



2026 West Coast Prawn Fishery Harvest Strategy

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DRAFT 2026 West Coast Prawn Fishery Harvest Strategy

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This harvest strategy is dedicated to the late Nick Paul who contributed significantly to the management of the West Coast Prawn Fishery and always maintained a constructive and optimistic approach towards the fishery, even during hard times.

Cover Image: Photo credit - Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Association

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1 Background

This harvest strategy has been developed by industry and government through a working group including representatives of the Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Association (SGWCPA), the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) Fisheries and Aquaculture, as requested by the industry in 2025. It builds on the harvest strategy adopted in 2019 and revised in 2022. Key external stakeholders were consulted on the draft harvest strategy prior to finalisation.

This harvest strategy has been developed on the basis that the management arrangements in place for the West Coast Prawn Fishery (WCPF) since 2007 have been adequate to maintain stocks despite periodic declines. The previous harvest strategy (2010/11) has been improved by the addition of: 1) performance indicators with reference points, and 2) decision rules for managing the fishery in times of reduced fishery performance and to account for persistent El Niño conditions that are known to impact fishery performance.

There are four main fishing regions within the WCPF: Venus Bay, Ceduna, Corvisart Bay and Coffin Bay (Figure 1). Fishing can also occur outside of the four main regions in the waters of the WCPF, as defined in the Fisheries Management (Prawn) Regulations 2017. Data are collected and analysed from the four main regions and three outer fishing regions, and the fishery is monitored and managed at this regional scale (see Section 8 for definitions of fishing regions).

The fishing season with respect to this harvest strategy is 1 March through to 31 December in each year with no commercial fishing in January or February and fishing does not usually occur in May and October. Fishing occurs from the last quarter of the moon through to the first quarter of the moon in each lunar period. November and December fishing coincides with the early spawning period for Western King Prawns (*Penaeus (Melicertus) latisulcatus*). To minimise the possibility of recruitment overfishing, a conservative fishing strategy during this early spawning period is applied, reducing the regions and the number of nights available for fishing. These arrangements are considered to be appropriate to maintain sustainable prawn stocks.

For the remainder of the fishing year more flexible arrangements are provided as the location of the WCPF means that it is exposed to oceanic influences. This includes bad weather (swell and wind) and environmental impacts relating to changes in currents and water temperatures as a result of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and cold upwelling events. ENSO events lead to enhanced upwelling, lowering the sea level and raising the thermocline (Middleton and Bye 2007). During El Niño events, wintertime shelf-edge currents and the warm Leeuwin Current which flows from north-west to south-east are reduced (Middleton and Bye 2007). There is evidence that ENSO events influence recruitment strength in the WCPF and that El Niño driven changes (low sea level height and cold water) have been identified as important drivers in structuring recruitment (Carrick and Ostendorf 2005; Carrick 2008).

Given the WCPF is impacted by oceanic conditions, the fishery rarely utilise all the allowable fishing nights. This can appear as poor fishing performance when considering the nights fished per season rather than the holistic understanding of the nights lost due to bad weather. Additionally, it is thought the WCPF is less affected by moon phases as it operates in deeper waters in comparison to South Australia's two other prawn fisheries (e.g., Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent Prawn fisheries).

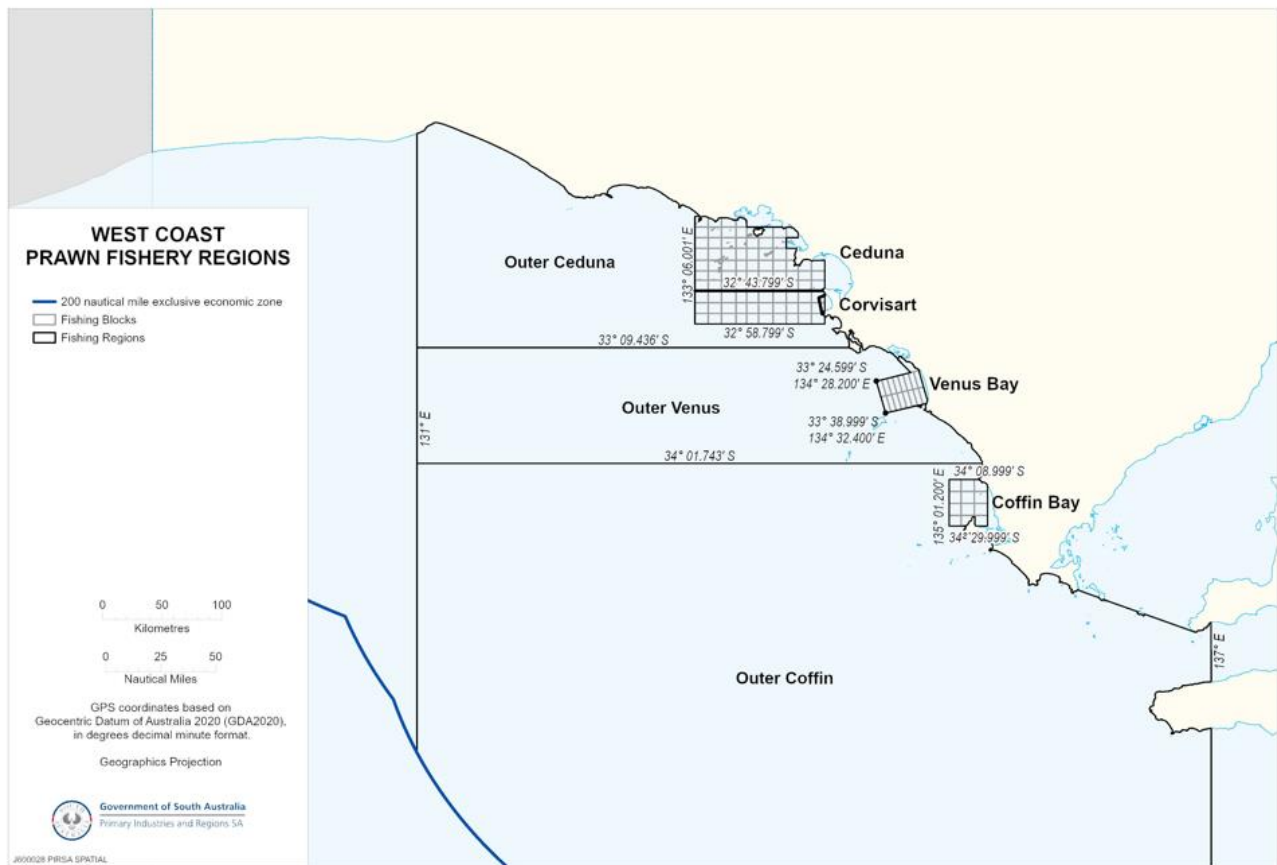


Figure 1: Map showing the main fishing areas in the West Coast Prawn Fishery.

Historically, Venus Bay is the largest and most productive fishing ground for the WCPF and is also considered to be an important area for egg production. As such, management arrangements have been put in place to restrict fishing for prawns in this area during the peak spawning period in November and December. Conversely, the shallow estuarine waters adjacent to Ceduna are considered to be an important prawn nursery supporting recruitment into the fishery. Additional management arrangements for this area have been provided in circumstances when stock declines in the WCPF. Corvisart Bay, adjacent to Ceduna, is considered by industry to be different from the Ceduna grounds as it supports larger prawns. Coffin Bay is comparable to Corvisart Bay in terms of tonnage. Corvisart Bay is not considered to be a key recruitment or spawning ground for the WCPF. Industry considers smaller prawns migrate from Ceduna through Corvisart Bay to Venus Bay, particularly inshore. Historic data suggests there has been limited fishing in Corvisart Bay.

