

Summary Report - Draft Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery

Report pursuant to section 44(2) of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*

October 2024

OFFICIAL

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Introduction

The *Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery* (“the Management Plan” or “the Plan”) commenced on 1 October 2013 and, following a two-year extension, expires on 30 June 2025.

The former Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Minister) approved a review of the Management Plan on 20 October 2021 pursuant to section 49 of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* (“the Act”) to be undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) for the purpose of determining whether the Plan should be amended, replaced or reinstated without amendment.

Consistent with the outcomes of the review, the Minister approved the development of a replacement Management Plan on 8 October 2022 and noted the Executive Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), as her delegate, will develop a draft Management Plan to replace the current Plan in consultation with the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MSFMAC), Marine Fishers Association, and other bodies and interested persons, consistent with section 44 of the Act.

This document summarises the significant changes included in each section of the draft Management Plan now provided for public consultation.

This report fulfils the requirements of section 44(2) of the Act as a report containing:

- an explanation of the purpose and effect of the draft management plan; and
- a summary of the background and issues relevant to the draft plan and of the analysis and reasoning applied in formulating the plan.

Purpose of the Management Plan

The role of a management plan as set out in section 43 of the Act is to describe the broad structure and nature of the fishery and to set out the objectives and strategies to manage the fishery. A management plan must also:

- identify the impacts or potential impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem as well as ecological factors that could have an impact on the performance of the fishery;
- specify methods to monitor the performance of the fishery, including performance indicators, reference points and trigger points for review and/or action; and
- specify the share of aquatic resources to be allocated to each fishing sector and prescribe a method for adjusting allocations.

The proposed draft Management Plan sets out the management arrangements for the South Australian commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery (MSF), including co-management arrangements with industry, allocation of access between sectors, goals and objectives of

the Plan, harvest strategy, stock assessment and research, compliance and monitoring arrangements, among others.

Summary of background and issues relevant to the draft plan

The management of the MSF has undergone significant change since the commencement of the current Management Plan in 2013. Most notably, large reforms implemented on 1 July 2021, including:

- a government funded voluntary licence surrender program resulting in the removal of 100 licences from the Fishery;
- establishment of four fishing zones;
- establishment of individual transferable quota (ITQ) and total allowable commercial catch (TACC) management for the primary 'Tier 1' stocks including King George Whiting (KGW), Snapper, Southern Garfish and Southern Calamari;
- separation of the commercial taking of Vongole and Sardine from the MSF and the creation of the new fisheries under their own regulations;
- various amendments to management arrangements to reduce unnecessary rules and regulations ("red tape") to improve efficiencies and flexibility for MSF licence holders.
- establishment of a Tiered Management Framework for the MSF

In consideration of these and other changes identified through the formal review of the current Plan and development of its replacement, several changes have been made to the draft Plan. Significant changes are outlined under the headers below that correspond with the relevant section of the draft Plan.

The draft Management Plan has also been updated and modernised consistent with other recent PIRSA fishery management plans, including the removal of the following sections:

- other Commercial Fishing (former section 10) – this section has been removed, and relevant information included in section 4
- research and Monitoring (former section 11) – this section has been consolidated and included within section 4.7
- regulatory Arrangements (former section 13) – references to specific regulatory arrangements have been removed and future strategic priorities for the fishery have been described in Section 10.

Fishery to which this plan applies (Section 1)

Changes to this section have been made to update references to fisheries regulations following separation of the South Australian Sardine Fishery (SASF) and the Vongole Fishery (VF) from the MSF on 1 July 2021.

Consistency with other management plans (Section 2)

Changes to this section have been made to update references to fisheries regulations following separation of the SASF and VF from the MSF.

Term of plan (Section 3)

The draft Plan is proposed to commence from 1 July 2025, following the expiry of the current Plan on 30 June 2025, for a period of ten years.

Description of fishery (Section 4)

This section has been updated to incorporate key changes since the commencement of the current Plan in 2013 including:

- management changes implemented as part of the reform of the MSF in 2021.
- updates to the chronology of the major management milestones in the commercial MSF.
- new information about the South Australian recreational fishing economic contribution to the State, and updated recreational fishing statistics from the 2021/22 South Australian Recreational Fishing Survey.
- addition of information about the South Australian marine parks network prescribed under the *Marine Parks Act 2007*
- information about climate change.
- updated information about the habitat and biology the key species in the fishery
- the stock assessment, research and monitoring program for the MSF
- how strategic research priorities and plans are developed and updated
- Inclusion of updated economic data regarding the MSF up to and including 2022/23.

Co-management arrangements (Section 5)

New information has been included regarding the establishment of the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MSFMAC) in 2021 as the lead advisory body to guide the management of the shared-access MSF.

Updates have also been made to reflect changes to the various peak representative bodies that contribute to co-management processes in support of the MSF.

