

Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery Resource Sharing Intergovernmental Agreement

Attendees: John Diplock (Principal Manager, Recreational Fisheries, NSW); Terry Healey (Manager, Recreational Fisheries Unit, QLD); Murray Macdonald (Manager, Bay & Inlet Fisheries, VIC); Howell Williams (Manager, Recreational Fisheries, TAS); Graham Rudd (ETBF Manager, AFMA); Russell James (General Manager, FAME, DAFF); and Liz Foster (DAFF).

Observers: Ewan Colquhoun (Ridgepartners) and Brione White (DAFF)

This Agreement is a collaborative approach to establishing common objectives for management, recognising that the management of the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) involves several fishery jurisdictions with differing government policies and legislative requirements.

Resource sharing arrangements for the Commonwealth ETBF will be decided in the short-term (~the next six months), based on the best available information, to meet the Australian Government objectives for resource sharing, which are:

1. *To avoid conflict between sectors by ensuring equitable access to Commonwealth fisheries resources;*
2. *To effectively manage the total extraction of fish resources from Commonwealth fisheries to contribute to their long-term sustainability; and*
3. *To engage the relevant sectors in the development of resource sharing arrangements and seek to develop mutually acceptable arrangements, where possible.*

In making an initial resource sharing decision, relevant governments (QLD, NSW, VIC, TAS and AG/AFMA) have agreed that the following can and cannot be achieved. It is anticipated that the initial resource sharing decision will be made with a view to progressing some of the issues that cannot be met in the short-term, in anticipation that review of resource sharing arrangements in the longer-term (~4-5 years) may lead to more robust arrangements.

*What **can** be achieved in the short-term (~6 months)...*

- collation of commercial catch data by species, location and time for the whole fishery;
- use of existing state-based communications capabilities to identify and consult with recreational fishers and associated interest groups on resource sharing options for the ETBF (beyond those gamefishers in clubs);
- in the absence of comprehensive data and governance arrangements that allow for the effective management of the total extraction of fisheries resources and proper estimation of the socio-economic value of competing uses of these resources, access restrictions such as spatial/temporal management measures and possession limits can be implemented as an interim strategy to meet the Australian Government's objectives of reducing conflict between sectors and applying a precautionary approach to management;
- collation of available aggregated recreational catch data (limited to charter and gamefishing data);
- work towards the development of agreed methodologies for resource sharing and identification of catch and socio-economic information requirements to facilitate more robust resource sharing decision-making; and
- development of recommendations on legislative, administrative and cost sharing for the multi-jurisdictional management of the ETBF once a decision on resource sharing has been made.

*What **cannot** be achieved in the short-term...*

- AFMA specifying detailed management arrangements for sectors other than the commercial sector;
- implementing a resource sharing arrangement that will impact the commercial fishing sector if it is inconsistent with AFMA's legislative objectives;
- a specific allocation¹ to the recreational sector that can be clearly defined, appropriately managed, monitored or enforced (state governments are currently do not manage the recreational sector to a capped effort or catch limit);
- conduct of studies of the net socio-economic benefit to Australians of recreational and commercial fishing use of whole ETBF to provide a basis for determining appropriate resource sharing arrangements;
- development of co-operative and cost-effective recreational fishery monitoring and research programs across states;
- collection of adequate data on post-release mortality of key species;
- licensing for recreational fishing in Tasmania/Victoria/Queensland (not all states support licensing for recreational fishers and legislative, administrative and cost recovery issues in some states do not currently allow implementation of management arrangements for the recreational sector in the ETBF); and
- determination of appropriate cost-recovery mechanisms from recreational fishers for research or management measures required as a result of initial resource sharing decisions for all states.

¹ An allocation is defined in this instance as an arrangement that can be clearly defined in terms of impact on the fishery, can be managed in accordance with specific restrictions/limits, and can be monitored and enforced.