Harvest levels up to the time when the 2019 harvest strategy was developed were considered to be consistent with maximum sustainable yield. This position was inferred from the comparison with the first harvesting period (1970 to 1975) where catches ranged from 150 to 290 tonnes (t), with an average of around 200 t harvested by 12 vessels. Effort over this period ranged from 6,000 to 10,000 trawl hours each year. In 1979 the number of licences were capped at three reducing overall effort in the fishery.

A review of the 2019 harvest strategy in 2021-2022 captured minor amendments including providing for fishing arrangements in Corvisart Bay between March and October, removing the November fishery-independent survey (FIS) from calculating the primary performance indicator, amending the winter FIS, and allowing for a transition from 50 to 75 nights mid-season if the fishery is classified as 'depleting'.

A further review of the harvest strategy in 2024-26, has incorporated the allowance of industry-led spot surveys; fishing outside of the four main fishing regions; and updates to reference points.

2 Operational objectives

The primary aim of this harvest strategy is to maintain sustainability of Western King Prawns in the waters of the WCPF, as defined in the Fisheries Management (Prawn) Regulations 2017. Sustainability is achieved through management arrangements that aim to reduce the capture of large amounts of small prawns and protection of spawning prawns during peak spawning periods. This harvest strategy also considers economic efficiency by allowing for flexible fishing arrangements and account for unfavourable environmental conditions associated with persistent El Niño events.

Goal:

Maintain ecologically sustainable prawn biomass taking into account environmental conditions.

Operational objective:

Maintain the average catch rate (commercial and Fishery Independent Surveys (FIS) combined) at or above 30.00 kg/hr in all years except when an El Niño event is identified in the assessment period as described in section 3.1.

3 Performance indicators

Primary performance indicator

The primary performance indicator (PI) used to monitor the WCPF is total prawn abundance and is based on average nominal catch rates obtained from FIS undertaken by SARDI and commercial catch data. Catch rate data are considered a proxy for relative abundance, and due to the small scale of the fishery, standardisation of catch rates to account for other factors which may influence abundance has not been undertaken (see Appendix 9.2 for further information).

Total prawn abundance

Average nominal catch rate = commercial catch per unit effort (CPUE) (at least three months of commercial fishing between March and September) and average Venus Bay (VB) CPUE from FIS in February/March and June/July. A 50/50 weighting to commercial CPUE and FIS VBCPUE is applied in calculating average CPUE (Appendix 9.3).

Secondary performance indicator

The secondary performance indicator, the El Niño - Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Outlook status, is not used in informing stock status for the fishery; however, it is used in decision rules for management arrangements.

The ENSO Outlook status is used as determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (see Appendix 9.1 for further information on ENSO status).

3.1 Reference points

Target, Trigger and Limit reference points are derived from the average catch rate calculated from commercial CPUE (≥ 3 months March - September) and FIS VBCPUE (March and June) (Table 1). For this harvest strategy, reference points were calculated using commercial CPUE and FIS CPUE obtained between 1987 and 2025 (see Appendix 9.2, page 22 and Table 10 in Appendix 9.4, page 24), where the commercial CPUE ≥ 43 kg/hr (Appendix 9.3, page 22).

Average catch rate as the primary performance indicator for the period from 1987-2025 is provided in Figure 2.

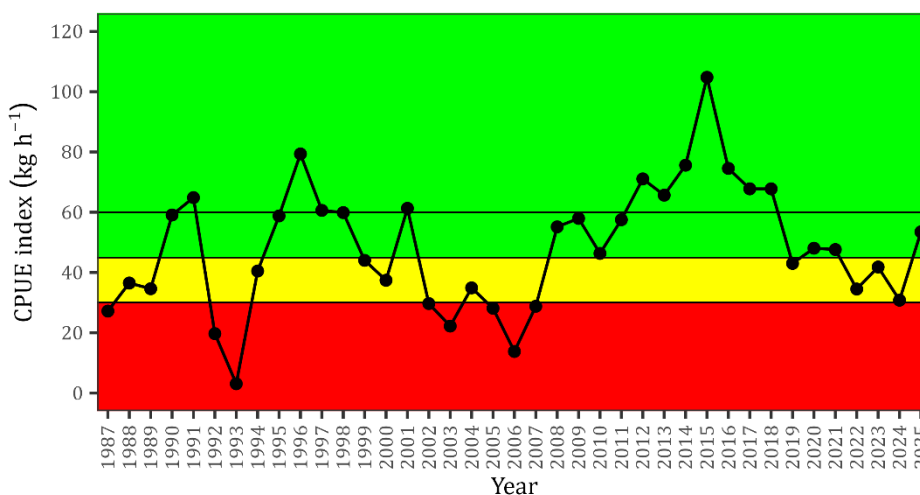


Figure 2: Average catch rate derived from commercial catch per unit effort (CPUE) and Venus Bay fishery-independent survey (FIS) CPUE for the West Coast Prawn Fishery from 1987 to 2025. Lines delimit the Target (upper line), Trigger (middle line) and Limit (lower line) reference points, respectively.

Table 1: Reference point values defined by average catch rate calculated from commercial catch per unit effort and fishery-independent survey data (1987-2025).

Reference Point	Average Catch Rate
Target Reference Point	60.00 kg/hr (2.20 lb/min)
Trigger Reference Point	45.00 kg/hr (1.65 lb/min)
Limit Reference Point	30.00 kg/hr (1.10 lb/min)

3.2 ENSO Outlook Status

In this harvest strategy, an El Niño event for a fishing season will be considered to be in place when five or more consecutive months are declared as El Niño Advisory by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the previous 24 months ending 30 September of the fishing season being assessed.

A summary of status available for NOAA (2009-2024) is provided in Appendix 9.1.

ENSO data (from 2001) is available on the NOAA website (NOAA 2025) at [Climate Prediction Center - El Niño Southern Oscillation Diagnostic Discussion Archive](https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/ENSO_DD_archive.php) (https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/ENSO_DD_archive.php).

4 Monitoring strategy

4.1 Commercial fishing

Commercial CPUE is derived from catch and effort data reported in electronic trip reports provided to PIRSA throughout the fishing season. SARDI report on the performance indicators for the fishery in an Advice Note prior to the beginning of the next fishing season as well as assessing stock status in regular stock status or assessment reports.

4.2 Fishery Independent Surveys

Two fishery-independent surveys (FIS') are conducted annually in the fishery, generally between the last quarter of the moon and the new moon (dark of the moon), according to the schedule in Table 2. The methods for conducting a FIS are described in Heldt (2024). FIS' are conducted using industry vessels with independent observers. The FIS' at Venus Bay in March and June are included in the calculation of the average catch rate as the main spawning area for the WCPF prawn resource. Ceduna is considered the main area of recruitment, and March is considered to be the peak recruitment period. The outcomes of the Ceduna surveys in March are not explicitly used in this harvest strategy. However, the survey results in Ceduna, particularly the inshore survey shots, may be considered for use as a recruitment index in the future when sufficient data are available.

