

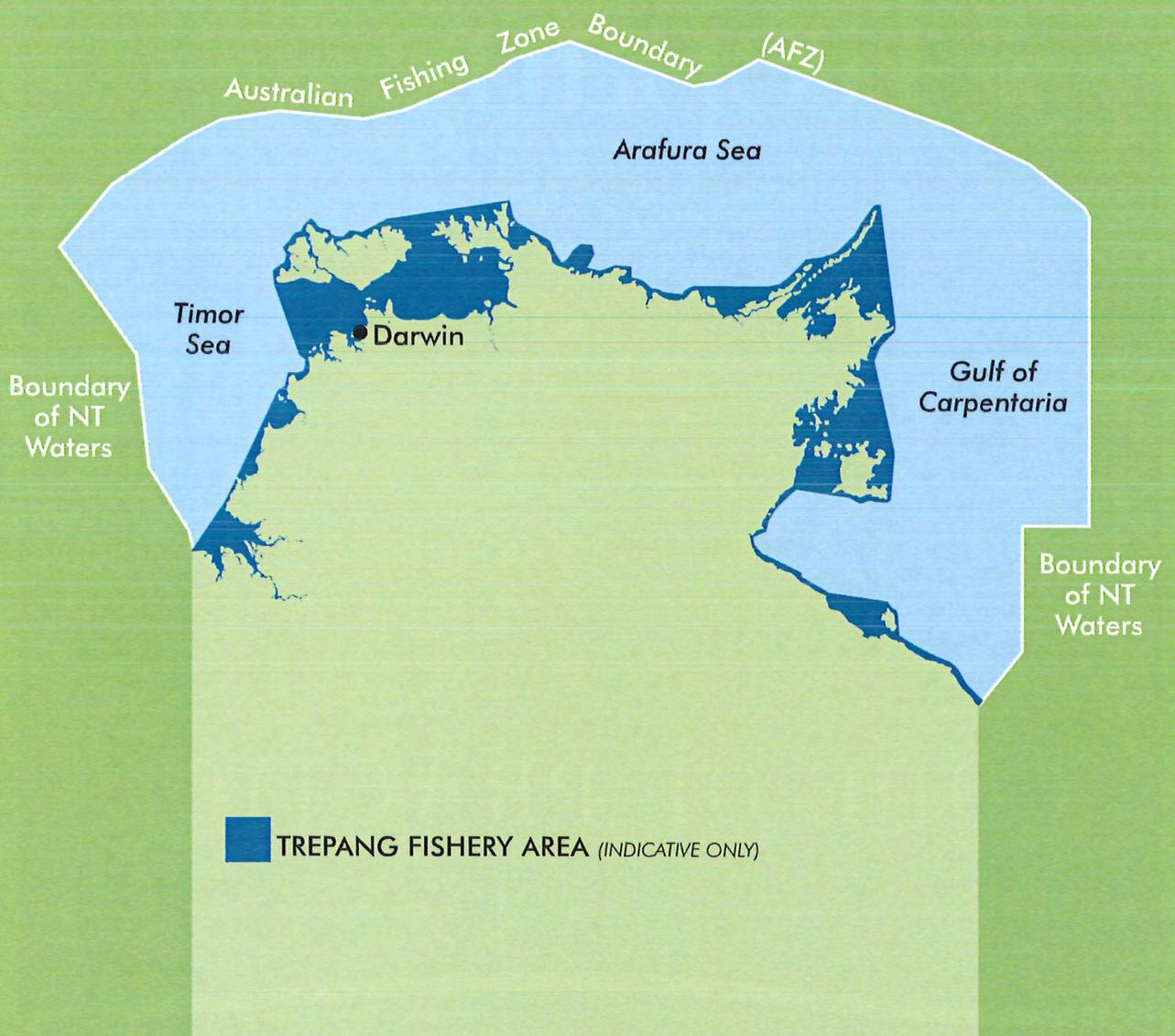
NORTHERN TERRITORY

Trepang *Fishery*



CODE OF PRACTICE

TREPANG FISHERY





OBJECTIVE

To provide operators in the Northern Territory Trepang fishery with the knowledge and understanding to further enhance the ecological sustainability of the fishery and safety of operations, while maximising the quality, safety and value of product.

INTRODUCTION

A best practice guide for the Trepang fishery, this is specifically designed to assist operators to maximise the quality and value of product, minimise wastage and contribute to the ongoing ecological and economic health of the Trepang fishery and businesses involved in it.

This voluntary Code of Practice has been developed by the Trepang Licensee Committee of the Northern Territory Seafood Council, with funding assistance from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Northern Territory Government.

