively harvest larger fish, consistent with changes proposed for GP hauling nets used in the Estuary General Fishery (consultation paper 6).

¹ Selectivity refers to the ability of fishing gear to retain target species at intended sizes and allow non-target species or fish of certain sizes to escape.

What is the problem being resolved?

The proposed changes would address the following problems or issues:

- Inconsistent rules applying to the GP hauling net in Jervis Bay and other waters
- Risk of enforcement action for non-compliance with prescriptive and inconsistent regulations
- Cost for fishers building and maintaining nets to suit different rules in different fisheries
- Inability to use larger mesh to reduce bycatch or to selectively harvest larger fish to suit market demand or to capitalise on higher prices per kilogram
- Burden on government maintaining, communicating, and enforcing this rule

Outcomes

The proposed change would deliver the following outcomes and benefits:

- Improved consistency between fisheries, reduced costs for fishers, and improved compliance
- Opportunity to target optimum size fish and reduced bycatch
- Unnecessary provisions removed and red tape reduced
- Reduced burden on Government maintaining, communicating, and enforcing this rule
- No discernible impact on the fisheries resource and environment

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