Prawn abundance in Coffin Bay fluctuates from year to year and commercial fishing is not always conducted in this area. Commercial catch rates in Coffin Bay are considered sufficient to monitor trends in prawn abundance in this area when fishing occurs. The fishery previously undertook a November FIS in Venus Bay. This November FIS ceased in 2021 as the survey did not directly influence harvest strategy outcomes. The November survey can be used to reopen the fishery or provide additional data points if other surveys are not conducted as per Table 2. The November survey may be undertaken at the request and expense of the industry, to evaluate the option to transition from one strategy within season.

Table 2: Schedule of annual fishery-independent surveys in the West Coast Prawn Fishery.

Month	Region	
March	Venus Bay	Ceduna (2 nights)
June	Venus Bay	
November	Venus Bay (if requested)	

4.3 At-sea monitoring

Management of fishing strategies is informed from data collected at the conclusion of each night of commercial fishing from all vessels that have fished on that night and reported to a nominated person. Data reported on each fishing night includes the estimate of total nightly catch per vessel and average bucket count per vessel by midday each day following a fishing night, including on nights when fishing is not conducted during a fishing run. A minimum of three bucket counts must be undertaken on each fishing vessel for each night of fishing and the average reported to the nominated person¹ within the SGWCPA.

4.4 Industry and stakeholder input

Catch rate occasionally requires interpretation as a measure of fishery performance due to the influences of various external factors that may not necessarily be related to stock abundance. To assist this process, SARDI will provide a Stock Status Advice Note no later than 30 November each year. Industry will be given an opportunity to provide factual and credible evidence to support the impacts of these external factors on catch rate each year, prior to the recommendation of management arrangements for the following fishing season. These comments should be provided from the SGWCPA to PIRSA no later than 31 December each year.

¹ The nominated person would usually be the Executive Officer or an alternative as nominated by SGWCPA

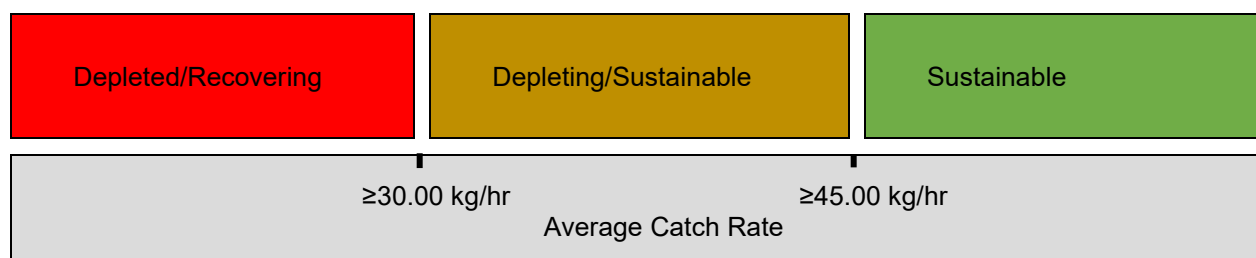
The external factors to be considered by the representative consultative process include, but are not limited to market failures, market influences, environmental influences, such as upwelling events, prevailing currents and other factors impacting on profitability e.g., fluctuations in fuel prices fishing practices and climate change. PIRSA may consider and acknowledge input from industry relating to the Advice Note and subject matter outlined in the harvest strategy in setting management arrangements for a fishing season (usually before 31 January and no later than 28/29 February).

5 Stock status

The stock status classification for the WCPF aims to be consistent with the National Status of Fish Stocks framework (SAFS) (Roelofs et al. 2024). For consistency with SAFS the use of the term “environmentally limited” as a stock status used in the 2019 harvest strategy has been removed from this harvest strategy. However, environmental conditions associated with El Niño are considered to be an influencing factor on prawn abundance in the WCPF and therefore are included in meta-rules for determining the management arrangements (see to Section 6.6).

The following table considers the performance of the fishery with regard to total prawn abundance and SAFS classifications. The classifications provided in Table 3 may be used to determine the status of the fishery in any fishing season, noting that in some years other information may be included in the status classification in a weight of evidence approach such as upwelling events, prevailing currents or changes in fishing practices. Further information on stock status terminology and the classification process can be found at [How are the Status of Australian Fish Stocks Reports done](https://www.fish.gov.au/about/how-are-the-status-of-australian-fish-stock-reports-done) (<https://www.fish.gov.au/about/how-are-the-status-of-australian-fish-stock-reports-done>) (SAFS 2025).

Table 3: Guidance for stock status classification for the West Coast Prawn Fishery.



6 Setting management arrangements

6.1 Fishing season arrangements

SARDI will provide advice on average catch rate (FIS and commercial CPUE up to 30 September), stock status and ENSO data relevant to a fishing season to PIRSA by 30 November. PIRSA then delivers the Advice Note to SGWCPA.

SGWCPA will consider the WCPF performance indicators, the harvest strategy decision rules and industry comments about the fishery from the previous season and make a recommendation to PIRSA on management arrangements for the following fishing season for the WCPF by 31 December. If the recommendation is not consistent with the decision rules in this harvest strategy (Figure 4), information to support the recommendation should also be provided with the recommendation.

PIRSA considers the recommendation of the SGWCPA, WCPF performance indicators, the harvest strategy decision rules, industry comments, SARDI advice and objects of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* to set the management arrangements for the following fishing season. A decision on setting management arrangements for the WCPF will be usually made by 31 January prior to the beginning of the fishing season. PIRSA will inform the SGWCPA and WCPF licence holders of the decision as soon as practicable.

6.2 Within-season fishing strategies

Fishing strategies will be set prior to the commencement of commercial fishing for each fishing run. For months when the new moon falls late in the month preceding, or early in the following month, fishing may commence in that month through to the new moon in the following month. When the fishery is open, spot surveys may be conducted by industry to inform the fishing strategy.

The fishing strategy involves two phases – a ‘development phase’ that sets the initial fishing arrangements, and a ‘management phase’ where at-sea decision rules maintain fishing operations during a fishing run.

6.2.1 Fishery strategy development

The SGWCPA Management Committee will recommend a fishing strategy to PIRSA at least two business days prior to the beginning of a fishing run, including the main fishing region/s (Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Ceduna, or the three outer sub-regions) to be opened to fishing and the maximum number of fishing nights.

A notice describing the fishing strategy will be communicated to all licence holders prior to the commencement of the fishing run, and the notice will be published in the South Australian Government Gazette by the delegate.

6.2.2 Fishing strategy management

Once fishing has commenced during a run, the fishing strategy is maintained by the fishing fleet by monitoring the fleet against the at-sea decision rules appropriate for the fishing strategy.

Management of fishing strategies is informed from ‘average nightly catch rate’ and ‘average nightly bucket counts’ collected during each commercial fishing night. Catch information will be monitored from the best records of catch available in appropriate timeframes, as required by PIRSA. Data may be as reported by skippers or, if available, by electronic reporting from vessels.

If minimum requirements for prawn size (bucket counts) or average nightly catch rate are not met on two consecutive nights in a region (Ceduna, Corvisart Bay, Venus Bay, Coffin Bay, or in an outer sub-region) fishing in that region or sub-region shall cease for the remainder of the fishing run. Fishing vessels can continue fishing in another region or sub-region where the bucket count or average nightly catch rate have not been breached. The at-sea decision rules are outlined in Table 4. The fishing run can cease at any time during the fishing run if requested by the SGWCPA.

Table 4: At-sea decision rules for managing fishing runs. Fleet catch is average nightly catch per vessel per night. Bucket count is number of prawns per 7kg (pp 7 kg).

