

Proposed resource sharing for primary species in the Western Zone

The purpose of this document is to describe how draft resource sharing recommendations have been reached for the Western Zone of the Coastal Line Fishery (CLF). This document should be read as an interpretive document to assist stakeholders in developing their input into the draft management framework released for consultation (insert web link to main document here)

Resource sharing is defined in terms of allocation and access. Allocation is the amount of a resource (e.g. a specific species) that is available to be harvested by a fishing sector, while access is the ability for a fishing sector to harvest the resource within a specified geographical area and/or during specified time periods.

Recommendations on allocation and access arrangements should seek to equitably share the fishery resources within sustainable limits while optimising community benefit and providing long term certainty to all user groups. Procedural fairness to provide opportunity for stakeholder views to be considered in development of the recommendations is a critical step. Aspirations (long-term fishery goals) and current participation should also be taken into account when considering resource sharing.

Three broad steps were used while considering resource sharing arrangements in the Western Zone of the CLF:

1. A technical assessment of risks to sustainability:
https://dpir.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/619405/NTCLF-ecological-risk-assessment-052018.pdf
2. A stock assessment to determine levels of sustainable resource use (i.e. a Total Allowable Catch setting process).
3. An analysis of fishing patterns (catch and spatial distribution of effort) by each sector. In this regard it was noted that the fishery appears to be operating well at present with no obvious resource conflicts between sectors nor any compelling need for significant change. The current separation of commercial fishing activity from major recreational sites is a key reason for this. This new management framework will provide long-term certainty to sectors and provide opportunity for planning at the operational/individual as well as the sector level.

The Objects of the NT Fisheries Act underpinned all considerations as did the principles of the NT Fishery Resource Sharing Framework, and the draft long-term fishery goals developed in consultation with stakeholders appointed to the CLF Management Advisory Committee (CLFMAC) and the Coastal Line Advisory Group (CLAG).

As part of developing the new management framework the CLFMAC and CLAG considered resource sharing arrangements in line with the NT Fishery Resource Sharing Framework, but were unable to provide an agreed proposal on allocation and access arrangements in the Western Zone. The CLFMAC and CLAG processes have informed the Department's recommended allocation and access arrangements provided below for consultation.

Allocation arrangements

The recommended allocation methodology is summarised in the sequence below:

- 1) Undertake scientific stock assessment to determine the total allowable catch (TAC) of Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper (using a stochastic Stock Reduction Analysis (SRA)).
- 2) Set aside an amount of the TAC for provisional use by Aboriginal traditional fishers and incidental capture by non-targeted commercial fisheries.
- 3) Allocate proportional catch shares for targeted resource users by dividing the available TAC into the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and the total allowable recreational catch (TARC):
 - a. The CLF licence catch share maintains the existing TACC for Black Jewfish (145t) and Golden Snapper (4.5t) managed under an individual transferable quota framework; and
 - b. The remainder of the available TAC (the TAC less provisions for traditional harvest, incidental catch and the existing CLF TACC allocation) is shared between recreational fishers and Fishing Tour Operators (FTOs).
 - c. The recreational and FTO catch shares are calculated by dividing the TARC by their respective proportional use reported in 2018-19. Those proportions are provided in the specific allocation details section.

Proposed resource shares for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper using the recommended allocation methodology for the Western Zone of the CLF are set out in Figure 1 below.

