

Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program

Business Efficiency Program Update – January 2022

In 2020, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) invited public submissions on changes to improve efficiency in the NSW commercial fishing industry now that new ways of managing catch and fishing effort apply. This paper provides an update on this program, the introduction of a new management fee framework, and important information on changes to fishing boat licensing.

Business Efficiency Program update

The Business Efficiency Program (BEP) provides for consideration of changes to improve efficiency in the NSW commercial fishing industry now that new ways of managing catch and fishing effort apply. The process involves up to three important phases:

Phase 1: consideration of proposals by CommFish (following initial consultation)

Phase 2: consideration by the recently established CommFish/RecFish working group

Phase 3: public consultation

CommFish has considered over 800 BEP proposals under the first phase of the process.

Some of these proposals have been progressed as a first round of regulatory change to be implemented soon. This follows public consultation, review by CommFish, and Ministerial approval.

Some further BEP proposals will progress to phase 2 for consideration by the newly established joint working group of CommFish and RecFish representatives, while other proposals have been deferred, set aside, referred to other processes for consideration, or referred back to DPI for further investigation.

First round of BEP changes

The Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales has approved DPI delivering the first round of changes below. This follows public and targeted consultation throughout 2021. Consultation papers are attached.

Commercial fishing licences: optional longer-term commercial fishing licences (for further information see [Longer term commercial fishing licences](#)).

Boat licensing: removing the requirement for boats to be licensed, new maximum boat lengths for some fisheries, and phasing out the use of boats longer than the new maximum boat lengths (further information on this can be found below).

Lobster maximum shareholding: increasing the maximum shareholding in the Lobster Fishery from 350 lobster shares to 3,848 lobster shares (for further information see [Maximum shareholding in the Lobster Fishery](#)).

Inland restricted fishery endorsements: more flexible fishing business transfer rules in the Inland Restricted Fishery (for further information see [Inland restricted fishery endorsements](#)).

Real time quota reporting: adjustments to real-time quota reporting for Line East, Ocean Haul Garfish, and Ocean Trawl. For further information see:

- [Real-time reporting Line East](#)
- [Real-time reporting Ocean Haul Garfish](#)
- [Real-time reporting interstate Ocean Trawl](#)

Nominating endorsement holders: reducing the minimum time between nominations for improved business flexibility (for further information see [Nominating endorsement holders](#)).

DPI is working on these changes and will provide further updates on how and when they will be introduced.

CommFish and RecFish working group meeting early 2022

Early in 2022, the CommFish/RecFish working group will meet to discuss BEP proposals that have progressed to the second phase. The role of this group is to provide advice on the proposals prior to public consultation.

New management fee framework

Following Ministerial approval, DPI will move to implement a fairer management fee framework for the five multi-species share management fisheries. This follows public and targeted consultation throughout 2021 ([new management charges of the five multi-species share management fisheries](#)).

The new framework is underpinned by the simple philosophy that each shareholder's contribution reflects their level of access to the State's fisheries resources.

DPI is working on implementing this change and will provide further updates on how and when it will be introduced.

Important information on changes to boat licensing

Following Ministerial approval, DPI will be implementing changes to boat licensing that will allow fishers to invest in boats fit for the future. The changes include:

- Removing the requirement for commercial fishing boats to be licensed
- New maximum boat lengths for some fisheries
- Phasing-out the use of boats longer than the new maximum boat lengths

Many commercial fishing boats are already not required to be licenced. These changes will allow all fishers to enjoy the same benefits and flexibility.

DPI is working on these changes and will provide further updates on how and when they will be introduced.

Following is important information relevant to boat owners, boat licence holders, and those looking to invest in a boat or boat licence.

Removing boat licences

Boat licences will not be required after the changes are introduced, reducing paperwork for fishers, and making it easier to acquire boats fit for the future.

Anyone trading in boat licences in the lead up to these changes is encouraged to seek independent financial and legal advice prior to making any investment decisions.

New maximum boat lengths

New maximum boat lengths will be introduced in some fisheries. The new maximum boat lengths are:

Estuary General Fishery: maximum length increased from 10 to 16 metres

Estuary Prawn Trawl: maximum length increased from 10 to 16 metres

Ocean Trap and Line: maximum length increased from 16 to 20 metres

Phasing out large boats

Boats longer than the maximum length for a fishery may continue to be used in the fishery if the boat is identified in a list published on the DPI Fisheries website.

Once a boat is no longer fit for commercial use it will be removed from the list.

Adding boats to the list for a fishery will be a once-off process. For a boat to be added to the list for a fishery the boat must be:

- longer in length than the new maximum boat length for the fishery, and
- authorised for use in the fishery by a boat licence with an 'exemption code' for the fishery.

If you own a boat licence with an 'exemption code' and you are considering a new boat longer than the future maximum boat length for that fishery, you are encouraged to seek independent financial and legal advice prior to making any investment decisions.

More information

Further information on the first round of BEP changes and new management fee framework can be found in the papers released for public consultation in early 2021 available [here](#).

For enquiries contact the Commercial Fisheries hotline on 1300 726 488.

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