		Ceduna	Coffin Bay	Venus Bay	Corvisart Bay	Outer sub-regions
March, April, May	Average catch (kg)	>300	>300	>300	>300	> 300
	Bucket count (pp 7 kg)	<270	<240	<250	<250	<260
	Consecutive nights	2	2	2	2	2
	Catch Cap				6 tonnes	
June to October	Average catch (kg)	>300	>300	>300	>300	>300
	Bucket count (pp 7 kg)	<270	<240	<240	<270	<260
	Consecutive nights	2	2	2	2	2
	Catch Cap				6 tonnes	
November & December	Average catch (kg)	>300	>300	No fishing	>300	>300
	Bucket count (pp7 kg)	<270	<240		<270	<260
	Consecutive nights	2	2		2	2

A catch cap for Corvisart Bay has been set for fishing between March and October as described in Table 4. The fishery will monitor the average allowable catch data from total catch reported to a nominated person at PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture² the morning after fishing is completed. Once the fleet total catch reaches 6 tonnes in a relevant period, the fleet must cease fishing in Corvisart Bay for the remainder of the relevant fishing period (March to May, or June to October). If the reported cumulative average catch is within 50 kg of the 6 tonnes catch cap fishing will not be permitted for another night (due to the cap being expected to be reached during the next night's fishing).

When fishing in the three outer sub-regions, decision rules include an average nightly catch of 300 kg and bucket count of 260 pp 7 kg (Table 4). These decision rules values were developed based on the at-sea decision rules prescribed for the four main fishing regions, however, following monitoring these may need to be reviewed when information becomes available on appropriate decision rules for this newly identified fishing region.

Any changes to the fishing strategy that are required to meet at-sea decision rules will be communicated to all licence holders and skippers, the SGWCPA and PIRSA by the nominated person.

6.3 Sustainable (PI at or above trigger reference point)

If the average catch rate is at or above the trigger reference point described at Section 3.1 the following decision rules will apply for setting management arrangements for the following fishing season and will be described as a **sustainable fishing strategy**.

Decision Rules:

Sustainable fishing strategies will be developed consistent with the decision rules described in Table 5.

Fishing during fishing runs will be maintained consistent with the at-sea decision rules described in Table 4.

² The nominated person would usually be the Prawn Fishery Manager or alternative as nominated by PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture

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Fishing in Covisart Bay between March and October is prohibited in an area east of a line described by the following coordinates defined as degrees decimal minutes and are based on the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84):

1. 32°45.254'S 134°05.781'E
2. 32°47.018'S 134°02.088'E
3. 32°54.344'S 134°3.613'E.

*Table 5: Decision rules for developing a **sustainable fishing strategy**. Caps on the maximum fishing nights are the maximum number of fishing nights undertaken by the fleet where one or more fishing vessels fish on any night during a fishing run.*

Month	Maximum fishing nights		Fishing regions
January	No Fishing		
February	No Fishing		
March	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
April	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
May	14 nights (fishing does not usually occur)		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
June	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
July	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
August	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
September	14 nights		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
October	14 nights (fishing does not usually occur)		Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
November	7	Or 14 combined nights in November or December	Ceduna, Coffin Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions.
December	7		
Season nights	98 nights		

Meta Rules:

In years where environmental conditions have substantially reduced the number of fishing nights (i.e., less than average) in the usual fishing months (March, April, June, July, August and September), AND an El Niño event has not been identified as described in Section 3.2, May and/or October may be fished up to 14 nights maximum in each of those months providing that the total number of fishing nights fished for the fishing season does not exceed 98 fishing nights in total.

In years when the maximum number of fishing nights in the months of March and April are not fished, a maximum of two fishing nights from each of these months may be transferred to be used in months later in the year, with the exception of November and December, providing that the total number of fishing nights for the fishing season does not exceed 98 fishing nights in total.

6.4 Transitional (PI between limit and trigger reference points)

If the average catch rate is at or above the limit reference point and below the trigger reference point as described in Section 3.1 the following decision rules will apply for setting management arrangements for the following fishing season described as a **transitional fishing strategy**. This strategy was referred to as 'depleting' in the 2022 HS, however it did not consider the trajectory of the PIs from the previous years assessment as outlined in the updated definitions in SAFS (2025).

Transitional fishing strategies reduce the total fishing nights allowed for the season and restrict fishing in the Ceduna region and fishing in October.

If a transitional fishing strategy is required, the following decision rules will apply for setting management arrangements for the following fishing season.

Decision Rules:

For a transitional fishing strategy the maximum number of fishing nights for the fishing season is set out in Table 6.

Fishing strategies during the fishing season will be developed consistent with the rules set out in Table 7.

Fishing during fishing runs will be maintained consistent with the at-sea decision rules set out in Table 4.

Fishing in Covisart Bay between March and October is prohibited in an area east of a line described by the following coordinates defined as degrees decimal minutes and are based on the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84):

1. 32°45.254'S 134°05.781'E
2. 32°47.018'S 134°02.088'E
3. 32°54.344'S 134°3.613'E.

Table 6: Decision rules for setting total fishing nights for a **transitional fishing strategy**. Caps on the maximum season fishing nights are the maximum number of fishing nights for the fleet where one or more fishing vessels fish on any night during a fishing run

Catch Rate	Maximum season fishing nights
$\geq 30.00 < 38.00$ kg/hr	50 nights
≥ 38.00 kg/hr	75 nights

Table 7: Decision rules for a **transitional fishing strategy**. Caps on the maximum fishing nights are the maximum number of fishing nights for the fleet where one or more fishing vessels fish on any night during a fishing run.

Month	Maximum fishing nights		Fishing regions
January	No Fishing		
February	No Fishing		
March	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
April	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
May	14 (Fishing does not usually occur in May)		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
June	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
July	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
August	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-region
September	14		Coffin Bay, Venus Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
October	No Fishing		
November	7	Or 14 combined nights in November or December	Coffin Bay, Corvisart Bay, Outer sub-regions
December	7		
Season nights	50 or 75 nights (see Table 4)		

Meta Rule:

In years when the maximum number of fishing nights in the months of March and April are not fished, a maximum of two fishing nights from each of these months may be transferred to be used in months later in the year, with the exception of November and December providing that the total number of fishing nights for the fishing season does not exceed the number of fishing nights set for the fishery for that season (50 or 75 nights).

In a season when the fishery is managed via transitional fishing strategy and season fishing nights are limited to a maximum of 50 nights, the fishery may operate for a maximum of 75 nights where combined average CPUE from combinations of FIS as described in Table 8, are met.

Table 8: Decision rules for transitioning a **transitional fishing strategy** from 50 nights to 75 nights.

Combined Surveys	Number Surveys	Required average VBCPUE kg/hr (lb/min) ³	
March, June and November	3	18 kg/hr ≥ 35 kg/hr (0.66 lb/min ≥ 1.28 lb/min)	≥ 35 kg/hr (≥ 1.28 lb/min)
March and June	2	15 kg/hr ≥ 30 kg/hr (< 0.55 lb/min ≥ 1.10 lb/min)	≥ 30 kg/hr (≥ 1.10 lb/min)
November and March	2	20 kg/hr ≥ 40 kg/hr (0.73 lb/min ≥ 1.46 lb/min)	≥ 40 kg/hr (≥ 1.46 lb/min)
November and June	2	20 kg/hr ≥ 40 kg/hr (0.73 lb/min ≥ 1.46 lb/min)	≥ 40 kg/hr (≥ 1.46 lb/min)
Season total		50 nights maximum	75 nights maximum

³ Values were determined during the WCPF HS 2019 review using VBCPUE data from 1987-2016.

