

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL GULF ST VINCENT PRAWN FISHERY

SUMMARY REPORT

1 PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The commercial South Australian Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery (the Fishery) is managed under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* (the 'Act'), the *Fisheries Management (Prawn Fisheries) Regulations 2006* and *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2007*. The Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery Management Plan Steering Committee, in conjunction with Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) and the Saint Vincent Gulf Prawn Boat Owner's Association have prepared a draft management plan for the Fishery in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The management plan will have a life span of five years and will provide a framework for the management of the Fishery.

In summary, the general purpose of the management plan is to:

- describe the biological, environmental and social characteristics;
- identify and assess ecological impacts;
- identify the objectives, goals and strategies;
- specify the share of the fishery to be allocated to each fishing sector;
- detail the harvest strategy for Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery;
- detail the requirements for the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery to move to a quota management system;
- detail research and stock assessment requirements;
- detail compliance and monitoring requirements; and
- detail the regulatory arrangements.

The management goals for the fishery as set out in the management plan are:

1. Maintain ecologically sustainable prawn biomass
2. Enable optimum utilisation and equitable distribution
3. Protect and conserve aquatic resources, habitats and ecosystems
4. Enable cost effective and participative management of the fishery

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FISHERY

The South Australian Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery is a single species prawn fishery, based on the capture of the Western King Prawn (*Melicertus latisulcatus*). In addition to prawns, commercial licence holders are permitted to retain and sell two species harvested incidentally during prawn trawling: Bugs (*Ibacus* spp) and Southern Calamari (*Sepioteuthis australis*) as by-product.

Three commercial prawn fisheries occur within South Australia: the Spencer Gulf Prawn Fishery, the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery and the West Coast Prawn Fishery.

The Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery is important in terms of total value and benefit to regional economies in South Australia. The fishery generates direct and indirect employment, contributes to regional development, and supports small businesses in direct fishing enterprises as well as various support industries. In 2011/12 the total employment impact of the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery

was estimated to be 73 full time equivalent jobs and the fishery contributed \$4.7 million to gross state product in South Australia.

In 2014, PIRSA in collaboration with licence holders developed a management framework for the GSVPF that described a process for implementing an individual transferable effort system, to be transitioned to an individually transferable quota system; a licence amalgamation scheme to facilitate rationalisation and restructure of the fleet through allowing more efficient fishing gear. The framework was consistent with an independent review of the fisheries management arrangements conducted in 2013 by Morgan and Cartwright. The draft management plan has been developed to be consistent with the outcomes of the Morgan and Cartwright review (2013) and the management framework developed in 2014.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Fishery to which this plan applies

This plan applies to the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery, which is formally constituted by the *Fisheries Management (Prawn Fisheries) Regulations 2006*.

The regulations define the fishery as:

- (a) the taking of prawns in Gulf St Vincent; and
- (b) the taking of aquatic resources specified in Schedule 1 Part 1 in Gulf St Vincent where the aquatic resources are taken at the same time in the same net incidentally to the taking of prawns.

The aquatic resources specified in Schedule 1 Part 1 of the regulations are:

- Balmain Bug (*Ibacus spp*)
- Southern Calamari (*Sepioteuthis australis*)

The area of Gulf St Vincent is defined in the regulations.

3.2 Management Arrangements

The commercial fishery is currently managed using an Individual Transferable Effort management system (currently allocated fishing nights) with a mix of input controls aimed at matching harvesting capacity with resource availability and promoting stock recovery. The management plan provides the capacity to move the fishery to a quota management system should pre-conditions be met. No fishing is permitted in waters that are shallower than 10m in the GSV and trawling is banned during daylight hours.

All licence holders are permitted to use single or double rigged gear with a maximum headline length of 27.43 m or 29.26 m¹, or, for an amalgamated licence, triple rigged gear with a maximum headline length of 43.89 m if approved by the Minister.

¹ The maximum headline length when using double rig gear depends on the size of the vessel described in *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2007*.

Table 1: Management arrangements for the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery

Management tool	Current restriction
Permitted species	<i>Melicertus latisulcatus</i> , <i>Ibacus</i> spp., <i>Sepioteuthis australis</i>
Limited entry	10 licences
Licence transferability	Permitted
Corporate ownership	Permitted
Spatial and temporal closures	Yes
Method of capture	Demersal otter trawl
Trawl rig	Single, double or triple rig
Trawling times	Not during daylight hours
Maximum combined headline length	27.43/29.26m (non-amalgamated gear), 43.89m (amalgamated gear)
Minimum cod end mesh size	58mm
Maximum vessel length	22m
Maximum vessel power	336kW
Catch and effort data	Daily logbook and Catch Disposal logbook
Landing locations	Landings permitted anywhere in the State
Landing times	Landings permitted at any time during the season

4 ALLOCATION OF ACCESS BETWEEN SECTORS

4.1 Species allocated

The *Fisheries Management Act 2007* provides that a management plan must specify the share of the fishery to be allocated to each fishing sector under regulation (43(2)(h)). The *Fisheries Management Act 2007* also provides that, in determining the share of aquatic resources to be allocated to a particular fishing sector under the first management plan for an existing fishery, the share of aquatic resources to which that fishing sector had access at the time the Minister requested preparation of this plan must be taken into account (Section 43(3)).

The Minister formally requested preparation of this management plan on 17 June 2010. Therefore, this plan must take into account the share of the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery that the commercial fishing sector had access to on that date.

