



Implementing New Management Measures for the Recreational Harvest of Shrimps and Prawns Combined in BC Tidal Waters

Issue

The recreational daily limit for all Shrimps, including Prawn has not changed since 1996. A series of precautionary measures have been implemented by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the prawn and shrimp by trap fishery for all sectors in support of conservation and sustainable management. The effort in harvesting Prawns by the recreational sector has increased significantly over the last 20 years.

To support the overall sustainability of the prawn fishery, DFO is implementing a reduced daily limit and possession limit for all Shrimp species, including Prawn, which will be in effect April 1, 2020.

Background

DFO recognizes the importance of the fishery resource to all who depend on it for their sustenance, livelihood and recreation. The Department's role is to manage the fishery resource with a cautious approach to ensure the sustainability of Canada's fisheries into the future.

The Department regularly reviews the management measures it has in place for fisheries to ensure they are relevant to current conditions and objectives. In recent years, DFO Fisheries Management has been making adjustments to how the prawn fishery is managed under a conservation framework guided by the Prawn and Shrimp by trap Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for all sectors in support of conservation and sustainable management. While interest and participation in recreational fishing has increased significantly in recent years, numerous features of the recreational management regime for recreational prawn fisheries have not changed in decades. The new recreational limits for these fisheries are intended to respond to changes in fishing effort as part of the precautionary approach DFO takes to ensure sustainability of the fishery.

Over the last several decades, Prawn harvest has become an increasingly valuable and important part of BC's fisheries, placing increased pressure on the resource. The commercial Prawn harvest is one of the most valuable fisheries in BC and First Nations are harvesting Prawn in increasing numbers for Food-Social-Ceremonial (FSC) purposes, often using commercial gear. The recreational harvest of Prawns has grown, with increasing effort, increasing interest and advances in fishing gear and equipment (e.g. fish finders, chart plotters, power trap haulers). The daily limit has been in place since 1996 and has been viewed as unreasonably high, as it was an arbitrary number when adopted. Concerns about the recreational daily limit have been raised by First Nations, commercial harvesters and DFO through annual consultations. This has made efforts to manage First Nations harvest of prawn for FSC purposes challenging.

In recent years, DFO Fisheries Management has been making adjustments to how the Prawn fishery is managed, for all sectors, to respond to changes in prawn fisheries. All sectors involved in fishing (First Nations Food-Social-Ceremonial (FSC), Recreational, Commercial) share a responsibility to manage fisheries resources. This includes adopting sustainable fishing practices and the implementation of new management measures.

Some recent examples of new management measures in the Prawn fishery include:

- The requirement, starting in 2014, for all commercial Prawn vessels to have a DFO-approved Vessel Monitoring System and a system to notify DFO and the service provider every time gear is set or hauled.
- The requirement, starting in 2014, for all commercial Prawn vessels to release any egg bearing female Prawn, immediately, with the least harm possible.
- The requirement, starting in 2016, for a supplemental licence when using commercial gear and vessels to fish for Prawns for FSC purposes.
- The requirement, starting in 2017, for all commercial Prawn vessels to remove their fishing gear within 3 days of notification of the closure of the fishery (from 7 days), reducing commercial fishing effort by 4 days in a 35-40 day fishery.
- The requirement, starting in 2018, for all recreational harvesters to release any egg bearing female Prawn, immediately, with the least harm possible.
- (Complete list in Appendix 1)

DFO recognizes the efforts of the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) to support some of the existing management measures such as the release of all Prawns carrying eggs by the recreational fishing sector and seasonal area closures in key South Coast areas. The Department has consulted with the SFAB on the issue of daily limits for the past four years and more extensively in the past year to develop proposals. The SFAB recommended a smaller reduction to 170 per day in South Coast waters and no change in North Coast waters and has suggested that a reduction in the daily limit amounts to a reallocation to other sectors. While the daily limit does not restrict the total catch of the whole fishery, it can help in limiting effort in recreational fisheries that consist of numerous and often dispersed operations that might otherwise be difficult to limit. The reduction in the daily limit for recreationally caught prawn is considered a longer-term sustainable management measure that can be applied coast wide.

