



Submission for the reassessment of the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Line Fishery Wildlife Trade Operation approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999*

A report prepared by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

This publication has been compiled by Fisheries Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

© State of Queensland, 2015.

The Queensland Government supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of its information. The copyright in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia (CC BY) licence.

Under this licence you are free, without having to seek our permission, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms.



You must keep intact the copyright notice and attribute the State of Queensland as the source of the publication.

For more information on this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/deed.en>

The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. The Queensland Government shall not be liable for technical or other errors or omissions contained herein. The reader/user accepts all risks and responsibility for losses, damages, costs and other consequences resulting directly or indirectly from using this information.



Fishery Description

The Gulf of Carpentaria Line Fishery (GOCLF) is a multi-species fishery which harvests a range of pelagic (open water) and demersal (bottom-dwelling) fish. Spanish mackerel accounts for the vast majority of the fishery's catch; although other species including trevally and small mackerels can be retained. Smaller quantities of demersal tropical snappers, cods and emperors are also caught using hand lines on coral and rocky reefs in water depths of 1–30 m. Catch quantities for species other than Spanish mackerel though are comparatively small.

The fishery operates under an L4 fishery symbol, with fishing grounds including all tidal waters in the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria from Slade Point near the tip of Cape York Peninsula to the Queensland–Northern Territory border

Management

The Queensland Fisheries Joint Authority (QFJA), through the *Fisheries Act 1994* and *Fisheries Regulation 2008*, manages all targeted fishing for northern demersal and pelagic fin fish in waters adjacent to Queensland in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Management changes over the previous WTO period

There were no significant changes to the GOCLF management arrangements.

Catch data

Annual commercial catch statistics for this fishery are contained in the Queensland Fisheries Summary report. This report has been made publicly available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/monitoring-our-fisheries/data-reports/sustainability-reporting/queensland-fisheries-summary/gulf-of-carpentaria-line-fishery>

Status of target stocks

Spanish mackerel

Spanish Mackerel in the Gulf of Carpentaria were last assessed in 2014 as part of the *National Status of Australian Fish Stocks (SAFS)* process. This process classified fishing of the Gulf of Carpentaria stock as **sustainable**. This species will be re-assessed as part of the 2016 SAFS.

Impacts on the fishery on the ecosystem

The last ecological risk assessment for this fishery was conducted in 2004 (<http://secure.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/finfish-trawl/pubs/finfish-trawl-submission.pdf>).

Main features of the fishery in 2014

Feature	Details
Species targeted	Spanish mackerel and various demersal fin fish species
Fishery symbols	L4
Current management regime	<i>Fisheries Act 1994; Fisheries Regulation 2008; Queensland Fisheries Joint Authority</i>
Gear	Commercial: surface trolling and hand-lining Recreational: line fishing
Main management methods	Commercial & Recreational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear restrictions including restrictions on type of apparatus that can be used (numbers of lines and hooks) • Species specific size and possession limits apply. Commercial only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited entry • Gear restrictions - size of boat and number of tenders that can be used • Closed area restrictions – South Mitchell River • Prohibition on retaining barramundi (<i>Lates calcarifer</i>), black jewfish (<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>), blue and king threadfin (<i>Eleutheronema tetradactylum</i> & <i>Polydactylus macrochir</i>), scaly jewfish (<i>Nibea squamosa</i>), giant queenfish (<i>Scomberoides commersonianus</i>) and silver javelin (<i>Pomodasys argenteus</i>).
Fishing season	1 January - 31 December
Commercial fishery licences	46 L4
Accreditation under the EPBC Act (Part 13 and 13A)	Part 13: accredited 24 November 2010 (first accredited 2004) Part 13A: current declared Wildlife Trade Operation expires 24 November 2015
Total annual harvest by species	~144 t (Spanish mackerel 2015)
GVP	1.0 million (2015)
Monitoring	Catch and effort logbook and biological monitoring on Spanish mackerel
Catch and effort data validation	Routine – logbook data entry checks, data extraction checks and range checks

.....

