

24 February 2023

Fact Sheet

Changes to commercial fishing rules – Business Efficiency Program

Overview

This Fact Sheet summarises the next round of changes to commercial fishing rules under the Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program, following public consultation in October 2022.

Permitted species in the Estuary General Fishery

New 'secondary species' have been added to the list of species that may be taken in the Estuary General Fishery (refer Attachment A).

By-product species in the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery

New 'by-product species' have been added to the list of species that may be taken in the Hunter and Hawkesbury River sectors of the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery (refer Attachment B). These new species may only be taken as incidental catch (not targeted).

Hand gathering and handline fishers crewing arrangements

Estuary General hand gathering & handline endorsement holders may be assisted by one unendorsed crew member person subject to:

- the endorsement holder and the other person must be engaged in the same fishing activity
 - the endorsement holder must remain in the immediate vicinity of the other person at all times
 - any fish taken by the endorsement holder are to be kept in the endorsement holder's possession until the fish are lawfully disposed of.
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Beach hauling Crowdy Head to Harrington Inlet

General purpose hauling nets may be used between Crowdy Head and the northern breakwall at Harrington Inlet between 1 March and 31 July (both dates inclusive).

Endorsement holders are prohibited from taking Mulloway (*Argyrosomus japonicus*) using a hauling net (general purpose) from 1 March to 31 July in each year in waters adjacent to the shoreline between the southwesternmost point on Crowdy Head and the northern breakwall at Harrington Inlet. The taking of Mulloway will be revisited having regard to the Mulloway Harvest Strategy that is being developed.

Lobster trap ropes

The requirement to have a 50 gram weight attached to a buoy rope has been removed. Under the new arrangements, no rope can be floating on the surface of the water.

Male spanner crab spawning closure

The male spanner crab spawning closure that applies to fishers in the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery has been brought forward by one week (now 15 November to 14 December) for increased access to Christmas markets.

Automatic baiting machines

Automatic baiting machines may now be used in the line fishing (eastern) sector of the Ocean Trap and Line fishery.

Set lines

Fishers using set lines in ocean waters (inside 3nm) and estuary waters can still use 60 hooks in total, though can now use up to 10 setlines in any combination i.e., one setline with 60 hooks or up to 10 setlines with a total of 60 hooks.

Prawn net (set pocket)

In Lake Illawarra and Tuggerah Lakes, the maximum length of a prawn set pocket net has been increased to 6 metres (from 5 metres).

In all waters, fishers are no longer required to always remain in attendance of their net. If a net is left unattended, the net must be marked with a buoy that:

- is moored so it is visible and safely accessible by boat
- measures at least 200mm in all dimensions
- displays the relevant fishing business number followed by the letter “P” in clearly visible letters and figures that are at least 100mm in height and a colour that contrasts with the buoy.

Requiring the buoy to be visible and safely accessible by boat is important for the safety of Fisheries Officers and to minimise risk of damage to nets.

Subject to how your net is setup and local conditions, options for safely mooring a buoy may include attaching it to the lazy line on the net or to the outside peg used to set the net.

Flathead nets

The following requirements applying to the flathead net have been removed:

- the maximum cork size (61 mm x 36 mm)
- the minimum distance of 3.5 metres between corks
- the cork line being no more than 80 cm above the lead line when the net is in use

The maximum net depth of 16 meshes still applies and the lead line of the net must be touching the bed of the estuary when the net is in use.

Pilchard, anchovy & bait nets in the Estuary General Fishery

Species designated as 'permitted species' in the Estuary General Fishery and not subject to a size limit may now be taken in a pilchard, anchovy and bait net.

Garfish bullringing nets

The maximum mesh size for a garfish bullringing net is now 45 mm in all NSW waters.

Species designated as 'permitted species' in the Estuary General Fishery and not subject to a size limit may now be taken in a garfish bullringing net.

General purpose hauling nets

Removing fish from nets (EG and OH fisheries)

Fish must be removed from a general purpose hauling net on or before the completion of a haul, so that fishers may focus on the safe operation of the net.

Estuary General Fishery

The following changes apply to the general purpose hauling net used in the Estuary General Fishery:

- the requirement to use a stake or back net in coastal lakes and lagoons has been removed
- the bunt may be positioned anywhere in the net
- the bunt may be up to one-third the length of the net
- the centre piece of the bunt may be up to 90 metres in length
- the remainder of the bunt (or shoulders) may be up to 90 metres in length
- the maximum mesh size applying to the centre piece of the bunt has been removed

It is now lawful to delay or interrupt the hauling of a net, including by redirecting or relaying a hauling line, but only where necessary for the safe operation of the net.

In all other cases, the hauling of a net once commenced (that is, when any part of the net other than the hauling line has been shot or cast) must be continued without interruption or delay until completed.

Ocean Hauling Fishery

The following changes apply to the general purpose hauling net used in the Ocean Hauling Fishery:

- the bunt may be positioned anywhere in the net
 - for nets used in Jervis Bay, the maximum mesh size applying to the centre piece of the bunt outside the 'mullet season' (between 1 August and the end of February) has been removed.
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Prawn running nets

In Lake Illawarra, a prawn running net may now be staked.