Allocation of access between sectors (Section 6)

Updates have been made to subsections sections that describe the commercial, recreational and Aboriginal traditional fishing sectors that have access to marine scalefish species, including new reference to the Buthera Agreement¹ and inclusion of some key results from the *2021/22 Recreational Fishing Survey*.

Information regarding the review of allocations has been streamlined to defer to the processes provided in the *Allocation Policy (2023)*. Additions have been provided to reflect the allocation reviews currently underway following the completion of the 2021/22 Recreational Fishing Survey and to note that the Minister has approved for allocations to be assessed based on the catch of a fishery and/or sector against the Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) (or proxy) if available, to inform the need for a full evaluation.

The draft Management Plan includes no changes to the allocations (or the allocation triggers provided in Appendix B) made under the 2013 Management Plan.

Ecological impacts (Section 7)

Changes to this section of the draft Plan have been made to reflect that a new Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Risk Assessment of the MSF was completed in 2024. This assessment considered new information regarding the management of the Fishery and its environmental impacts, as well as impacts on the Fishery, since the last risk assessment which was undertaken in 2011.

The new ESD Risk Assessment was used to inform the development of the draft Plan, in particular the Goals and Objectives (Section 8) and associated management/mitigation strategies.

The ESD outcomes table was removed from the draft Management Plan as this table can be accessed as part of the MSF ESD Risk Assessment Report (2024) published on the PIRSA website.

Goals and objectives (Section 8)

The goals and objectives of the draft Management Plan have been reviewed and updated to: reflect the outcomes of the ESD Risk Assessment (2024), consider MSFMAC

¹ <https://www.agd.sa.gov.au/aboriginal-affairs-and-reconciliation/aboriginal-land-and-business/buthera-agreement>

feedback, focus on issues within PIRSA's or the Fishery's control, and to streamline and simplify wherever possible. Key updates to the goals and objectives include:

- updated performance indicators and trigger reference points that align to the new Harvest Strategy for the Fishery.
- incorporation of strategies for rebuilding stocks and ensuring that fishing mortality is controlled.
- addition of an objective and strategies to respond to external impacts on the Fishery, including climate change.
- updated performance indicators to reflect the objective of optimising economic performance within biologically sustainable levels.
- incorporation of mitigation measures currently applied to minimise potential interactions with Australian Sea Lions.
- updated management cost indicators
- updated strategies, performance indicators and trigger reference points reflecting the move to a tiered management framework for species within the MSF.
- updated strategies, performance indicators and trigger reference points for the Goal of 'Effective Compliance program for the Fishery' reflecting current practices applied.

Harvest strategy (Section 9)

A new Harvest Strategy Framework (HSF) for the MSF has been developed to replace the harvest strategies in the current Plan. A key driver for the development of the new HSF has been the move to quota management in 2021 and need to set annual commercial catch limits for Tier 1 stocks. The new HSF has been developed under the guidance of the MSFMAC.

The HSF describes the indicators to measure the performance of stocks, and the use of these indicators and their associated reference points and decision rules for managing the MSF. The reference points are set to achieve preferred stock status (called the target reference point) and to avoid undesirable outcomes (the limit reference point).

The stocks covered by this framework are those that are monitored and assessed, including Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 stocks of the TMF. Catches from the commercial sectors, as well as the recreational, Charter Boat and Aboriginal traditional sectors are included to account for all forms of fishing mortality, where data are available.

The HSF adopts a multi-category approach to deal with different levels of information and uncertainty in stock assessments. The different assessment categories reflect varying levels of uncertainty with stock status and identify ways to reduce the risks associated with this uncertainty.

Three goals are reflected for the HSF including:

1. To ensure that target species are biologically sustainable
2. To support economic and social benefits to the community
3. To contribute to cost-effective management.

To provide finer-scale complementary guidance for the application of the new HSF, a draft Implementation Plan has been developed. The Implementation Plan is to sit outside of the Management Plan to allow for periodic updates to be made as relevant new information becomes available regarding the scientific assessment and/or management of the MSF permitted species (e.g., improved stock assessment resulting in a change of assessment category, or a stock changes management tiers).

Compliance and monitoring (Section 10)

Minor changes have been made to this section to include more information about the coordination of compliance activities in the MSF.

Strategic priorities (Section 11)

The inclusion of a section describing the strategic priorities of the MSF including:

- industry led Blueprint for the future directions of the MSF
- removal of Red Tape
- completion of the Snapper Science Program.
- development and Implementation of a Snapper Science Rebuilding Plan for depleted stocks
- completion and application of the current Southern Calamari Stock assessment project
- improved stock assessments through transition to a new stock assessment modelling framework
- improved estimates of recreational catch of MSF species
- improvement of bycatch information for the MSF
- consideration of development of further socio-economic indicators for a future iteration of the management plan together with further climate change management strategies.

Resources required to implement the plan (Section 12)

Minor updates have been made regarding the resources required to implement the plan.

Review of Plan (Section 13)

This section has been simplified consistent with other recent PIRSA fishery management plans to refer to the requirements described in the Act.



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