6.5 Depleted (PI below the limit reference point)

If average catch rate is below the limit reference point described at Section 3.1 appropriate management arrangements to recover stocks are required and described as a **depleted fishing strategy**.

Decision Rules:

The fishery will be closed until information becomes available from FIS that indicates stocks in particular areas are sufficient to support fishing.

Reopening of the fishery will be guided by the rules set out in Section 6.7.

6.6 Environmental limited management strategy

During periods when an El Niño event is considered to be in place and the performance indicator is below the Trigger Reference Point prawn abundance and/or distribution may be considered to be 'environmentally limited' as it can be affected by the El Niño event. While it is noted that prawn stocks may be affected by the environmental conditions rather than fishing impacts it is considered precautionary to ensure management arrangements are appropriate for the stock abundance during these periods.

In the event that the performance indicator is below the trigger reference point and an El Niño event is identified (as outlined in Section 3.2) the following decision rules will apply.

Decision Rules:

If an El Niño event is identified in the first year after the fishery the performance indicator is below the trigger reference point as described in Section 3.1, the maximum number of fishing nights for the fishing season will be the same as for the previous fishing season, with the exceptions that no fishing will occur in the Ceduna region and no fishing will occur in October in any region of the fishery.

If the performance indicator is below the trigger reference point and an El Niño event is identified as described in Section 3.2 for two or more consecutive years the following decision rules will apply:

- If the catch rate is ≥ 30.00 kg/hr but < 45.00 kg/hr the management arrangements described in Section 6.4 will be implemented
- If the catch rate is < 30.00 kg/hr the management arrangements described in Section 6.5 will be implemented and the fishery will be closed.

6.7 Reopening the fishery

The fishery could be reopened based on the results from FIS conducted in Venus Bay in March, June and/or November in the following manner⁴.

Decision Rules

Following a closure, the fishery may be reopened if:

- March FIS catch rate in Venus Bay ≥ 30.00 kg/hr (1.10 lb/min) - the fishery may be opened in March and/or April.
- June FIS catch rate in Venus Bay ≥ 30.00 kg/hr (1.10 lb/min) - the fishery may be opened in June, July, August, and/or September.
- October/November survey in Venus Bay ≥ 50.00 kg/hr (1.83 lb/min) - the fishery may be opened in November and/or December.

Fishing will be restricted to a maximum of 7 nights in any month in March, April, June, July, August or September if the above catch rates are met.

However, if March and June FIS CPUE are both ≥ 30.00 kg/hr (the trigger limit), then a maximum of 10 nights in June, July, August or September will be allowed.

Fishing in November and December will be restricted to a total of 7 nights for the two months combined and will only be allowed in Coffin Bay or Corvisart Bay.

No commercial fishing shall occur in Ceduna in any month, and no fishing will occur in May or October.

Conducting FIS in years when the fishery is closed would require an industry independent observer on board and analyses of the survey data by SARDI with the costs to be covered by the industry.

6.8 Management arrangements based on FIS CPUE only

In years of limited amounts of commercial fishing (less than three months of fishing between March and September), management arrangements for the following year may be determined with a reduced data set based on FIS catch rates (VBCPUE) from Venus Bay only (Table 9).

Decision Rules:

A minimum of two FIS from Venus Bay are required to set management arrangements for the following year.

The total number of fishing nights for a fishery based on FIS VBCPUE from Venus Bay will be set consistent with Table 9.

⁴ Values were determined during the WCPF HS 2019 review using VBCPUE data from 1987-2016.

Table 9: Decision rules for setting a number of fishing nights based on data from Venus Bay FIS only.

Available Surveys	Number Surveys	Required average VBCPUE kg/hr (lb/min) ⁵		
March, June and November	3	<18 kg/hr (<0.66 lb/min)	18 kg/hr ≥ 35 kg/hr (0.66 lb/min ≥ 1.28 lb/min)	≥ 35 kg/hr (≥ 1.28 lb/min)
March and June	2	<15 kg/hr (<0.55 lb/min)	15 kg/hr ≥ 30 kg/hr (<0.55 lb/min ≥ 1.10 lb/min)	≥ 30 kg/hr (≥ 1.10 lb/min)
November and March	2	<20 kg/hr (<0.73 lb/min)	20 kg/hr ≥ 40 kg/hr (0.73 lb/min ≥ 1.4 lb/min)	≥ 40 kg/hr (≥ 1.46 lb/min)
November and June	2	<20 kg/hr (<0.73 lb/min)	20 kg/hr ≥ 40 kg/hr (0.73 lb/min ≥ 1.46 lb/min)	≥ 40 kg/hr (≥ 1.46 lb/min)
Fishing Arrangements				
Number fishing nights		Fishery closed	50 nights restricted fishing	75 nights restricted fishing
No survey		Fishery will remain closed		

7 Review of the harvest strategy

This harvest strategy is to be implemented for a period of ten years, unless replaced within a formal management plan. A review of this harvest strategy will be conducted at the fifth anniversary of its adoption if a review has not been completed before this time. A review of this harvest strategy may be undertaken at any time if new documented and verifiable information becomes available.

8 Definitions

Fishing night: a night of commercial fishing when one or more fishing vessels conducts fishing activity.

Fishing strategy: the rules that guide fishing operations during a fishing run including the maximum number of nights, bucket counts, and average vessel catch rates.

Fishing run: a period of fishing activity between quarters of the lunar cycle that includes a new moon which is Gazetted for the fishery. Fishing may start two nights before the last quarter of the moon and finish two nights after the first quarter of the moon. The number of nights included in a fishing run may be greater than 14 nights and up to 22 nights where completion of prior to unload reporting (all species) is not less than 4-hours in advance of the time of unload. However, the maximum number of fishing nights that may be fished during a fishing run must not exceed the maximum number defined in relevant decision rules included in this harvest strategy (7-14 nights).

Bucket count: measure of prawn size derived from the number of prawns in a 7 kg sample (pp 7 kg) reported during at-sea monitoring of each commercial fishing night. The bucket count will be the average of three separate bucket counts per vessel per night.

El Niño event: An El Niño event for a fishing season will be considered to be in place when five or more consecutive months are declared as El Niño by NOAA in the previous 24 months ending 30 September of the fishing season being assessed.

⁵ The catch rate information in Table 9 was calculated during the WCPF HS 2019 review using VBCPUE data from 1987-2016.

Fishery-independent survey (FIS): a fishery-independent survey undertaken in March and June each fishing year to monitor stock performance. An additional FIS may be conducted in November (if required), at cost to industry.

Fishery-dependent survey (FDS) / spot survey: a spot survey is a fishery-dependent survey conducted by and at cost to industry without an independent observer on board. Spot surveys can occur prior to fishing in a fishing region or sub-region to support development of a fishing strategy for that fishing run. A spot survey in a region or sub-region involves at least one boat, one night, a maximum of six shots per night, each up to an hour duration. Shots are not at fixed locations but should be undertaken at various locations within the region or sub-region being surveyed. Catch rates from spot surveys will not be included in the calculation of commercial CPUE or in the stock assessment. Fishing during a spot survey is considered to be a commercial fishing night for reporting purposes, and a fishing night will be deducted from the total fishing night allocated for the month and the season, for each night a spot survey is undertaken by the fishery.

Ceduna fishing region: the area adjoining Corvisart Bay fishing region north of 32°43.799'S (Figure 3), defined by fishing blocks 301-357 (Figure 1).

