

Sea cucumber fishery

Commercial fishing rules in Queensland

From **1 September 2021**, the sea cucumber fishery will be managed under the *Queensland sea cucumber fishery harvest strategy*.

General

- The commercial sea cucumber (beche-de-mer) fishery area consists of all tidal waters east of longitude 142°31'49"E between latitude 10°41'S and latitude 26°S (parallel to the southern limit of Tin Can Bay). However, in practice, waters south of the Great Barrier Reef are rarely fished.
- The fishery is managed under a rotational harvest arrangement. Reefs within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Coral Sea in the fishery area are divided into 158 zones.
- The fishery operates under the B1 symbol.
- The major commercially harvested sea cucumber species include:
 - black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*)
 - white teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*)
 - burrowing blackfish (*Actinopyga spinea*)
 - various other sea cucumber species.
- The fishery has been quota-managed since 1991 with a total allowable commercial catch (TACC). The TACC is allocated amongst individual transferable quota (ITQ) units for black teatfish, white teatfish and other sea cucumber.
- The TACC is adjusted according to the decision rules in the harvest strategy each year. The current TACC can be found in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019.
- Refer to the harvest strategy for information on fishery targets, biomass indicators, reference points, and decision rules that will be implemented if biomass limits are reached – visit fisheries.qld.gov.au.
- Australian Government requirements include displaying unique identifying numbers, safety management plans, safety equipment and licensing – for more information, visit amsa.gov.au.

Equipment

- Sea cucumber operations are dive-based (hookah) using hand collection techniques. Sea cucumbers are harvested mainly by divers breathing surface-supplied air from hookah equipment and, to a lesser extent, by free-diving from dinghies or by hand collection along reefs at low tide.
- Only 1 primary boat plus up to 4 tender boats can operate under a licence at any one time.
- Under Queensland fisheries legislation, an assistant fisher is not required to be within 800 m of a commercial fisher. However, Australian Maritime Safety Authority safety rules apply – for more information, visit amsa.gov.au.

Fishing operation

- Up to 6 people can operate under the licence at any one time.
- An approved vessel tracking unit must be:
 - installed as per the department's *Vessel tracking installation and maintenance standard*
 - installed on vessel/s and confirmed working prior to commencement of a fishing trip.
- The licence holder must have a contract with an approved supplier for collection of vessel tracking positional data
- There is also no longer a distance requirement for primary and tender vessels operating in this fishery. However, Australian Maritime Safety Authority safety rules apply – for more information, visit amsa.gov.au.
- Fishers must comply with marine park and go-slow zoning – for more information, visit gbrmpa.qld.gov.au and/or des.qld.gov.au.

Licensing

- To operate in the fishery, a fisher must have:
 - a primary commercial fishing licence
 - at least one B1 symbol
 - unused entitlements of quota units for the hand-harvest individual transferable quota year for the relevant species.
- The person in charge of an operation must hold a commercial fisher licence, in order to operate under a primary commercial fishing licence.
- A range of transactions can be completed online using FishNet Secure (e.g. quota temporary transfers, registering vessel tracking units to primary commercial fishing licences, accessing quota activity statements and registering change of personal contact details).
- Fees for licences and quota are invoiced in advance (i.e. before the fishing season starts or before the licence can be used).
- The licence holder is responsible for keeping contact details up to date on FishNet Secure.
- You may require accreditation with Safe Food in order to legally sell or supply your product in Queensland – for more information, visit safefood.qld.gov.au.

Reporting requirements

In summary, fishers must:

- report trip/catch notices for all catch to which a TACC applies via approved means (e.g. Automated Integrated Voice Response system)
- complete catch and effort logbooks and the threatened, endangered and protected animal logbook
- complete catch disposal records for the disposal of all catch to which a TACC applies
- keep sale dockets for all wholesale sales for 5 years, including to businesses involved in the processing and storage of fisheries resources.

For more information on reporting requirements, visit fisheries.qld.gov.au.