

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 43

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Geelong Star

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator BROWN asked:

In relation to the activities of the Geelong Star, can you provide details of all interactions with protective species from 1 January to 30 June of this year?

- a) How many of these interactions were fatal?
- b) Is the September 2015 (Version 1.5) of the Geelong Star Vessel Management Plan still the current version?
- c) In regard to the revised draft Vessel Management Plan for the Geelong Star, what informed AMFA's review of the Vessel Management Plan?
- d) Can you please provide a summary of the changes in the revised draft Geelong Star Vessel Management Plan?
- e) Can you provide a timeline for the public consultations on the revised draft Vessel Management Plan and a list of submissions received?
- f) When do you expect the final revised VMP to be in place?
- g) What role does AFMA have in monitoring the voluntary offer regarding recreational fishing made by Seafish Tasmania?

What are the implications of Seafish Tasmania not adhering to the terms of the voluntary agreement (which I understand is the case with the Geelong Star having fished within 20 nautical miles of Bermagui on the 13 May 2016, one day before the Canberra GFC Annual Yellowfin Tournament)?

Answer:

- a) Table 1: Protected species interactions for the Geelong Star from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2016 from logbook records.

Question: 43 (continued)

Species	Alive	Dead	Total
Australian fur seal	2	28	30
New Zealand fur seal		4	4
Shortfin Mako	4	3	7
Shy Albatross		6	6
Albatross (unspecified)		1	1
Whale shark	1		1

- b) A review of the Vessel Management Plan (VMP) for the Geelong Star was recently completed. The revised VMP (version 2.0) came into effect on 31 October 2016.
- c) The review took into account data about the vessel's activities and comments from public consultation, seabird and marine mammal experts, the fishing industry, the South East Management Advisory Committee, the SPF Scientific Panel, the Department of the Environment and Energy and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.
- d) A summary of changes can be found on AFMA's website at:
<http://www.afma.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Attachment-C-Summary-of-changes-to-the-VMP-accessible.pdf>.
- e) The public were invited to provide comments on the draft revised VMP (version 2.0) from 6 June 2016 until 11 July 2016. A total of 18 submissions were received. The full list can be found on AFMA's website at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Geelong-Star-VMP-Public-Comment-Submissions-281016.pdf>.

The list includes one confidential submission from Seafish Tasmania.
- f) Please refer to answer b).
- g) AFMA is using the Vessel Monitoring System, logbook and observer records to monitor compliance with Seafish Tasmania's voluntary offer and is publicly reporting quarterly at the request of Seafish Tasmania. As it is a voluntary offer, any implications of not adhering to it are matters for Seafish Tasmania.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 44

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Small Pelagic Fishery

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Provide an update on the scientific and economic advice with respect to the Small Pelagic Fishery?

Answer:

A list of recent research projects undertaken in relation to the Small Pelagic Fishery can be found at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Supertrawlers45th/Additional_Documents.

Australian Fisheries Management Authority's two year trial of a scientific panel, together with stakeholder forums, as the key way for the Commission to receive scientific and economic advice about the management of the Small Pelagic Fishery is continuing.

The scientific panel has met four times since 1 December 2015 to provide scientific and economic advice. Minutes for the first three scientific panel meetings are available at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/small-pelagic-fishery/small-pelagic-fishery-scientific-panel/>.

There has been one stakeholder forum and the meeting record can be found at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/small-pelagic-fishery/small-pelagic-fishery-stakeholder-forum/>.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 45

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Geelong Star

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Is AFMA seeking information about the social impact of the Geelong Star on regional areas when considering the Geelong Star's Management Plan?

Answer:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA) governing legislation sets out a number of objectives in relation to social performance including requirements to deliver fisheries management in pursuit of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and maximising net economic returns to the Australian community.

Australia's National Strategy on ESD establishes goals and objectives for development that:

- improve the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends
- enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations
- provide for equity within and between generations
- protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems

The National Strategy on ESD also establishes a number of relevant Guiding Principles including:

- decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered

Question: 45 (continued)

- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised
- the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
- decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them

AFMA takes a balanced approach in pursuit of these and other legislative objective wherein no single objective or principle predominates over all others. Central to AFMA's approach is a view that social benefits, including but not limited to those arising from recreational and commercial fishing, are best pursued from having fish stocks and underlying marine ecosystems that are healthy and well-managed. AFMA also takes the view that publicly owned marine living resources should generally be a shared resource wherein having multiple user groups will pursue ESD and other objectives.

To assist in pursuit of its legislative objectives, AFMA undertakes extensive stakeholder and public engagement through statutory Management Advisory Committees, Resources Assessment Groups, other expert and/or stakeholder reference groups and formal public consultation as well as more informal consultation and communication.

The Geelong Star operates in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF). Commercial harvest rates in the SPF are set conservatively and target fish stocks are neither overfished nor subject to overfishing. AFMA is not aware of any evidence that the activities of the Geelong Star are impacting on the availability of fish in other commercial- or recreational fisheries or the underlying health of the marine ecosystem that supports them. AFMA is working to make more information available to the public about the demonstrable sustainability of the SPF.

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Question: 46

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Geelong Star

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Provide detail on how much fish (by species) has the Geelong Star taken (by grid) in the 15/16 and 16/17 seasons?

Answer:

In the 2015-16 season, the Geelong Star took (either retained or discarded) fish in 7 of 81 grid squares in the western zone and 7 of 38 grid squares in the eastern zone. More than 99 per cent of the respective take in each zone occurred in two grid squares in the west and three grid squares the east.

As of 27 October 2016, the Geelong Star has taken (either retained or discarded) fish in two grid squares in each of the eastern and western zones during the 2016-17 season.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 47

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Small Pelagic Fishery

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Provide detail on how much fish has been taken in the Small Pelagic Fishery in these areas prior to 2015?

Answer:

Historically, the vast majority of the catch taken in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) has been taken in the eastern zone with catches exceeding 40 000 tonnes in the mid-1980s. Since then, catches have fluctuated markedly between years. A detailed description of the history of catches in the SPF can be found in the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences' Fishery Status Reports at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/publications>. These reports detail annual catches in the SPF by species since 1992-93.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 48

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Geelong Star

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Where are the end users for the fish taken by the Geelong Star?

Answer:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority does not collect trade information for Commonwealth fisheries but we understand that at least some of the catch has gone to West Africa.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 49

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Geelong Star

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

What measures are in place to ensure that the trawler is not situated in one location for extended periods of time?

Answer:

Regional catch limits have been applied in the Small Pelagic Fishery to encourage the distribution of fishing effort across the fishery and collect representative data on target species. Regional catch limits may also reduce any potential risk of localised depletion occurring by restricting catches in localised areas of the fishery over time.

- A catch limit of 2000 tonnes applies to the combined catch of quota species within any one of 120 grids over a 30 day period.
- A maximum of 75 per cent of a concession holder's combined quota (eastern or western) can be taken in any one of seven management sub-zones.

Seafish Tasmania has also made commitments under a voluntary offer to stay away from key recreational fishing areas at certain times. AFMA's quarterly report on Seafish Tasmania's adherence to the voluntary offer can be found at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/small-pelagic-fishery/seafish-tasmania-voluntary-offer/>.

The Geelong Star's catch is also limited by the portion of the quota that it owns. Seafish Tasmania, the operators of the Geelong Star, currently hold just under half the quota in the fishery.