Corvisart Bay fishing region: the area adjoining Ceduna fishing region south of 32°43.799'S (Figure 1), defined as fishing blocks 358–378 (Figure 3), excluding an area east of a line defined by the following coordinates defined as degrees decimal minutes and are based on the (GDA2020) 1) 32°45.254'S 134°5.781'E , 2) 32°47.018'S 134°2.088'E, 3) 32°54.344'S 134°3.613'E.

Venus Bay fishing region: the area defined by fishing blocks 101-117 within Venus Bay (Figure 3).

Coffin Bay fishing region: the area defined by fishing blocks 201-212 within Coffin Bay (Figure 3).

Outer fishing region: The area within the West Coast Waters as defined in the Fisheries Management (Prawn) Regulations 2017 but excluding the fishing regions of Ceduna Bay, Corvisart Bay, Venus Bay and Coffin Bay. The outer fishing region is divided into three sub-regions (Figure 1) described as:

Outer Ceduna fishing region: The area defined by fishing block 401, in the waters:

- east of longitude 131°E and
- north of latitude 33° 09.436'S (Point Labatt-33° 09.436'S 134° 16.030'E);
- excluding Ceduna and Corvisart Bay fishing regions

Outer Venus fishing region: The area defined by fishing block 402, in the waters:

- east of longitude 131°E and;
- south of latitude 33° 09.436'S (Point Labatt-33° 09.436'S 134° 16.030'E) and;
- north of the meridian at latitude 34° 01.743'S (Kiana Beach-34° 01.743'S 135° 15.999'E);
- excluding the Venus Bay fishing region

Outer Coffin fishing region: The area defined by fishing block 403 in the waters:

- east of the meridian at longitude 131°E; and
- south latitude 34° 01.743'S (Kiana Beach-34° 01.743'S 135° 15.999'E); and
- north of latitude 36° 00.334'S; and
- west of longitude 137°E; and
- excluding the Coffin Bay fishing region

Sunrise and sunset: will be calculated for each fishing run using the Geodetic calculator set for Adelaide and is accessible via <https://geodesyapps.qa.gov.au/sunrise>.

West Coast Waters: West Coast waters means the waters adjacent to South Australia contained within the meridians of longitude 131° E and 137° E, but does not include the waters of Spencer Gulf north of the geodesic from the location on Mean High Water Springs closest to 34° 59.118' S, 136° 00.185' E (Cape Catastrophe, Eyre Peninsula) to the location on Mean High Water Springs closest to 35° 17.993' S, 136° 52.836' E (Cape Spencer, Yorke Peninsula).

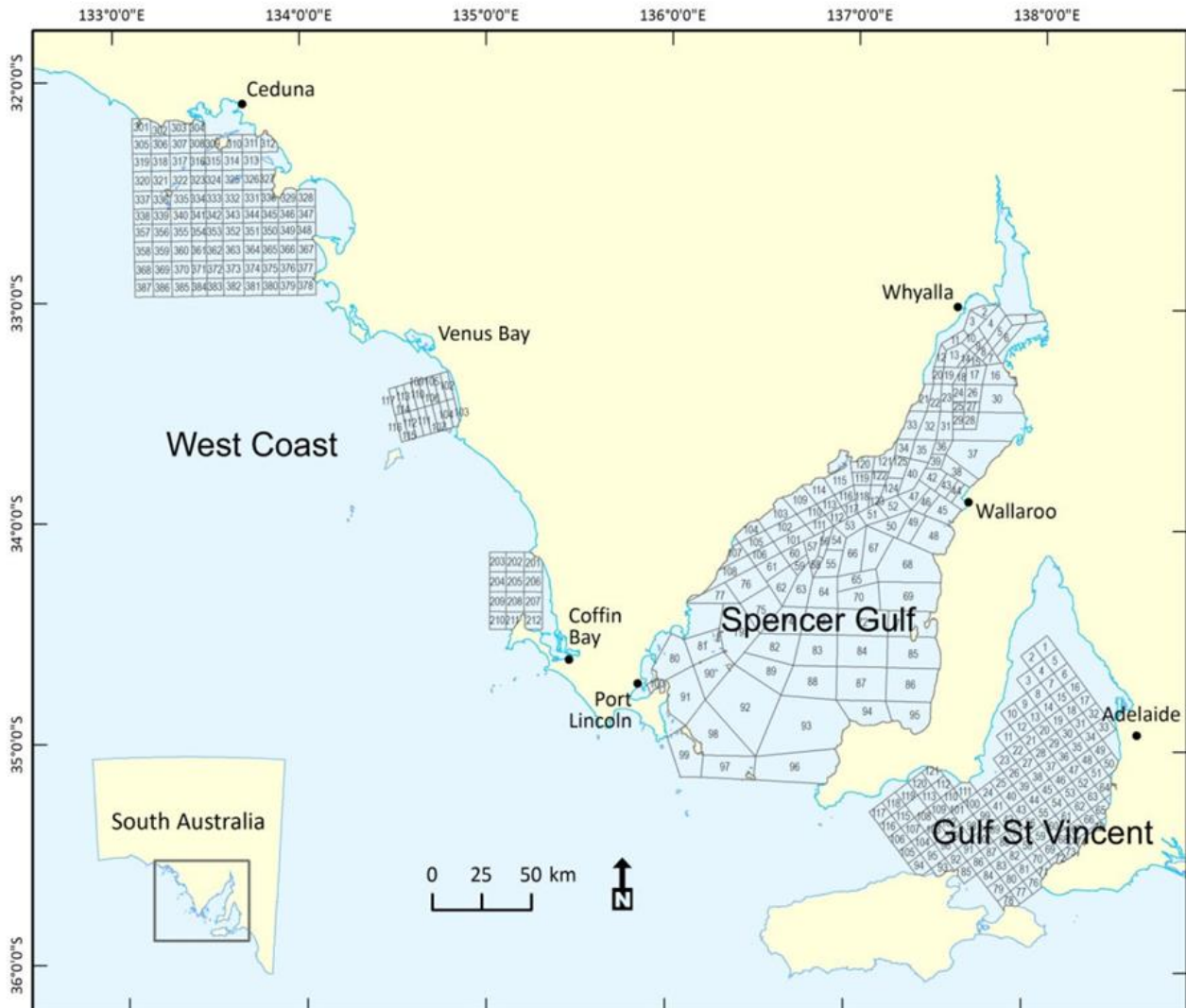


Figure 3: Map of the fishing regions in the West Coast Prawn Fishery, South Australia.



Figure 4: Harvest Strategy process for setting seasonal nights in the West Coast Prawn Fishery.

9 Appendices

Justification of harvest strategy performance indicators and decision rules

9.1 ENSO

ENSO is the oscillation between El Niño and La Niña conditions. El Niño and La Niña are the warm and cool phases of a natural climate pattern across the tropical Pacific known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, or “ENSO” for short. ENSO describes the natural year-to-year variations in the ocean and atmosphere in the tropical Pacific, such as sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific cycle.

The status of the ENSO Outlook is determined using set criteria and expert analysis by climatologists at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The status relates to ENSO as it transitions between phases of El Niño, Neutral and La Niña.

NOAA uses three main criteria to define an El Niño event:

1. when the El Niño area has average sea-surface temperatures at least 0.5° C warmer than average in the preceding month;
2. the anomaly persists or is expected to persist for several overlapping 3-month periods (e.g. Dec/Jan/Feb, Jan/Feb/Mar); and
3. the atmosphere over the tropical Pacific exhibits one or more of the changes commonly associated with El Niño:
 - weaker than usual easterly trade winds,
 - reduced cloudiness and rainfall over Indonesia, corresponding with an increase in the average surface pressure,
 - Increased cloudiness and rainfall in central/eastern part of the basin with a corresponding drop in the average surface pressure.