Management Changes

Starting April 1, 2020, the daily recreational limit for all Shrimps, including Prawn, will be reduced to 125 (aggregate limit). This applies coast wide.

The combined possession limit for all Shrimps including Prawn, will remain at 2 times the daily limit, which is 250 (aggregate limit).

Appendix 1: History of BC Prawn Fishery Management

Prawn and Shrimp Trap Fishery History of Commercial Management Actions

Year	Management Actions
1969	Gear marking requirements for commercial traps
1977	March 1 to March 31 commercial closure
1979	Fixed escapement model, the prawn “spawner index” and management to minimum spawner escapement commences
1983	Harvest log requirements and separate commercial Z licence established
1984	Annual seasonal commercial closure South Coast (Areas 11 to 29)
1985	January through March commercial closures Minimum commercial prawn size limit (30 mm carapace length)
1988	Minimum commercial trap mesh size
1989	Annual seasonal commercial closure North Coast (Areas 1 to 10) Commercial trap types standardized by catch efficiency
1990	Limited entry commercial licensing Standardized marking of gear required
1991	Commercial requirement to notify DFO of fishing activity and effort by area on a monthly basis
1992	Commercial hail requirements introduced Category “W” licence introduced
1993	Commercial daylight only fishing (0.5hr before dawn to 0.5hr after sunset) Voluntary commercial logbooks issued
1990s	Delayed commercial season opening date (1994?)
1995	Numbers of commercial traps limited to 300 traps per licence Management fees paid by commercial licence eligibility holders
1996	Minimum commercial prawn size limit increased to 32 mm
1997	Minimum commercial prawn size limit increased to 33 mm Berried females released in commercial fishery until June 30
1998	Minimum commercial telson length 22 mm introduced
1999	Octopus retention permitted by special conditions of licence
2000	Single haul per day pilot program southern coastal inside waters

	Commercial time of day hauling limits (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)
	Commercial opening date no earlier than May 1
2001	Single haul management measure extended coast wide
	Octopus closures and incidental catch logbook reporting requirements
2002	Industry-funded At-Sea Observers and service provider
	Rockfish by-catch monitoring program
2009	Opening date delayed after May 1
2010	Commercial vessels prohibited from non-commercial catch onboard
2014	Commercial vessel monitoring system and set/haul locations
	All berried females must be released in commercial fishery
2017	3-day closure notification in-season implemented coastwide

Prawn and Shrimp Trap Fishery History of Recreational Management Actions

Year	Management Actions
1977	Sport possession limit 100 lb shrimp in the shell or 30 lb shrimp meat
1987~	Recreational daily limit and possession limit for shrimp, includes prawn, 12 kg in shell or 4 kg shelled
	Recreational 4 trap gear limit
1994	BC Sport Fishing Regulation for hand pulling only was repealed
1995	Recreational fishers required to hold a sports fishing licence in order to catch prawns, as well as other shellfish
1996	Recreational daily limit for shrimp, includes prawn, 5 kg in shell or 2 kg shelled and possession limit 10 kg in shell and 4 kg shelled
2000	Fall spawner index monitoring begins and annual seasonal area closures in key South Coast areas
2002	Recreational limit for shrimp, includes prawn, converted from weight to daily limit of 200 pieces and possession limit of 400 pieces based on average piece count (40 prawns /1 kg)
	One recreational buoy may be used for 2 traps; traps on a single bottom line limited to one fisher (4 traps); fisher's name on buoys instead of owner's
2013	Mandatory recreational catch reporting on request
2018	All berried female prawns must be released in recreational fishery
2020	Recreational daily limit for shrimp, includes prawn, 125 pieces and possession limit 250 pieces

Prawn and Shrimp Trap Fishery History of First Nations Management Actions

Year	Management Actions
1993	Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licence Regulations; designations and catch reporting required
2016	Supplemental communal licence for commercial vessels and gear