In all waters, a prawn running net may now be staked within 10 metres of the high-water mark.

Minimum mesh size in an eel trap

The minimum mesh size in an eel trap in the Estuary General fishery is now 15 mm.

Minimum mesh size in a bait net

The minimum mesh size in a bait net in the Estuary General fishery is now 10 mm.

Bigeye ocean perch quota reporting in the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery

Line fishing (eastern zone), line fishing (western zone), and demersal fish trap endorsement holders now have 6 hours to make a final catch report (from the catch estimate report) when landing Bigeye Ocean Perch, consistent with the reporting requirements applying to other deepwater line species.

Other rules and regulations

This Fact Sheet does not cover all rules that apply to commercial fishing in NSW.

For information on other rules that apply to commercial fishing in NSW, refer to the NSW DPI website or contact DPI.

More information

For more information, please call Commercial Fisheries Customer Services on 1300 720 662

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Attachment A: new secondary species in the Estuary General Fishery

Australian herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	Secondary species
Barred grunter	<i>Amniataba percooides</i>	Secondary species
Bigeye trevally	<i>Caranx sexfasciatus</i>	Secondary species
Birdwire rockcod	<i>Epinephelus merra</i>	Secondary species
Blackspotted rockcod	<i>Epinephelus malabaricus</i>	Secondary species
Brassy trevally	<i>Caranx papuensis</i>	Secondary species
Common ponyfish	<i>Leiognathus equulus</i>	Secondary species
Diamondfish	<i>Monodactylus argenteus</i>	Secondary species
Eastern shovelnose ray	<i>Aptychotrema rostrata</i>	Secondary species
Eastern wirrah	<i>Acanthistius ocellatus</i>	Secondary species
Giant sea catfish	<i>Netuma thalassina</i>	Secondary species
Giant trevally	<i>Caranx ignobilis</i>	Secondary species
Greenback flounder	<i>Rhombosolea tapirina</i>	Secondary species
Hawaiian giant herring	<i>Elops hawaiiensis</i>	Secondary species
Moses snapper	<i>Lutjanus russellii</i>	Secondary species
Oxeye herring	<i>Megalops cyprinoides</i>	Secondary species
Painted sweetlips	<i>Diagramma pictum</i>	Secondary species
Queenfishes	<i>Scomberoides spp.</i>	Secondary species
Redthroat emperor	<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>	Secondary species
Stargazers	Family: URANOSCOPIDAE	Secondary species
Sweetlips	<i>Haemulidae</i> except <i>Pomadasys spp.</i>	Secondary species

Attachment B: new by-product species in the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery

Hunter River

Australian herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	By-product species
Common silverbiddy	<i>Gerres subfasciatus</i>	By-product species
European carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	By-product species
Hawaiian giant herring	<i>Elops hawaiiensis</i>	By-product species
Largespotted herring	<i>Herklotsichthys koningsbergeri</i>	By-product species
Oxeye herring	<i>Megalops cyprinoides</i>	By-product species
Southern herring	<i>Herklotsichthys castelnaui</i>	By-product species

Hawkesbury River

Australian herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	By-product species
Black rabbitfish	<i>Siganus fuscescens</i>	By-product species
Common pike eel	<i>Muraenesox bagio</i>	By-product species
Coral crab	<i>Charybdis feriata</i>	By-product species
Cuttlefish	<i>Sepia spp.</i>	By-product species
Diamondfish	<i>Monodactylus argenteus</i>	By-product species
Eastern fiddler ray	<i>Trygonorrhina fasciata</i>	By-product species
Eastern shovelnose ray	<i>Aptychotrema rostrata</i>	By-product species
Eeltail catfishes	Family: PLOTOSIDAE	By-product species
Estuary cobbler	<i>Cnidoglanis macrocephalus</i>	By-product species
Fantail mullet	<i>Paramugil georgii</i>	By-product species
Forktail catfishes	Family: ARIIDAE	Species name update for by-product species
Giant boarfish	<i>Paristiopterus labiosus</i>	By-product species
Hawaiian giant herring	<i>Elops hawaiiensis</i>	By-product species
John dory	<i>Zeus faber</i>	By-product species
Largespotted herring	<i>Herklotsichthys koningsbergeri</i>	By-product species

Longfin pike	<i>Dinolestes lewini</i>	By-product species
Oxeye herring	<i>Megalops cyprinoides</i>	By-product species
Southern calamari	<i>Sepioteuthis australis</i>	By-product species
Southern herring	<i>Herklotsichthys castelnaui</i>	By-product species
Stingrays	<i>Dasyatidae, Gymnuridae, Myliobatidae and Urolophidae spp.</i>	By-product species
Striped scat	<i>Selenotoca multifasciata</i>	By-product species
Tripletail	<i>Lobotes surinamensis</i>	By-product species