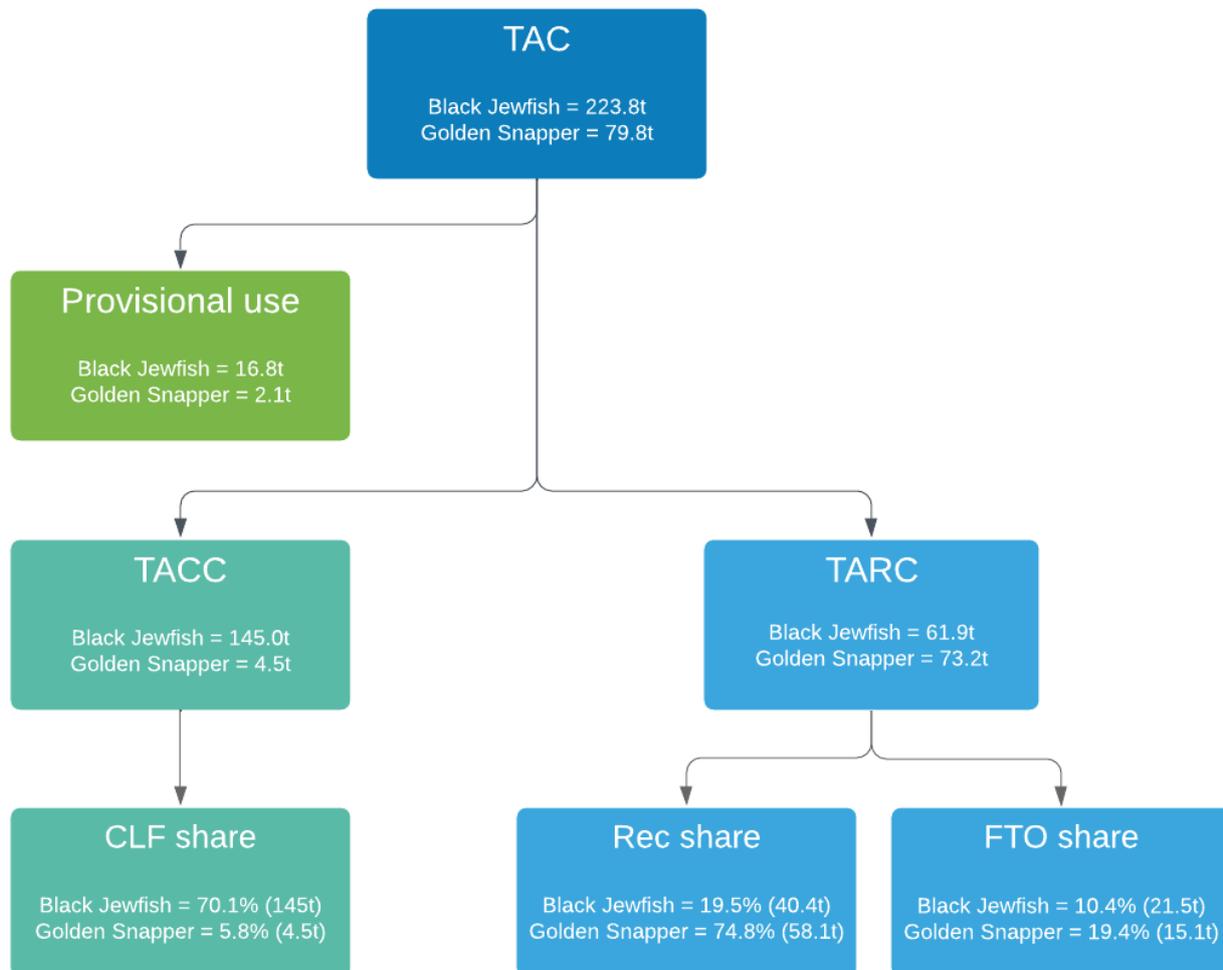


Figure 1. Proposed catch shares in the Western Zone of the CLF.

Specific allocation details

- The SRA modelled the TAC for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper using data up to 2019. The SRA used fishing data from commercial logbooks, FTO logbooks and recreational fishing surveys to provide estimates of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) which were used as the benchmark TAC for determining catch shares.
- Based on advice by the CLFMAC, and given there are no contemporary estimates of traditional harvest, the provisional use for Aboriginal traditional fishers was estimated to be equal to the lowest recorded catch by other user groups in 2018-19, up to a maximum of five percent of the TAC.
- The provisional use for incidental capture by other non-target commercial fisheries was based on statutory logbook data from Barramundi Fishery, Offshore Net and Line Fishery and Coastal Net Fishery licences using the average catch between 2015-16 and 2019-20.
- The TACC for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper maintains the existing catch levels at 145t and 4.5t respectively, which were implemented on 1 July 2015.
- The TARC was determined by subtracting the TACC from the remaining TAC (the amount of TAC remaining after the provisional uses have been subtracted) for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper.
- To establish an allocation baseline the CLF licence catch shares have been expressed as the proportion of the TACC when compared to the remaining TAC (the amount of TAC remaining after the provisional use has been subtracted) for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper.
- Recreational and FTO catch are reported in quantities and were converted to weights using the average of weights measured during FTO observer trips between 2018 and 2019.
- The recreational catch shares were determined by multiplying the recreational catch proportion of the total amateur catch of Black Jewfish (65.3%) and Golden Snapper (79.4%) with the TARC for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper. Note the total amateur catch for a species is the combined catch from the recreational fishing survey and FTO logbooks reported in 2018-19.
- The FTO catch shares were determined by multiplying the FTO licence catch proportion of the total amateur catch of Black Jewfish (34.7%) and Golden Snapper (20.6%) with the TARC for Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper. Note the total amateur catch for a species is the combined catch from the recreational fishing survey and FTO logbooks reported in 2018-19.

