

10 October 2022

Proposed amendment to commercial fishing regulations

Consultation paper 11

Estuary General Fishery – garfish bullringing nets

Overview of activity

The garfish bullringing net may only be used by holders of a category one or category two hauling endorsement in the Estuary General Fishery, which operates in 76 of the 140 or so estuaries in NSW (tidal waters only) subject to marine park, aquatic reserve, and fisheries spatial controls. The net may only be used to take garfish, with River Garfish and Snub-nosed Garfish the two species that are generally taken.

Fishers in the hauling sector are subject to effort quota – limiting the number of days that may be fished each year. From 2024, the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) that applies will be periodically reviewed by the independent Total Allowable Fishing Committee or the Secretary of the Department of Regional NSW. Any unsustainable catch may be managed by adjusting the TAE or introducing species-specific controls.

Current arrangement

A maximum mesh size of 36mm applies, except in the Clarence River where it is 45mm.

Proposed change

Increase the maximum mesh size from 36 to 45mm for all waters, consistent with the Clarence River.

What is the problem being resolved?

The proposed changes would address the following problems or issues:

- Inconsistent rules applying to the garfish bullringing net throughout the State
 - Regulation stopping fishers using 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 inconsistent rules
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Outcomes

The proposed change would deliver the following outcomes and benefits:

- Improved consistency throughout the State
 - Opportunity to selectively harvest optimum size fish to improve profit and reduce bycatch
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- Redundant provisions removed, red tape reduced, and reduced burden on government
- No discernible impact on fisheries resources or the environment

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