Areas of Limited Gear Restrictions in the East Coast Trawl Fishery

a case of sensible resource sharing or the reallocation of fishing rights?

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Presentation outline

- The GBR Marine Park
- Aquaculture of marine prawns
- The East Coast Trawl Fishery
- Brood stock collection
- Three case studies
  - Mission Beach
  - Inshore north of Cairns
  - Innisfail
- Lessons learnt
The GBR Marine Park

- Recognised as critical global resource
- World Heritage listed (1981)
- Covers vast area (345,400 sq. km; >2300 km long; up to 300 km wide)
- Multiple jurisdictions (CW & QLD)
- Major Rezoning (July 2004)
- Multi-Use Marine Park
Aquaculture of Marine Prawns in Queensland

In 2003/04
- Value - $53 million
- Production - 3,360 t
  - 4 farms produce >200t/yr
  - 14 farms produce 50–200t/yr
- 8% growth
- Prawn Industry Development Plan
- Market – mostly interstate domestic
Prawn Aquaculture continued ….

Graph from Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries – Aquaculture Investor Information Kit on Prawns (last updated 11 January 2006)
Industry issues:
- Hatchery technology
- Diseases
- Market Competition
  - low-cost farmed imports
  - wild caught domestic product
- Reliant on brood stock supply from wild
  *(Penaeus monodon)*

Female broodstock (Photo taken from AIMS website)
East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery

Targets:
- tiger & endeavour prawns
- northern & eastern king prawns
- banana prawns; scallops; bugs

Commercial catch – 60 sp
Bycatch ~ 1,000 sp

Largest QLD Fishery
- ~530 trawlers
- ~10,000t catch /year
- ~$100 - $120 million value
• Uses pelagic trawl gear to sweep over bottom
• Indiscriminate fishing method with large bycatch
Broodstock Collection

- Approx. 6-10,000 female leader prawns (>22.5cm) required annually for farms
- Collected from turbid inshore waters
- Requires specialised collection operations
- Comparative financial returns ($1, $40-$100 or >$400 )
Supply & demand of broodstock
• Peak abundance throughout summer (Jan – Apr)
• Coincides with peak commercial fishery
• Peak demand from farms in spring (Sep – Dec)
Case Study 1 - Mission Beach

- Major tourist area to the north of Hinchinbrook Island (WHA listed).
- Fish kills regular occurrence since 1970s.
- Resulted in major community opposition to trawling & calls for a closure of the area.
Case Study 1 - Mission Beach

continued ....

Extent of Fish Kills

- Reported by local rangers
- Tens of thousands of mostly “trash fish”
- Dead fish floating 2 km offshore
- Slick < 1 km wide, < 4 km long
- Density of fish < 40 - 50 per m²
- Heavy earth-moving machinery sometimes used to bury dead fish
Case Study 1- Mission Beach
continued ….

The outcome

• Closure of Mission Beach to trawling under GBRMPA legislation in April 2002.
• Only broodstock collection permitted. (up to 5 restricted licences)
• Major industry opposition to closure.
• Happy locals!
Case Study 2- North of Cairns

- Commercial fishing is 3rd largest industry in region
  - employs 1600 people
  - injects $150 million/yr
- Major tourist destination
- Large charter & game fishing fleet
Case Study 2- North of Cairns

continued ….

• Code of Conduct developed by industry
  – Gear restrictions effectively limit operations to broodstock collection
  – Weekend closures

• Code of conduct incorporated under Trawl Plan (Sep. 2003).

• Previously considered for independent environmental certification by MSC.

Trawler mooring at Port Douglas
(photograph from GBRMPA photo library)
Case Study 3- Innisfail

- Another tourist destination ("Gateway to the Tablelands").
- Best all-year round broodstock collection grounds following rezoning.
- No fish kills to date.
Proposal for similar gear size restrictions as Cairns was rejected by industry.

Currently negotiating a voluntary code of conduct.

Situation is highly inflamed between brood stock collectors & trawlers.

Estuary at Tully
(photograph from GBRMPA photo library)
Lessons Learnt

• Don’t tackle the tourism & recreational fisheries sectors.
• Avoid the lime light!
• Being pro-active pays off!
• Maximise returns in the inshore area.
• Forfeiture of some short term fishing rights may yield greater security in the long term.