

SASF TEPS Mitigation and Monitoring Workplan

Background

PIRSA and the Minister are responsible for management of the fishery under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* (the Act). The Act requires PIRSA and the Minister to:

“provide for the conservation and management of the aquatic resources of the State, the management of fisheries and aquatic reserves, the regulation of fishing and the processing of aquatic resources, the protection of aquatic habitats, aquatic mammals and aquatic resources and the control of exotic aquatic organisms and disease in aquatic resources; and for other purposes”.

In addition, a condition of approval for the South Australian Sardine Fishery under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) refers to measures to ensure accurate information on protected species mortality rates is collected.

Condition G: *By 2024, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions of South Australia must implement suitable measures to ensure accurate information on protected species mortality levels is collected in the fishery and that underreporting is not occurring. In satisfying this condition, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions of South Australia must:*

- a) by 16 December 2022, publish a plan detailing how it will respond to this issue, including any systems, controls, or management arrangements that will be implemented and associated timeframes. The plan will need to be made publicly available and a copy provided to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.*
- b) by April 2024, provide evidence that suitable systems have been implemented to ensure accurate information on protected species mortality levels is collected in the fishery and that underreporting is not occurring.*

A workshop of 17 November 2022 between PIRSA, SARDI and industry was held to discuss the need for options to progress mitigation and monitoring of interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species (TEPS) in the South Australian Sardine Fishery. At that meeting industry agreed to participate in a Steering Committee to co-design a research project aimed at assessing the effectiveness of options to mitigate or monitor interactions with TEPS in the SASF including e-Monitoring via a camera trial.

The objective of the research program is to reduce uncertainty in mortality estimates by reducing the discrepancy in performance indicators of the fishery.

The research program will investigate the following mitigation and monitoring options:

- Net monitors
- Acoustic deterrents/detection gear
- Thermal imaging gear
- Electronic monitoring of commercial purse seining at night
- Improvements to the wildlife interaction reporting framework

The research program aims to assess the effectiveness of identified options to:

- improve mitigation of interactions with dolphins
- reduce uncertainty in mortality estimates by reducing discrepancy in performance indicators of the fishery.

A SASF TEPS Mitigation Research Steering Committee has been established to provide guidance on the operational provisions of the planned research program. The members of this committee are:

- Industry members nominated by the Sardine Industry Association of South Australian (SASIA)
- Executive Officer SASIA
- A SARDI Research Member
- A PIRSA Compliance Member
- A PIRSA Fisheries Management Member

Project Timeline

The timeline of the research project is:

| Milestone | Timeline | Responsible / Key parties |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Research proposal drafted by SARDI | In progress | PIRSA, SARDI and Industry |
| 2. Publish work plan in fulfilment of Condition G of the EPBC conditions | 16 December 2022 | PIRSA, Steering Committee |
| 3. Research proposal considered by Steering Committee | Mid Jan 2023 | Steering Committee |
| 4. Develop research methods including participants, structured deployment strategies, timelines | Jan 2023 | Steering Committee |
| 5. Finalise trial design | Jan 2023 | PIRSA, SARDI and SASIA EO |
| 6. Trial the use of net monitors to bridge the gap in the discrepancies within net setting parameters, and also of acoustic detection/deterrents and other available gear | February – November 2023 pending funding | PIRSA / SARDI and participants |
| 7. Review the efficacy and regulatory regimes of e-monitoring technology implemented elsewhere in like fisheries, and advise on the required legislated changes/protocols required | February – November 2023 | PIRSA / Steering Committee |
| 8. Identify available Charter vessel/s that can operate similar to a SA Sardine fishery boat and can demonstrate purse seining at night for trialing electronic monitoring, net monitors, thermal imaging, if not identified earlier | End June 2023 | Steering Committee |
| 9. Key period of research activity including electronic monitoring, thermal imaging and net monitors | August – November 2023 | SARDI / participants |
| 10. Structured research completed | Dec 2023 | PIRSA / SARDI and participants |
| 11. Draft report considered by Steering Committee for comment | 2024 TBC | Steering Committee |
| 12. Report finalized | 2024 TBC | SARDI |
| 13. Propose future activities based on the research outcomes were appropriate. | April 2024 | Steering Committee/PIRSA |