REGIONAL NRM STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

WILD FISHERY

ALL REGIONS

1. Overview of the Asset Within the Region

Tasmania's Wild Fisheries comprise two significant sectors, the commercial sector and the recreational sector. The Northern Tasmanian region is the home of a longstanding and significant wild (capture) fishing industry. The region produces its share of the State's $115 million dollar abalone industry and the $65 million dollar rock lobster industry. Tasmania alone produces about 25% of the world's supply of wild harvested abalone. Also of importance are a range of scalefish species, including garfish, Australian salmon, flounder, warehou (trevally), mullet and flathead.

Wild fisheries are dependent on well managed and sustainable fish stocks, but also rely heavily on a range of safe ports dotted around Tasmania's coastline, and the infrastructure they provide. Conversely, these communities rely significantly on the economic and social contributions made by the fishing industries.

Recreational fishing in Tasmania's marine waters is a major contributor to the social fabric of the Tasmanian community, and recent surveys show that more than one in four Tasmanians fish recreationally each year. The recreational fishery contributes similarly to the economic well being of coastal towns and the fishing experience that can be offered in the region is known to be a significant tourism drawcard.

Sustainable fisheries, whether commercial or recreational, depend on a healthy ecosystem. A healthy ecosystem is also essential to preserve and protect our unique biodiversity for future generations.

2. Current Asset Condition

The State's fisheries resources are considered to be fully utilised. Fishing activities are highly regulated and management plans are already in place for Tasmania's major wild fisheries: Abalone, Rock Lobster, Giant Crabs, Scalefish and Scallops. Other plans are in preparation for fisheries such as sea urchins, octopus and small pelagic fish such as jack mackerel and redbait.

Management plans contain a number of objectives, and determine the strategies used to achieve these objectives. Each plan also specifies a number of trigger points, which, if breached, automatically start a review of any relevant management arrangements.

The objectives vary from fishery to fishery. For example, one of the aims of the rock lobster fishery is to build the biomass of lobsters over time, whereas a new

objective for the scalefish might be to remove latent effort (that is, fishing entitlements not currently in use) to help protect the fishery from overfishing in the future.

3. Issues Associated with, or Threats to the Asset

The primary risk to fish stock resources is over-fishing. It is vital that the mistakes made in many fisheries elsewhere in the world are not repeated in Tasmania.

Other threats include the loss or degradation of critical habitat. Many fish species are dependent on estuarine and costal habitats that can be adversely affected by industrial development, rural development, coastal development, reduced fresh water flows from our rivers and streams into estuaries and coastal waters, and pollution.

Many fish species depend on inshore habitats for reproduction or growth during various stages of their life cycles. Increased nutrient loadings in the marine systems from sewage and fertiliser application can have far reaching and devastating impact on sea grass beds, the powerhouse of many inshore marine ecosystems. Reduced freshwater inflows or pollutants can impact directly on fish or the systems on which they depend. The landfilling of estuaries, bays and inlets directly reduces the amount of sheltered habitat essential for a range of marine communities.

Quantifying the effects of such external influences on the marine environment is difficult. However they can be, and have been, significant. For example, the past few decades have seen a significant decrease in the distribution of sea grass beds. Such effects highlight the importance of good catchment management.

4. Current Responses to Issues and Threats

Because fish don't respect lines drawn on charts, and most of Tasmania's fisheries are spread all around our coastline, fisheries are managed on a "state-wide" basis, although the management controls can vary from place to place to accommodate differences as required. For example, the size limits for abalone vary around the coast to reflect the different sizes at which the fish mature in different areas.

The response to the threats posed by over-fishing is largely regulatory. The *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995* (LMRMA) provides for a wide range of management techniques to be imposed by regulations, rules and orders. Techniques to manage fisheries include output controls, such as quota, and input controls, such as restrictions on participation and the amount and type of fishing gear that can be used. Often, a whole range of restrictions of varying types are required to achieve effective management and sustainable fisheries.

The process of developing these "management plans" is specified in the LMRMA itself and involves a high level of industry, other stakeholder and community participation. The Fisheries Advisory Committees are made up of representatives of diverse interest groups, public meetings are advertised and held in a range of

locations throughout the State, and policies and plans are exhibited for consultation and input. It is largely this system of broad involvement in the development phase that has resulted in management arrangements that are supported by fishers and are successful in their implementation.

In addition to statutory processes, education is vital to the success of any management regime. This is particularly important when considering recreational fisheries, where good stewardship of the resource centres around the adoption of responsible and sustainable fishing practices. Activities can range from pamphlets and brochures, to displays at shows and fishing events, to one on one discussions and contact between fishers and "fishcare" volunteers throughout the State.

5. Productive Use and Other Opportunities in Relation to the Asset

Most of Tasmania's fisheries are fully utilised, and there is little scope for new fisheries to develop. In some instances fisheries can be improved, and many require additional protection. There are still opportunities to enhance financial and social returns, by innovative processing and marketing, and building on the tourism potential of our recreational fisheries.

6. Available Data and Its Usefulness

Large databases of fisheries data are maintained, and form the basis of fisheries stock assessments. These stock assessments are available from Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) and on their website, www.utas.edu.au/docs/tafi/TAFI_Homepage.html.

Fisheries Management Plan Policy documents are available from the DPIWE and its website, www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au.

The legislative Management Plans themselves are available from Tasmania's Legislation website, www.thelaw.tas.gov.au.

7. Information Gaps and Actions Required to Fill These Gaps

No fishery has enough data or knowledge for us to be absolutely confident that our management strategies are appropriate. Marine ecosystems are highly dynamic and changes driven by changes in climatic conditions can be very significant.

Each of the fisheries has a research plan, which highlights the priorities for attention. Most of these issues are directly related to improving our knowledge and understanding of the fish and fisheries so that the most critical gaps in our knowledge can be addressed first. In this way the accuracy of the stock assessments can be improved, and in time, the management responses refined and targeted to the greatest needs.

8. Current Targets for the Asset

Tasmania Together - Goal 24 "ensure our natural resources are managed in a sustainable way, now and for future generations."

As detailed in each Fisheries Management Plan Policy Document.

9. Proposed Management Action Targets for the Assets

As detailed in each Fisheries Management Plan Policy Document.

10. Relevant Scientific Publications

CONTRIBUTORS TO PAPER

The following people have been involved in the drafting of this paper:

Author:

NAME	POSITION	AGENCY
Dennis J Witt	Manager (WFMB)	DPIWE

Date: 31 July 2003