THE FISHERY

The Northern Territory Trepang fishery is based on the hand harvesting of Holothurian species in coastal waters extending seaward of the high water mark at the coastline to three nautical miles from the baseline.

Sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) is the major target species with White Teat Fish (*Holothuria nobilis*) also being harvested. Other Holothurian species have been identified in NT waters for being possible harvest species, however these are not currently targeted.

Due to the hand harvested nature of the fishery, there is no by-product or by-catch. Product is sold in cooked, frozen form to markets where further processing is undertaken.

Almost wholly an export fishery, it has significant potential to expand and further contribute to the Northern Territory economy.





PREPARATION

Vessels

Good vessel design and maintenance minimise the chance of contamination and physical damage to the product.

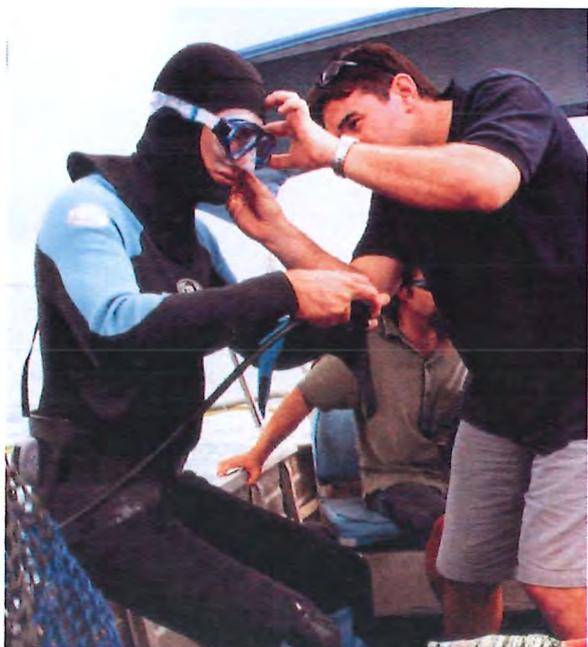
Gear

Gear should be designed to minimise damage or loss of product. All gear used in the fishing operation should be maintained and stowed or secured in a safe manner when not in use.

Occupational health and safety

Clear, concise occupational health and safety guidelines should be in place for the entire operation and crew members should understand these and other relevant food safety and regulatory obligations.

When crew understand their responsibilities during fishing operations the chances of accidents are minimised.



Hygienic handling

Crew should be trained in the hygienic handling of food products.

Any person with a contagious or notifiable illness must not be allowed to come in to contact with product unless the integrity of the product can be guaranteed.

Cleaning

Deck, mats, processing tables, utensils and other potential product contact surfaces should be cleaned and sanitised to prevent any contamination.

The vessel should be thoroughly cleaned prior to each fishing trip to remove any contaminants that may be present.

Ensure only "food safe" cleaning and sanitising products are used on product surfaces and always follow manufacturers directions in respect to their use.

Secure harmful materials

Harmful and poisonous materials such as oils, insecticides and cleaning products must be stored and/or secured in an area where they cannot contaminate product or handling areas.

Pest control

Rodents, birds and insects are all potential carriers of diseases which could contaminate product and it is important that adequate steps are taken to control pests on a vessel. Domestic animals should not be kept on board.



Water

To maintain product quality and safety, only clean sea water or potable fresh water is to be used on product.

COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

Diving safety

In addition to standard safety requirements associated with diving, there are additional concerns in regard to dangerous animals in Northern Territory waters.

There are aquatic animal hazards such as sharks, crocodiles, box jellyfish, stingers, cone shellfish, leopard fish, stonefish, stingrays, sea snakes and stinging corals or fire corals.

Injuries or death may occur from predatory attacks (sharks, crocodiles, box-jellyfish) or defensive attacks (blue-ringed octopus, stonefish and sea snakes). Preventative measures can be taken and all crew should be aware of these.

Length of dive session

Dive sessions should be around 3 to 4 hours and a maximum of two sessions per day. The length of a dive session may vary due to operational constraints such as poor visibility, strong winds, currents and presence of predators or threats (e.g. crocodiles, sharks or jellyfish).

Returning product to vessel

Collection bags should be emptied into suitable containers such as a fish bin

until they are returned the mother vessel for processing.



Processing surfaces and implements

Processing surfaces should be cleaned of waste, washed down and rendered sterile at the end of each processing run. During the run, regular rinsing off with clean seawater will also lessen the risk of contamination.

Smoking, eating and drinking should be prohibited in the processing, sorting and storage facility areas.





Handle trepang with clean hands

Before handling or processing catch, crew members should ensure their hands are clean. If gloves are used, they should be clean and rinsed regularly during processing. After use they should be cleaned and dried.