Explanation

The Western Zone of the CLF is fully developed in terms of its resource use of Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper and has been the target of consolidated management aimed at providing long-term resource sustainability of local fish populations. For this reason the recommended methodology is centred on determining an appropriate distribution of resources within the sustainable bounds of the most recent assessment of total available catch in the Western Zone.

Providing for catch by Aboriginal traditional and incidental user groups under the TAC is important and acknowledges that: Aboriginal traditional fishers are not constrained by fisheries legislation, but traditional harvest of resources needs to be included in the scientific assessment of sustainable resource use; and incidental capture of Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper from other commercial fisheries is unavoidable and a controlled level of allowable catch is necessary to avoid discarding.

The recommended allocation maintains the catch by CLF licences at current levels and provides for modest growth by recreational fishers and charter fishing clients (6.8t and 3.6t of Black Jewfish and 2.1t and 0.6t of Golden Snapper respectively) above 2018-19 reported levels.

Access arrangements

The recommended access arrangement for the Western Zone was informed by the CLFMAC and CLAG processes and provides for spatial separation between user groups that target Black Jewfish and Golden Snapper inside the Western Zone. The access arrangement is herein referred to as the proposed management area.

The proposed management area will prevent the harvest of resources by CLF licences within the spatial extent of the green highlighted area commencing from Cape Hotham to Point Blaze (Figure 2). This management area has been developed to prioritise resource use to the benefit of recreational fishers and charter fishing clients while not impacting on historical patterns of resource use over the past five years by CLF licences.