Progress in implementing conditions and recommendations (July 2016)

Condition 1: *Operation of the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Line Fishery will be carried out in accordance with the management regime for the fishery in force under the Queensland Fisheries Act 1994 and the Queensland Fisheries Regulation 2008.*

Progress: ongoing

Operations of the fishery were carried out in accordance with the management arrangements in force under the Queensland *Fisheries Act 1994* and the Queensland Fisheries Regulation 2008.

Condition 2: *Fisheries Queensland to inform the DoE of any intended material changes to the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Line Fishery management arrangements that may affect the assessment against which Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 decisions are based.*

Progress: ongoing

There have been no changes to management arrangements in 2015/2016.

Condition 3: *Fisheries Queensland to produce and present reports to the Department of the Environment annually as per Appendix B to the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition.*

Progress: Completed. DAF provided the DoE with annual reports detailing the progress of each fishery against their respective WTO conditions and recommendations. This latest report was sent to DoE on 8 December 2015.

Recommendation 1: *Fisheries Queensland to ensure that:*

- *its PMS remains robust and has appropriate sustainability yield estimates for key target species, particularly Spanish mackerel; and*
- *long-term monitoring of target species' stock status in the fishery continues.*

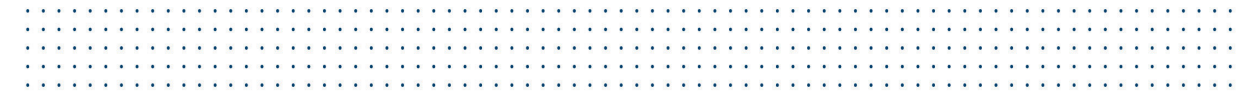
Progress: Ongoing

Queensland previously utilized a Performance Management System (PMS) to track catch and effort levels against key criteria. The PMS included both species-specific and more generalized criteria that determine if additional management responses are required. The applicability and suitability of the PMS is now being reviewed as part of a broader management reform package being implemented by DAF. As part of this process, a number of alternate options for tracking catch and effort in Queensland commercial fisheries are being considered as part of a broader fisheries management review (see below). Given these developments, it was determined that Queensland would not monitor and report against the existing fishery PMS in its entirety. Rather, the core elements of each PMS will be monitored via the stock status assessment process and through the annual SOCI reporting requirements.

DAF has made considerable progress on fisheries reform and on 21 July 2016 release of the *Green Paper on Fisheries Management Reform in Queensland*. The purpose of the green paper is to engage with the community and stakeholders about the best approach for managing Queensland's fisheries resources into the future. To this extent, the green paper outlines:

- the Government's vision for the management of wild harvest fisheries;
- where the Government wants to be; and
- the proposed reforms that are required.

The green paper has now been released for public comment with the public consultation period remaining open until 30 September 2016. During this time and until the review has been finalised, DAF will continue to utilise the approach outlined in CRIFFF WTO conditions and recommendations report.



More information on the green paper including mechanisms within which stakeholders can provide input and comment is available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/consultations-and-legislation/reviews-surveys-and-consultations/green-paper-on-fisheries-management-reform-in-queensland>

DAF also collects information on the biology of the Spanish mackerel catch through the Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP). This information is used to inform discussions surrounding the management of the species and in broader stock status assessment processes. This includes the *National Status of Key Australian Fish Stocks (SAFS)* which indicated that the catch of Spanish mackerel in the Gulf of Carpentaria was sustainable. Spanish mackerel will be reassessed as part of the next SAFS process and the updated assessment will be released in the second half of 2016.

Information collected as part of the LTMP is made available to the public via the DAF website (<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/monitoring-our-fisheries/commercial-fisheries/species-specific-programs/spanish-mackerel/gulf-of-carpentaria-update>). The results of the 2014 SAFS stock status assessment process can be downloaded at: http://www.fish.gov.au/pages/safs_report.aspx.