Thoroughly remove viscera

Using a sharp knife, make an incision in the trepang to assist in the removal of viscera. Ensure all viscera is removed from the product.

Boiling

Only clean sea water or potable fresh water should be used for boiling trepang. Ensure trepang are boiled at a minimum temperature of 100°C for a duration of at least 20 minutes.

Chilling

Following boiling, trepang should be drained and immediately placed into chilled clean sea water or potable fresh water until their temperature has dropped to below 4°C.



Freezing

Frozen trepang must be kept at a temperature of at least -18°C.

Keep the deck clean

The vessel's deck should be continually washed down to remove any contaminants and to maintain a safe working environment.

STORAGE

Use food grade packaging

Packaging used for product must be of food grade quality and stored in a contaminant and pest free environment.

Regularly check thermometers

Trepang quality and safety is dependent on temperature control and thermometers should be regularly checked for accuracy. A check thermometer should be available onboard and used at the beginning, at least, of each processing session.

Monitor freezer gauges

It is good practice to monitor freezer temperature three or four times daily. Frozen product must be kept at or below -18°C at all times and it is recommended that freezers be fitted with high temperature alarms.

Unloading

It is important to ensure that the cold chain is maintained during unloading and transport to storage or market to ensure temperatures do not rise above the minimum recommended for frozen (-18°C).



Transferring product from onboard storage in small batches to the receiving unit which in turn, should be pre-chilled, will help ensure integrity of the cold chain.

All deck equipment and holding tanks should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and rinsed following unloading.

WASTE & POLLUTION

Processing water

Processing wastes should be diluted and expelled in deeper water away from bays and inlets. Discarding waste within enclosed waters such as harbours and in the vicinity of communities should be avoided.

Plastics

Plastics are not allowed to be discharged into the sea. All plastics must be retained on the vessel and disposed of at port facilities. Plastic waste which forms a continuous loop should be cut onboard to minimise impacts in the event that it is accidentally lost at sea.

Noxious liquids

No discharge of residues containing noxious substances is permitted within 12 nautical miles of the nearest land. The discharge of liquid in quantities or concentrations that are harmful to the aquatic environment is prohibited by law.

Retrieval of lost fishing gear and garbage

Lost fishing gear and garbage can pose a significant threat to aquatic life. All

efforts should be made to retrieve lost fishing gear. If it is not possible to collect, report the location of the gear to the relevant authorities.

Efforts should also be made to retrieve any non-degradable garbage or wastes found during fishing operations, for proper disposal at onshore facilities.

Report pollution

Any oil or chemical spills or other incidences of environmental damage in the area of the fishery should be reported as follows:

- Within 3nm of the baselines, to the **Pollution Hotline 1800 064 567**



THREATENED SPECIES

There are a number of species listed as protected under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and under the Northern Territory's *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

On occasions, unintended interactions with protected species may occur. It is a legal requirement to report any such interactions to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage.

Some examples of interactions that require reporting are:

- Any action resulting in the killing, injuring, taking or trading of a listed species
- The accidental capture of a listed species in a fishing operation
- A humane action that is necessary to relieve or prevent the suffering of a listed species
- An action taken to prevent risk to human health
- An action that is necessary to deal with an emergency where there is a serious threat to human life or property

Reporting requirements

Under the EPBC Act, the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) must be notified within 7 days of a person becoming aware of an interaction and the report should include the following details:

- Time and date
- Species involved
- Number of animals
- Specific location
- Gear or bait type used

To report an interaction or to seek further information:

Phone: 1800 641 806

Email: protected.species@deh.gov.au

Mail: Director, Wildlife Impact and Protection Section
Dept. Environment & Heritage
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601



DEFINITIONS

By-Product – Catch which is kept to be sold but is not the principal target.

By-Catch – Catch which is returned to the sea either because it has little or no commercial value or because regulations preclude it being retained.

Ecologically Sustainable Development – Using, conserving and enhancing community resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased

CONTACTS

Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
Queries regarding Commonwealth environmental laws.
Tel: 02 6279 5015 | Fax: 02 6279 5966

Bureau of Meteorology
Forecasts and warnings Tel: 08 8920 3826
General Enquires Tel: 08 8920 3800

Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH)
Reporting all listed species interactions.
Tel: 1800 641 806

Fishwatch
Reporting illegal fishing activities.
Tel: 1800 065 522

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
Identification of unusual or exotic fish.
Tel: 08 8999 8201

