Benefits of Developing a Fisheries Resource Allocation Policy in Queensland

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Overview

- Background
- Drivers
- Development of the policy
- Benefits
- Application
- Linkages with other processes
- Future issues
- Conclusions
Where are we?
General characteristics

- Multi-species fisheries
- Multi-sector use of most fisheries resources
- Range of different types of fishing gear
- Highly diverse marine habitats that support a high diversity of commercially and recreationally valuable species.

- Mostly fast growing species as a result of the subtropical climate.

Queensland Government
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
General management framework

- **Fisheries Act 1994**
  - The main purpose of this Act is to provide for the use, conservation and enhancement of the community’s fisheries resources and fish habitats in a way that seeks to—
    - (a) apply and balance the principles of ecologically sustainable development; and
    - (b) promote ecologically sustainable development.

- **Fisheries Regulation 1995**
  - **Fisheries Management Plans:**
    - Trawl fishery
    - Spanner crab fishery
    - Finfish fishery
    - Coral reef finfish fishery
    - Freshwater fishery
    - Gulf of Carpentaria
Drivers for a policy

• Applications to establish multiple “recreational only fishing areas”.
• Increasing competition for resources due to:
  – increasing leisure time,
  – increasing population,
  – expanding export markets,
  – a boating boom in the south east corner,
  – increasing popularity of ecotourism and
  – greater international exposure of charter businesses.
• The Minister’s Fishing Industry Development Council pushed for a more considered approach through development of a policy to guide all allocation decisions in the future
• Desire to be proactive rather than reactive.
Use of policy

- The Queensland Government uses alternatives to regulation where possible.
- The use of policy provides flexibility, but also gives a clear indication of the Queensland Government’s position on an issue.
- Limited discretion when applying legislation.
- Usually faster than legislation, so can respond to issues more quickly.
- The policy is dynamic and can deal with changing circumstances and community values over time.
- Can be appealed through the Fisheries Tribunal.
A working group was established by the FIDC, with membership from all major stakeholder groups. FIDC was unable to nominate an indigenous representative, but very useful input was obtained by the working group from the ATSIS policy unit. The working group met 5 times, where they negotiated the principles and processes, and helped identify the aspirations of each user group.
Scope

- The policy applies to all stakeholders, both consumptive and non-consumptive.
- It is also used internally as a guide to management planning.
- Not designed for small allocation changes (e.g., size limits, etc).
- It does not apply to allocation changes made by other State Government departments or the Australian Government.
Policy outline

- Guiding principles
- Other factors to be considered
- Decision-making process
- Guidelines for proposals
- Statement of aspirations from stakeholder groups
## Principles

The ecological sustainability of fisheries resources and the ecosystems on which they depend is paramount.

Allocation decisions should be based on the best available ecological, economic and social information.

Any allocation changes should aim to maximise the benefits to the Queensland community. In doing this, the decision-making process needs to involve the community and seek wide-ranging opinions in recognition of the fact that fisheries resources are owned by the community.

Allocation arrangements should be explicitly stated in terms of the sectors involved, the percentages of the total catch allocated to each and the allocation methods. Such arrangements should reflect sectoral values and the management objectives for the fisheries resources concerned.

Allocation within a fishery sector should seek to avoid adverse changes to the relative positions of existing operators.

Where adjustments to fisheries resource access are required, market forces should be used to achieve this wherever practical.

If a fisheries resource is over-used and an overall reduction in access is required to ensure sustainability, either all extractive user groups should share equally in that reduction of access or a specific reallocation proposal should be made.

Resource allocation adjustments should be open to scrutiny and should have a time frame sufficient for implementation of change.
Other factors to be considered

- Difficulties in comparing industries in a socio-economic sense
- Third party impacts
- The use of spatial allocation
- Integration with other agencies/legislation
Guidelines for proposals

• Responsibility lies with the proponents to demonstrate the benefits of the proposal.
• Mirrors other development-based applications.
• Detailed information must be provided.
• Proponents are also required to establish a local consultation process to gauge support for the proposal prior to submission.
## Needs and aspirations of each sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial fishing</td>
<td>Security of access and business certainty; recognition of community value; flexibility; compensation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational fishing</td>
<td>Opportunity for access; diversity of experience; some reasonable expectation of catching a fish; equity; recognition of benefits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charter fishing tourism</td>
<td>Recognition distinct from the recreational sector; sustainability of the industry; regional equity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seafood consumers</td>
<td>Recognition as a user group; expectation of affordability and quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>recognition of diversity; traditional use; indigenous commercial fishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aquaculture</td>
<td>Access requirements; recognition of reliance on other sectors for source food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation:</td>
<td>ESD; a comprehensive network of no take zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism/ecotourism</td>
<td>World class tourism activities; security of access; business certainty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td>Knowledge that the resource is being managed sustainably.</td>
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Benefits of the policy

• It was the first major strategic policy developed by FIDC.
• Gave stakeholders a chance to sit around the table and negotiate a fair process and principles on which decisions should be based.
• Collaborative approach
• It provides for fair treatment of user groups and a balanced approach to allocation.
Benefits of the policy cont’d

- Puts the onus back on proponents to demonstrate the benefits of a reallocation proposal.
- Minimises the number of unreasonable or poorly constructed proposals.
- Uses systems already in place (e.g., MACs) to minimise duplication. An independent panel is only used when a resolution can’t be reached.
- Is consistent with national progress on allocation (e.g., Coolangatta Communiqué).
Application of the policy to date

- The policy has been approved, but not formally applied to a proposal.
- Since its implementation the number of inadequately justified reallocation proposals has fallen dramatically.
- No action is being taken on applications that were submitted prior to the development of the policy.
- The policy has been used to help develop a strategic directions document which will guide development of the East Coast Inshore Finfish management plan.
Linkages with other processes

- Introduction of the new licensing system may lead to increased market-based changes to allocation.
- Formula for compensation where commercial fishing rights are diminished for the benefit of another user group.
- Modern management measures will allow for more market-based reallocations. Eg buying of quota (reef, trawl, spanner).
Future issues

- How can we make reallocation decisions when sectors don’t have an opportunity to adjust to the multiple and ongoing changes?
- The rezoning of the GBRMP effectively constitutes a spatial reallocation.
- It is possible that DPI&F may receive applications seeking to shift allocation arrangements because of the impacts of the RAP.
- Issue of data quality. How do we allocate explicit shares of a resource when the amount of resource available is either unknown or lacks scientific certainty.
Future issues cont’d

• Putting in place management arrangements to adequately constrain users to within their share can also be problematic, particularly in regard to the recreational sector.
• Is the policy too onerous on proponents? Does it stop all applications, or just the frivolous ones?
• Real value may lie in using the policy in management planning processes.
Conclusions

- The policy attempts to pull together allocation issues within a single overarching framework, while still providing flexibility.
- It has provided structure to deal with complex issues where a structure didn’t exist before.
- No single formula for determining allocation values, but it does provide a fair process for negotiating outcomes.
- It encourages stakeholders to work together and appreciate each others positions and aspirations.
- Hopefully this will lead to better understanding between user groups and more balanced allocation outcomes.
Not enough?

For more information and copies of the policy go to: www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb