

Sustainable Fisheries Strategy

2017–2027

Results of consultation: Urgent management actions proposed for scalloped hammerhead shark in the Gulf of Carpentaria

Summary

Public consultation on the urgent management arrangements for scalloped hammerhead shark in the Gulf Carpentaria took place from 25 November 2021 to 8 December 2021. Two urgent management actions were proposed:

- Option 1: a risk-based species-specific harvest strategy for scalloped hammerhead in the Gulf of Carpentaria and regulatory changes to require fins to be naturally attached for hammerhead shark (all species) landed in the Gulf of Carpentaria; or
- Option 2: regulatory changes to make hammerhead shark a no-take species in the Gulf of Carpentaria until fisheries reforms are progressed.

A letter summarising the possible management actions and draft copy of the Gulf of Carpentaria Hammerhead Harvest Strategy was emailed to all N3, N12, N13, N11 and S authority holders. The documentation was also made available on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries eHub website where stakeholders had the option of filling out an online survey; submitting brief comments; attaching their own documents; or responding directly via email or post.

A total of six responses were received to the consultation process with 4 responses to the online survey and two written submissions. Five of the six respondents supported the implementation of a risk-based species-specific harvest strategy for hammerhead in the Gulf of Carpentaria and regulatory changes that require fins to be naturally attached for hammerhead shark (all species) landed in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The remaining respondent did not provide a management action recommendation.

In addition to the proposed management options, three of the responses included comments supporting the management of scalloped hammerhead shark through commercial Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), making references to recent scientific literature indicating the stock may have had some recent recovery following historic declines.

Fisheries Queensland reviewed all responses and feedback provided by industry, with the information used to guide the management decision for scalloped hammerhead shark in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Background

Scalloped hammerhead shark is currently listed as 'Conservation Dependent' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act 1999*. This listing took effect from 15 March 2018. The 'Conservation Dependent' listing was contingent on jurisdictions introducing additional management and assessment measures recommended by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC).

The conservation status of scalloped hammerhead shark under the EPBC Act is currently being reassessed by the TSSC. The TSSC's preliminary advice is that the current management arrangements, including a draft National Management Strategy between Queensland and the Northern Territory, are inadequate to support maintaining a 'Conservation Dependent' listing. A decision is due before 30 April 2022.

If the species is listed as 'Endangered', and not 'Conservation Dependent', fishers would be required to take all reasonable steps to avoid catching scalloped hammerhead sharks. An 'Endangered' listing would have significant consequences on commercial fisheries nationally. As such, Urgent management action is required in an attempt to maintain a 'Conservation Dependant' listing status under the EPBC Act.

The listing of scalloped hammerhead shark as 'Conservation Dependant' was contingent on jurisdictions introducing additional management and assessment measures recommended by the TSSC. Since this listing, Queensland has implemented the majority of requirements including catch limits consistent with the non-detriment finding, fins naturally attached for sharks landed on the east coast and an East Coast Inshore Harvest Strategy that incorporates management of hammerheads on the east coast. However, the outstanding management changes for Queensland are:

- implementing a harvest strategy for the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fishery
- requiring sharks to be landed with head and/or fins naturally attached to enable species-specific reporting in Gulf of Carpentaria waters
- implementing species-specific data validation in Queensland waters.

Consultation was undertaken with N3, N12, N13, N11 and S authority holders to receive advice and recommendations to guide management decisions. The urgent management actions available for urgent implementation included:

- Option 1: a risk-based species-specific harvest strategy for scalloped hammerhead in the Gulf of Carpentaria and regulatory changes to require fins to be naturally attached for hammerhead shark (all species) landed in the Gulf of Carpentaria; or
- Option 2: regulatory changes to make hammerhead shark a no-take species in the Gulf of Carpentaria until fisheries reforms are progressed.

The industry consultation results will be used to guide the management decisions in an attempt to maintain a conservation dependant listing of scalloped hammerhead shark.

Consultation process

Timing

Public consultation on the urgent management arrangements for scalloped hammerhead shark in the Gulf Carpentaria took place from 25 November 2021 to 8 December 2021.

Notifications

A letter and draft copy of the scalloped hammerhead harvest strategy were emailed to all N3, N12, N13, N11 and S authority holders. The documentation was also made available on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries eHub website where stakeholders had the option of filling out an online survey; submitting brief comments; attaching

their own documents; or commenting directly via email or post.

Content

The draft documents were made available on the eHub website at <https://daf.engagementhub.com.au/goc-scalloped-hammerhead>. Respondents were able to have their say in various ways by:

- completing an online survey on eHub page with the following features:
 - o A single choice answer section with the following choices:
 - Management Option 1
 - Management Option 2; or
 - Other
 - o A text box for written comments where respondents were encouraged to explain why they support their chosen option, or alternatively explain why they support an alternative option
- sending a written document via post or email to fisheriesmanagers@daf.qld.gov.au.

Online surveys

Respondents

A total of four eHub surveys were completed by individuals, along with two written email submissions from a representative body and individual. Five of the six respondents supported the implementation of a risk-based species-specific harvest strategy for hammerhead in the Gulf of Carpentaria and regulatory changes that require fins to be naturally attached for hammerhead shark (all species) landed in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Figure 1). The remaining respondent chose the 'Other' option, however did not provide an alternative management action recommendation (see 'Written responses' section below).

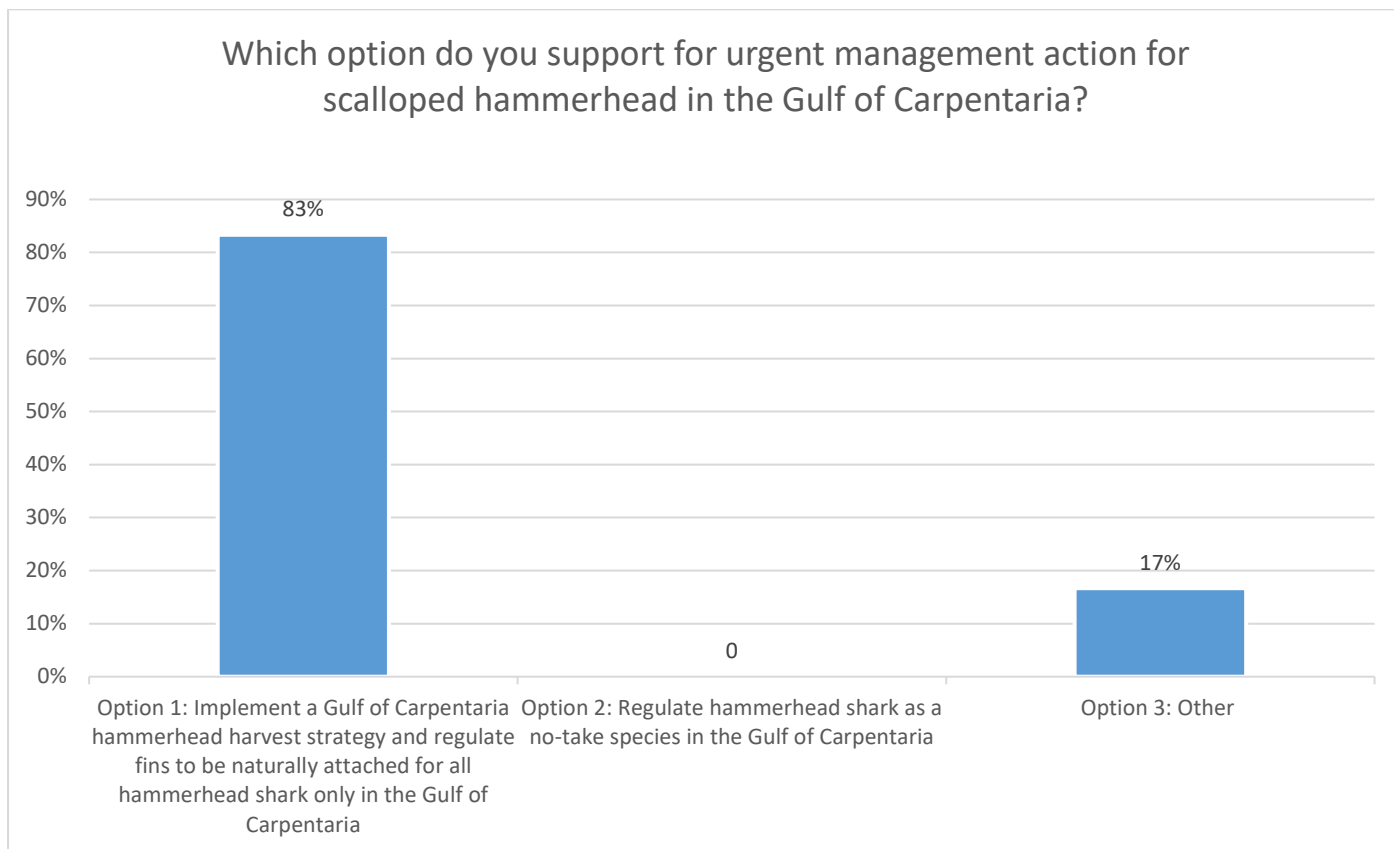


Figure 1: Summary of consultation results

Written responses

Written comments were received in a number of ways:

- A text box for written comments where respondents were encouraged to explain why they support their chosen option, or alternatively explain why they support an alternative option
- Documents that could be attached via eHub, or
- Information emailed to fisheriesmanagers@daf.qld.gov.au.

All email and eHub responses included brief additional comments. All written comments were compiled into a single document that was reviewed for consideration by the relevant fishery manager. A summary of the survey responses is provided in Table 1.

Three of the responses included comments supporting the management of scalloped hammerhead shark through commercial Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), citing references to recent scientific literature indicating the stock may have had some recent recovery following historic declines. One response confirmed that a harvest strategy needs to be implemented and another stated they would prefer the regulation of fins naturally attached.

The survey response that chose the 'Other' option did not provide an alternative management action recommendation for consideration in support of their decision (Table 1).

Table 1: Further information provided

Preferred Management Option	Further detail provided
Option 1: Implement a Gulf of Carpentaria hammerhead harvest strategy and regulate fins to be naturally attached for all hammerhead shark only in the Gulf of Carpentaria	Qld represents 13.2% of this species distribution range. Observer data from GoC offshore fishery from 2000-2006 demonstrated mostly male juveniles where commonly interacted with, with some adult males (was N9 / N12); which is also supported by Stevens & Lyle 1989; Harry et al. 2011a; 2011b. Research and management is required for the adult populations of this species; especially in Indonesia and some what in PNG. Currently there is no recovery plan in place for the Scalloped Hammerhead; however; based on relative biomass trajectories in Saunders et al. (2021), the Scalloped Hammerhead trend has potentially had some recent recovery following historic declines, and limited evidence to indicate that stocks are significantly depleted. This should demonstrate the effectiveness of existing shark commercial fishery management regimes and commercial fisher practices within the Gulf of Carpentaria. Hence, there is a strong argument for the Conservation Dependant status to continue for the scalloped hammerhead; with a few tweaks : a balanced TACC, species validations, species ID and post release education, and a better understanding of the International impacts on the population and protection of adults in international / overseas waters.
Option 1: Implement a Gulf of Carpentaria hammerhead harvest strategy and regulate fins to be naturally attached for all hammerhead shark only in the Gulf of Carpentaria	It's been stated from NT Fisheries, that the post release of scalloped hammerheads is presumed low and given there is evidence to show low catch rates, of mainly juvenile males, in GoC commercial fishery waters; and the Scalloped Hammerhead trend has potentially had some recent recovery (Saunders et al. 2021). There is a strong argument for the Conservation Dependant status to continue for the scalloped hammerhead with a balanced TACC; so this hammerhead species isn't wasted.
Option 1: Implement a Gulf of Carpentaria	A harvest strategy needs to be done.

<p>hammerhead harvest strategy and regulate fins to be naturally attached for all hammerhead shark only in the Gulf of Carpentaria</p>	
<p>Option 3: Other</p>	<p>As usual the only options given suggest a pre determined outcome on behalf of the department and regardless of any opposition from industry participants you no doubt consider a survey such as this a sufficient level of consultation before you impose / implement your chosen path upon us.</p>
<p>Option 1: Implement a Gulf of Carpentaria hammerhead harvest strategy and regulate fins to be naturally attached for all hammerhead shark only in the Gulf of Carpentaria</p>	<p>A preferred option for scallop hammerhead take in the GOC is whole with fins intact, fortunately I do my best to avoid these species because of the sensitivity surrounding them.</p>
<p>Option 1: Implement a Gulf of Carpentaria hammerhead harvest strategy and regulate fins to be naturally attached for all hammerhead shark only in the Gulf of Carpentaria</p>	<p>Queensland represents 13.2% of this species distribution range. Observer data from GoC offshore fishery from 2000-2006 demonstrated mostly male juveniles (2:1 ratio of male to females) where commonly interacted with, with some adult males (was N9 / N12 – Background paper presented at Sharks International Conference); which is also supported by Stevens & Lyle 1989; Harry et al. 2011a; 2011b indicating that most of the Australian catch is of juveniles of both sexes and some adult males. Research and management is required for the adult populations of this species; especially in Indonesia and somewhat in PNG. Currently there is no recovery plan in place for the Scalloped Hammerhead; however, based on relative biomass trajectories in Saunders et al. (2021), the Scalloped Hammerhead trend has potentially had some recent recovery following historic declines, and limited evidence to indicate that stocks are significantly depleted. This should demonstrate the effectiveness of existing shark commercial fishery management regimes and commercial fisher practices within the Gulf of Carpentaria. Hence, there is a strong argument for the Conservation Dependant status to continue for the scalloped hammerhead; with a few reforms: a balanced TACC, species validations, species ID and post release education; and we need a better understanding of the International impacts on the population and the protection of adults in international / overseas waters.</p>

Next steps

Fisheries Queensland reviewed all advice and feedback received. The consultation results will be used to guide the management decisions proposed in an attempt to maintain a conservation dependant listing of scalloped hammerhead shark.

Fisheries Queensland intent to undertake further consultation with impacted stakeholders once a decision on the management actions is finalised.