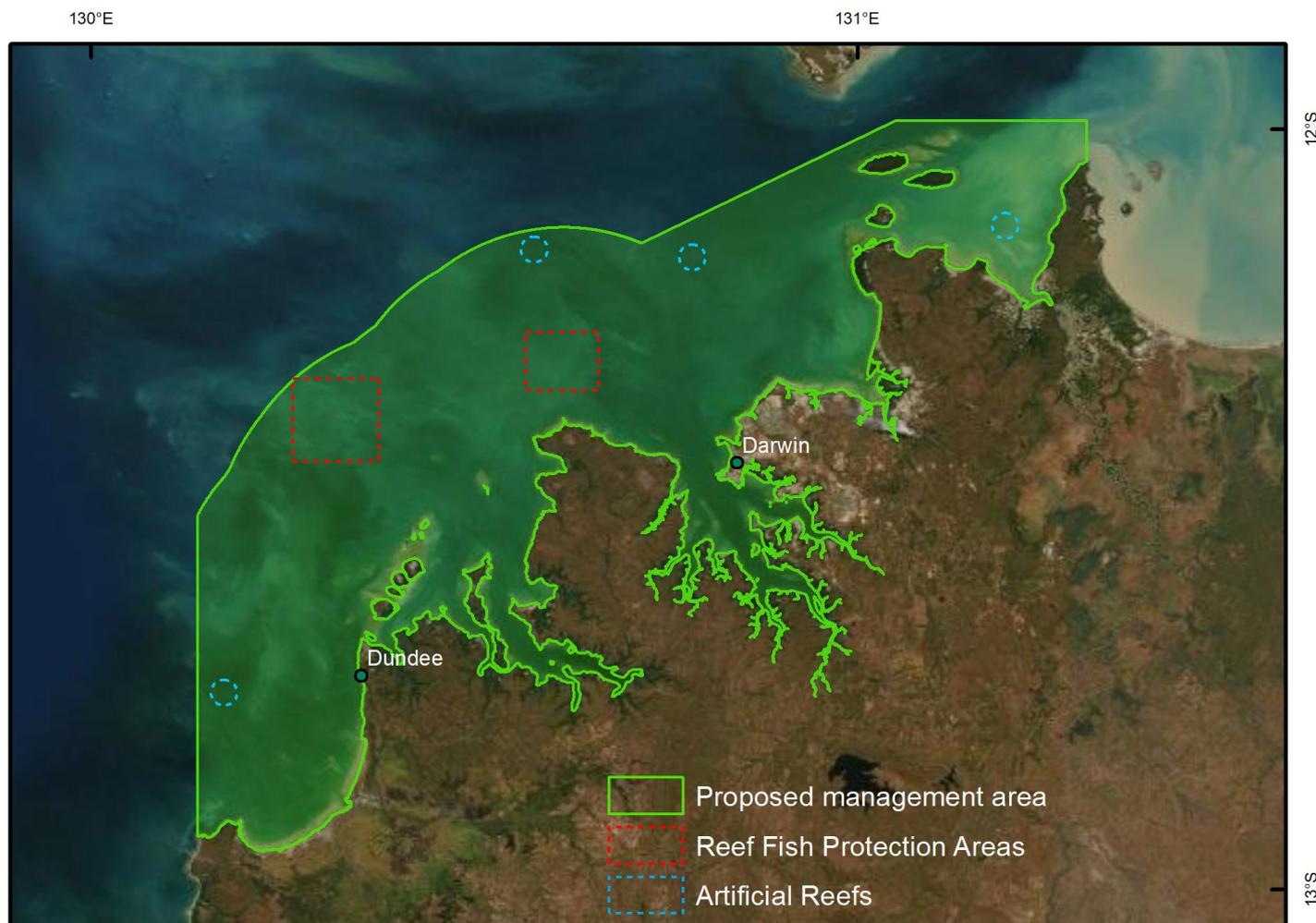


Figure 2. Proposed management area from Cape Hotham to Point Blaze.

Specific access details

The proposed management area:

- Provides exclusive access to approximately 5142km² of fishery area for harvest by recreational fishers and charter fishing clients in waters adjacent to key access sites centred on Darwin, Bynoe and Dundee.
- Represents approximately 86% of reef fish catch by recreational fishers in the greater Darwin area (based on catch reported in the Survey of Recreational Fishing in the Greater Darwin Area 2017).

Proposed resource sharing for primary species in the Western Zone

- Represents approximately 56% of reef fish catch by charter fishing clients in the NT (based on catch reported in FTO logbooks for 2020-21).
- Does not displace any catch from CLF licences in the past five years (based on catch reported in CLF logbooks between 2016-17 and 2020-21).

Explanation

Recreational and charter fishing is socially and economically important and remains a key policy area for the NT Government with infrastructure, access, artificial reefs and a new recreational fishing development plan being the focus of existing platforms. Seafood production is also important in delivering socioeconomic outcomes and requires policy support to provide value-add and growth potential in areas that do not detract from recreational and charter fishing potential in the NT.

In the context of the Western Zone of the CLF, providing opportunity to grow and accommodate future participation in recreational and charter fishing is challenging when resources are considered fully developed and harvest is constrained by precautionary limits designed to recover reef fish populations from overfishing.

The proposed management area formalises the separation of commercial fishing activity by CLF licences from key recreational fishing grounds and in doing so provides long-term certainty for recreational and charter fishing operators to enhance and develop within their recommended catch share. The proposed area eliminates the risk of future sector conflict and creates opportunity to optimise the recreational and charter fishing experiences in areas immediately adjacent to key access sites centred on Darwin, Bynoe and Dundee.

Establishment of the proposed management area does not impact on historical patterns of resource use by CLF licences since individual transferable quota (ITQ) was introduced in the Western Zone. ITQ has resulted in a smaller number of commercial operations predominantly targeting Black Jewfish aggregations, all of which occur outside of the proposed management area, to maintain economically viable catch rates.

The proposed management area compliments significant Government investment to enhance and develop amateur fishing opportunity in the NT. Particularly, investments to improve infrastructure and accessibility for fishers to fishing grounds adjacent Dundee, and the design and implement of four purpose built artificial reefs to boost productivity of at-risk reef fish populations.

The proposed area encompasses the majority of recreational and tourism fishing activity inside the Greater Darwin Region and when combined with augmented amateur fishing opportunity provides sufficient scope for expansion of recreational reef fishing in the region.