NOAA classifies ENSO using five categories:

1. La Niña Advisory (LN)
2. La Niña Watch (LNW)
3. Not Active (NA)
4. El Niño Watch (ENW) and
5. El Niño Advisory (EN).

There are a few caveats when applying the NOAA classification system to the ENSO Outlook Status:

1. When the status is given as a final advisory, the given status is used (e.g. El Niño final advisory = El Niño status). This is because even though NOAA defines a final advisory as being ‘issued after El Niño or La Nina conditions have ended’ and an alternative status is not given.
2. In some years, two statuses are given (e.g. La Nina Watch and El Niño Advisory). In these cases, the preceding months’ status is used until a single status, or the final advisory is given. For example, in 2024, January status is EN, and from February to June the status is LNW/EN with a final advisory in June. In this case, February to May, is given EN status and June is given LNW status.

For the context of this harvest strategy, an El Niño event for a fishing season will be considered to be in place when five or more consecutive months are declared as El Niño by NOAA in the previous 24

months ending with the ENSO indicator for the 3-month period August/September/October (ASO) of the fishing season being assessed (the assessment period). For example, in assessing the 2024 fishing season the ENSO assessment period would have been from September/October/November (SON) 2022 to ASO 2024. During this period there were 12 consecutive months of El Niño classification, and it was considered that an El Niño event had occurred (Figure 5).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009		LN	LN	LN	LN	ENW	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN
2010	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	LNW	LNW	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN
2011	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	IN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN
2012	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	IN	IN
2013	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN
2014	IN	IN	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	ENW	
2015	ENW	ENW	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN
2016	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	LNW		LNW	IN	LNW	LN	LN
2017	LN	LN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	LNW	LNW	LN	LN
2018	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	ENW	ENW	ENW		ENW	ENW	ENW
2019	ENW	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	IN	IN	IN	IN
2020	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	IN	LNW	LNW	LN	LN	LN	LN
2021	LN	LN		LN	LN	IN	LNW	LNW	LNW	LN	LN	LN
2022	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN	LN
2023	LN	LN	LN	ENW	ENW	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN
2024	EN	EN	EN	EN	EN	LNW	LNW	LNW	LNW	LNW	LNW	LNW
	LN	LN	LN	LN	IN							

	El Nino
	El Nino Watch
	Inactive
	La Nina Watch
	La Nina

Figure 5: ENSO outlook summary from SARDI based on the alert system status from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Centre from 2009 to 2024. Years that an El Niño event would be considered to be in place are bordered in red/blue.

9.2 Catch Rate

As commercial CPUE may be influenced by factors not related to abundance, the inclusion of survey CPUE provides additional confidence given the standardised protocols which have been applied. Venus Bay is the primary region surveyed, as it has been surveyed most consistently and is considered the most productive region in the fishery. The trends in commercial and average FIS CPUE from Venus Bay are similar for the period 1987 to 2025 (Figure 6) and these indicators are considered to reflect prawn abundance in the WCPF. It was considered favourable to use both commercial catch rate and the FIS catch rate from Venus Bay averaged over March and June surveys with equal weighting in the harvest strategy. Between 2015-2025, a divergence between commercial CPUE and FIS CPUE is evident, however, both continue to follow similar trends. Therefore, equal weighting is still deemed appropriate for applying this harvest strategy. The relationship between commercial CPUE and FIS CPE will continue to be monitored.

In considering the availability of commercial CPUE and FIS CPUE data for informing the average catch rate and determination of fishing management arrangements for the following year (beginning on 1 March), it was considered necessary to restrict the months of commercial and FIS CPUE to March to September inclusive and February/March and June/July FIS, respectively.

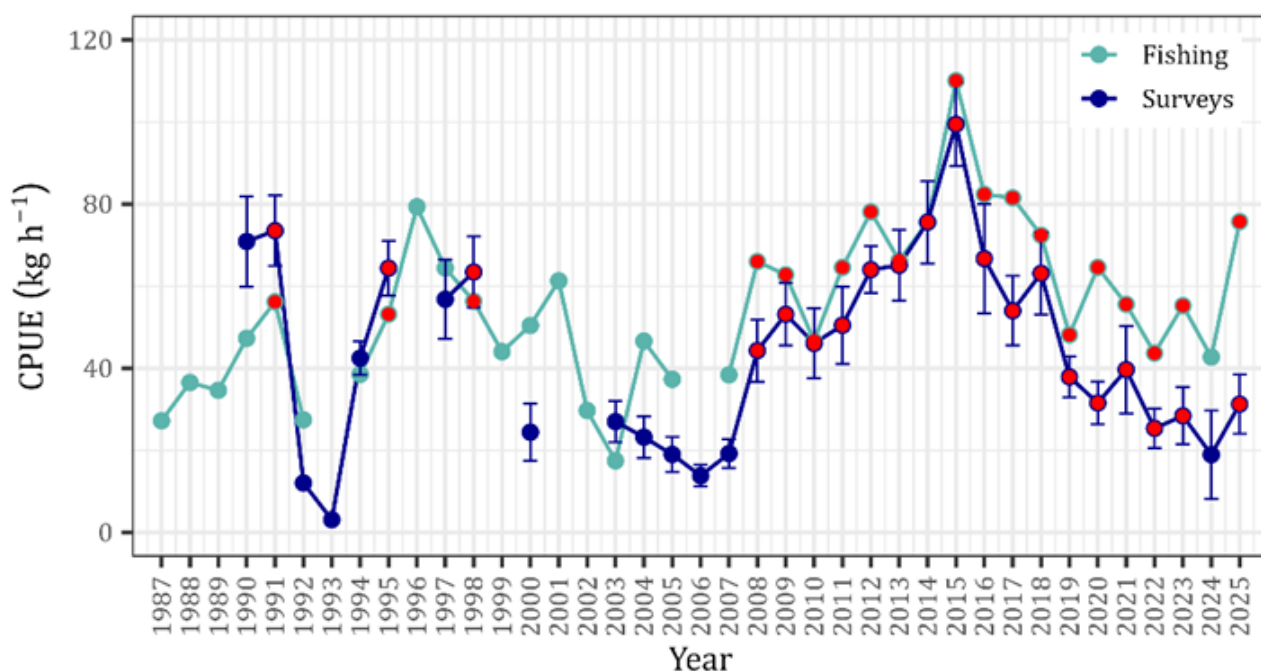


Figure 6: Average fishery-independent survey VBCPUE (blue, March and June) and commercial fishing CPUE (green, March-September). Highlighted in red are the years utilised for the re-calculated reference points (> 3 months of fishing and FIS in both March and June). Error bars: Standard Error.

Standardisation of catch rates in application to the performance indicator for the WCPF was investigated by Alexander Morison in 2023 in a review of the harvest strategy which noted there may be merit in considering statistical standardisation be used in the harvest strategy. However, this report also noted the small scale of the fishery may not warrant the expenditure on very sophisticated monitoring and assessment models required. This information was considered in this 2025 review of the WCPF harvest strategy and based on the expense of this method, catch rate standardisation was not considered to be warranted at this time.