Western King Prawns, as the main target species, has been allocated in the plan. Bugs (Slipper Lobster) and Southern Calamari as by-product species have also been allocated. Prawns and bugs are allocated 100% to the commercial sector, to reflect the existing share of the resource between the two sectors at the time the Minister requested preparation of this management plan. Due to physical and regulatory limitations, access to prawns by recreational fishers is limited. The most recent recreational survey recorded a very minor harvest of prawns, and no identified take of Bugs by the non-commercial fishing sectors (including recreational and Aboriginal Traditional sectors).

The shares allocated to each sector in relation to Southern Calamari at the state-wide level reflect those set out in the Marine Scalefish Fishery management plan.

4.2 Spatial scale of allocation

When determining the shares of aquatic resources to be allocated, it is important to clarify the spatial extent of the fishery to which the allocation applies. Shares for a species may be allocated in a number of ways including fishery boundaries, management regions, biological or stock boundaries or a single allocation across the state.

The spatial scale used to allocate prawns and Bugs in this management plan is the area of the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery, to best reflect management arrangements and stock boundaries.

Allocated shares of Southern Calamari in this plan are consistent with the shares that have been allocated in the Marine Scalefish Fishery management plan at the state-wide level, providing a single allocation for each of the sectors.

4.3 The shares

The shares allocated to each sector in relation to the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Shares of Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery resources allocated to each fishing sector.

Species	GSVPF	Other commercial	Recreational	Aboriginal traditional
Western King Prawns	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bugs	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Southern Calamari	0.45%	61.15%	37.4%	1.0%

4.4 Allocation review and trigger limits

Allocations between sectors may be reviewed in accordance with the Allocation Policy and under the following scenarios.

1. A review of the management plan, which will reassess the appropriateness of shares and may trigger an adjustment; or
2. One or more sectors exceed their allocation of Western King Prawns or Bugs, or in accordance with the allocation triggers for Southern Calamari in the Marine Scalefish Fishery described in the management plan for that fishery: or

3. A major change in the management of a species and/ or a sector that results in a shift of allocations to a sector(s).

The declaration of a marine protected area that would result in reallocation of shares would be given effect through the *Marine Parks Act 2007* and policies applying under that Act. The *Marine Parks Act 2007* requires the Government to pay fair and reasonable compensation to commercial fishers whose statutory rights are affected by marine park zoning.

The process to review allocations under the scenarios described above will be a two-staged approach. The first stage is an initial assessment to determine whether a full assessment is necessary or appropriate. The second stage involves a full assessment, where required.

In the event that an adjustment of shares is required, PIRSA will be responsible for determining the most appropriate adjustment package. If any future adjustment of shares is to be from the commercial sector to the non-commercial sector, a voluntary scheme would always be pursued in the first instance. If a voluntary adjustment scheme is not able to be implemented in the fishery, a second voluntary option/step is required, which would investigate an incentive-based scheme for share adjustment. Compulsory acquisition of commercial access to the fishery would be explored as a last resort.

The management plan also sets out triggers for a review based on changes in sector shares. A comprehensive review of each sector's allocation is not possible in years when recreational catch estimates are not available.

5 HARVEST STRATEGY

This harvest strategy provides a structured framework for informing decision making that specifies pre-determined management actions necessary for the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery to achieve the ecologically sustainable development objectives of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

Consistent with national guidelines (Sloan et al. 2014), the harvest strategy brings together all of the key scientific monitoring, assessment and management elements to form an integrated package used to make decisions about the level of fishing intensity that should be applied to the Western King Prawn stock in Gulf St Vincent.

The aim of the harvest strategy is to rebuild prawn biomass in the short to medium term and maintaining ecologically sustainable prawn biomass thereafter.

Monitoring for the fishery is achieved through a fishery-independent stock assessment survey as well as monitoring of catch and effort from commercial fishing.

The management elements of the harvest strategy that achieve sustainability aims are setting of a total allowable commercial effort (fishing nights) or total allowable commercial catch (tonnes) that may be harvested in each fishing season. The levels of fishing nights or catch are set out in the harvest strategy informed by the commercial catch rate in the preceding season and catch rate from the preceding fishery independent survey. Fishing nights or catch conducted in December and November annually are also restricted to protect spawning prawns informed by levels of recruits recorded from the preceding fishery independent survey.

Fish stock status is classified as Sustainable, Transitional or Overfished using terminology consistent with the 'Status of key Australian fish stocks reports' (Flood et al. 2014).

The harvest strategy in the management plan will be reviewed in two and a half years following implementation of the plan.

6 ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS

A goal of this plan is the management of the fishery as a part of the broader ecosystem, using an ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) approach. The *Fisheries Management Act 2007* specifically requires that the following ecological impacts be identified and assessed, specifically:

- current known impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem;
- potential impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem; and
- ecological factors that could have an impact on the performance of the fishery.

To efficiently meet its ecological impact accountabilities under both State and Commonwealth legislation, PIRSA has adopted the 'National Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Reporting Framework for Fisheries' developed by Fletcher et al. (2002). The initial steps of this analysis included identifying the issues relevant to the fishery and then prioritising these issues. With respect to the identified risks to retained species, the risk assessment used data from a 2007 by-catch survey and, therefore, identifies the risks at that time. It is recognised that the fishery and the Gulf St Vincent environment are dynamic and risks will change over time.

Specific management strategies to mitigate risks to the fishery rated at medium risk or higher in the ESD Risk Assessment report are reported in the management plan. Many of these strategies have already been in place in the fishery over a long period including closed areas, limits on issuing licences and gear restrictions. In addition, the harvest strategy identified in this plan will be important for the sustainable management of the fishery.

Please contact the Executive Officer, Boards and Committees, PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture on (08) 8429 0429 if you require further information.

Sean Sloan

**DIRECTOR
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE POLICY**