NT Fisheries
Fisheries Management Agency
Tel: 08 8999 2144 | Fax: 08 8999 2065

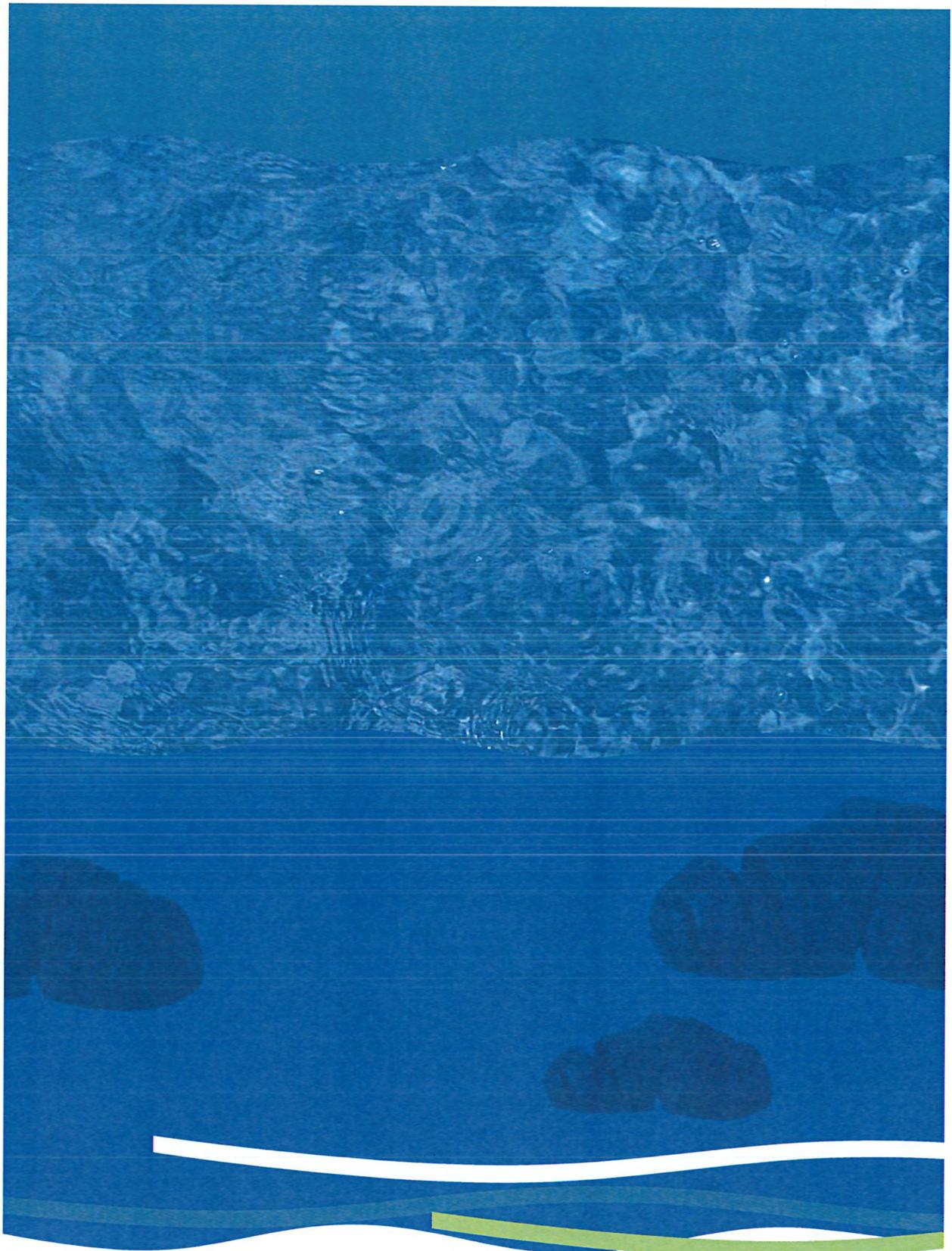
NT Parks and Wildlife Commission
Interactions with tagged animals and NT protected species.
Tel: 08 8999 5511

NT Pollution Hotline
Reporting pollution within the NT.
Tel: 1800 064 567

Northern Territory Seafood Council
Peak industry body, NT
Tel: 08 8981 5194 | Fax: 08 8981 5063

Trepang Licensee Committee
Tel: 08 8981 5194 | Fax: 08 8981 5063

Rescue Co-ordination Centre Australia (RCC Australia)
Reporting close collisions and pollution at sea beyond 3nm.
Tel: 1800 641 792 | Fax 1800 622 153



For more information:
Northern Territory Seafood Council
Trepang Licensee Committee
Tel 08 8981 5194
www.ntsc.com.au | ntsc@ntsc.com.au
GPO Box 618 Darwin NT 0801