9.3 Reference points

The reference points for the 2026 WCPF HS were developed following consultation with industry members of the WCPF and recalculation of average CPUE for years 1987 to 2025 where commercial CPUE ≥ 43 kg/hr. During the development of the 2026 harvest strategy, industry raised concerns that the previous threshold average CPUE used to calculate the reference points in the 2019 harvest strategy were not reflective of the current fishery's target and identified commercial CPUE of 43 kg/hr or higher was an economically viable target (compared to 59 kg/hr for the 2022 WCPF HS). This threshold commercial CPUE was used to recalculate reference points included in this harvest strategy.

The calculation of these reference points also used the criteria for inclusion of at least 3 months of commercial CPUE and both FIS surveys completed for March and June in Venus Bay (Table 10). The target reference point was set at the calculated mean catch rate from years meeting the criteria (60 kg/hr). The trigger reference point (45 kg/hr) has been set at 75% and the limit reference point (30 kg/hr) set at 50% of the target reference point, consistent with the process used in the 2019 harvest strategy.

The reference points included in the 2019 harvest strategy were set using similar methodology but used average CPUE (commercial and FIS between 1990 and 2016) > 59 kg/hr, being a level to which the WCPF was aiming to perform at the time when catches were higher. A comparison of the outcomes of application of the 2019 harvest strategy and the 2026 harvest strategy are depicted in Figure 7.

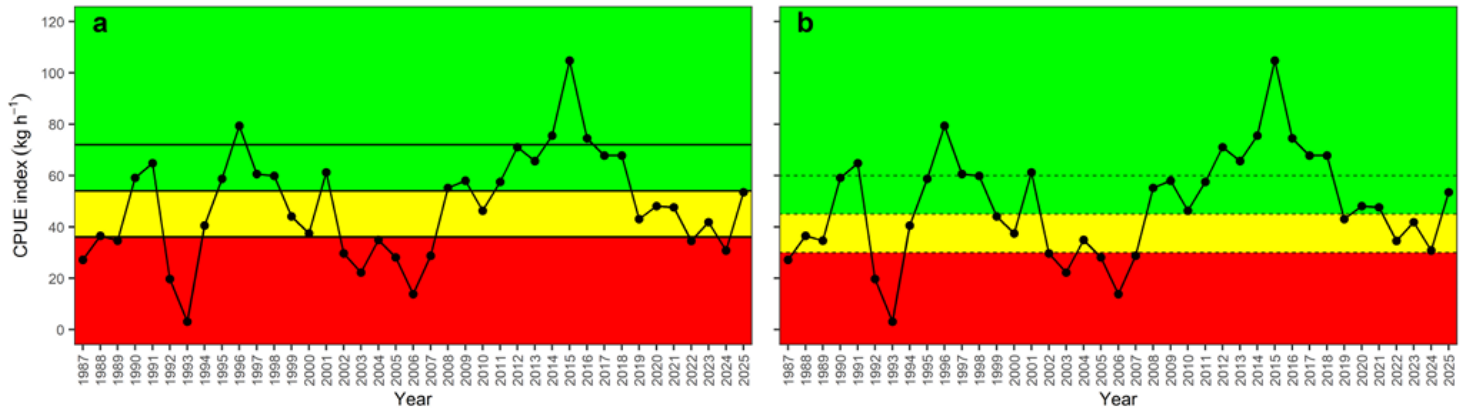


Figure 7: Comparison of average catch rate and reference points (RPs) for the WCPF for a) the 2019 and 2022 harvest strategies (PIRSA 2022) and b) re-calculated for the 2026 harvest strategy. Solid and dashed lines delimit the Target (upper line), Trigger (middle line) and Limit (lower line) for previous and re-calculated RPs, respectively.

9.4 Trigger points for depleting fishing strategies.

The decision rules for setting the maximum available nights (50 or 75 nights) for the fishing season under a depleting fishing strategy were first described using reference points calculated for the 2019 harvest strategy. These decision rules have been translated to the updated reference points in this harvest strategy calculated at 50% between the Limit reference point (30 kg/hr) and the Trigger reference point (45 kg/hr) (Table 10) which equates to 38 kg/hr when rounded using conventional rounding rules. This reference point is included in the decision rules set out at Table 4.

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Table 10: Average catch rate from 1987 to 2016 (2019&2022 HS) and 1987 to 2025 (2026 HS). CPUE = catch per unit effort. NA = not available. * Average catch rate used to calculate the Target Reference Point (TRP) when commercial CPUE > 59 kg/hr. ** Average catch rate used to re-calculate the TRP when commercial CPUE > 43 kg/hr. () = Incorrect average catch rate values in 2019. Data checked and amended values are provided as average catch rates for 2025. Excludes years that did not meet the current criteria for PIs for commercial fishing (at least 3-months March to September) and Venus Bay CPUE (Feb/Mar & Jun/Jul).

Year	Commercial CPUE (kg/hr) (Mar-Sept)	Months fished (Mar-Sep)	Venus Bay CPUE (kg/hr) (Feb/Mar and Jun/Jul)	Average catch rate (kg/hr) 2019	Average catch rate (kg/hr) 2025
1987	27.19	2	NA	27.19	27.19
1988	36.50	5	NA	36.50	36.50
1989	34.61	6	NA	34.61	34.61
1990	47.28	7	70.90 (Feb only)	59.09	59.09
1991	56.19	6	73.51	64.85	64.85**
1992	27.41	2	12.01	19.71	19.71
1993	NA	0	3.06	3.08	3.08
1994	38.51	6	42.46 (June only)	40.49	40.49
1995	53.15	6	64.40	58.78	58.78**
1996	79.35	6	NA	79.35*	79.35
1997	64.43	7	56.81 (Feb only)	60.62*	60.62
1998	56.32	6	(44.3) 63.45	(50.31)	59.89**
1999	44.03	5	NA	44.03	44.03
2000	50.42	7	24.4 (Feb only)	37.41	37.41
2001	61.30	6	NA	61.30*	61.30
2002	29.69	3	NA	29.69	29.69
2003	17.43	2	26.97 (July only)	22.20	22.20
2004	46.60	1	23.18 (June only)	34.89	34.89
2005	37.30	4	18.98	28.14	28.14
2006	NA	0	(9.45) 13.79	(9.45)	13.79
2007	38.38	1	(20.43) 19.20	(29.40)	28.79
2008	65.99	6	44.30	55.15	55.15**
2009	62.78	7	53.14	57.96	57.96**
2010	46.61	6	46.05	46.33	46.33**
2011	64.57	7	50.47	57.52	57.52**
2012	78.11	6	64.01	71.06*	71.06
2013	66.24	6	65.08	65.66*	65.66**
2014	75.60	7	75.61	75.61*	75.61**
2015	110.09	6	99.47	104.78*	104.78**
2016	82.40	7	(75.35) 66.71	(78.88*)	74.55**
2017	81.53	7	54.01	67.77*	67.77**
2018	72.40	6	63.12	67.76*	67.76**
2019	48.13	7	37.88	43.01	43.01**
2020	64.57	5	31.53	48.05	48.05**
2021	55.69	6	(41.69) 39.66	(48.69)	47.62**
2022	43.67	7	25.34	34.50	34.50**
2023	55.24	3	28.39	41.82	41.82**
2024	42.71	3	18.92	30.81	30.81
2025	75.73	5	31.07	53.49	53.49
			Average catch rate	(71.39) 73.27	59.81
			TARGET	72.00	60.00
			TRIGGER (75%)	54.00	45.00
			LIMIT (50%)	36.00	30.00

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