Saucer scallop rebuilding and harvest strategy discussion paper

The Department of Primary Industries proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the Country. We recognise their continuing connection to land, sea, waters and sky. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and to their Elders past and present and commit to ongoing reconciliation.

Contents

Have your say

The Queensland Government is seeking community feedback on proposed management options to ensure the sustainable management of the Ballot's saucer scallop (*Ylistrum balloti)* fishery in Queensland.

The fastest and easiest way to provide your feedback is to complete the online survey on our engagement hub.

The survey questions are also available at the end of this document if you prefer to print and post your submission to:

Scallop fishery discussion paper
Department of Primary Industries
GPO Box 46
Brisbane Qld 4001

Submissions close 5 pm, Wednesday 8 October 2025.

NOTE: The survey questions are designed to seek your input – they are not a voting tool. Your feedback will be used to help develop options for fisheries management action and provide an insight into the preferences of all stakeholders.

Summary of options

This discussion paper has been prepared based on initial advice received during 2 scallop fishery workshops (held on 7 May and 10 July 2025) and industry-developed proposals provided to the Department of Primary Industries. This paper establishes the science and identifies the issues relevant to the future management of this fishery. The issues and options in this document will inform a 5-year saucer scallop rebuilding strategy, as well as minor amendments to the central region, southern inshore and southern offshore (A and B regions) harvest strategies.

While these harvest strategies are nearing their 5-year review cycle from 2026, the rebuilding strategy will be attached as an appendix to each harvest strategy and will replace decision rules regarding the management of saucer scallop by referring to the appendix only. No other amendments to the harvest strategies are proposed at this time.

The proposed management options within the rebuilding strategy are intended to improve the sustainability of saucer scallops, while allowing small and sustainable harvest to support regional businesses. The re-opening of the saucer scallop fishery must be informed by the best available science and based on management options that can control harvest through reportable total allowable commercial catch (TACC) limits. The proposed management options refer to managing scallop harvest in each of the 3 trawl regions separately under precautionary harvest setting.

Option 1: Regional TACC limits
Option 2: Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits
Option 3: Same trip limit and regional TACC limits

Background

The east coast otter trawl fishery targets a variety of species, with saucer scallop (*Ylistrum balloti*) an historical key target species. Fluctuating population levels and inconsistent recruitment makes it difficult to manage this species using a long-term maximum economic yield level.

First and foremost, the proposed management options are intended to ensure the ongoing sustainability of scallops, with the additional aim to maintain Australian Government wildlife trade operation approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Current management arrangements for the fishery require access through a total allowable effort unit system (effort units), which allows operators in this multi-species fishery to target different species and employ different fishing business models based on target species abundance, seasonality and availability. This management arrangement works well when target and secondary species are sustainable as it significantly reduces unwanted discards and allows the fishery to change targeting based on abundance. While increased flexibility is important for this multi-species fishery, relying solely on effort units has proven difficult in managing the number of trawlers fishing for scallops.

Saucer scallops are suitable for management under a total allowable catch and effort system and with a minimum legal size limit. Unlike prawns, scallops have reasonable post-release survival rates if handled correctly. They are one of the few species in the east coast otter trawl fishery that can survive if released in a timely manner and tumbling (i.e. using a specially designed grading machine called a 'tumbler' to grade the scallop catch at sea) is minimised where possible.

Current management and harvest strategies

The overarching management of the fishery involves trawl regions with allocated annual effort units and harvest strategies, which have been developed at a regional level to help with the separate management of the take of saucer scallops as either a target or secondary species.

These harvest strategies are designed to ensure ecological sustainability of the stocks and are guided by stock assessments that measure the performance of the populations through time. They look at the relative number of animals compared to when the fishery was unfished, and act as a health-check to ensure management of the fishery prevents stocks being depleted (limit reference point) and drives harvest towards a target reference point.

For saucer scallops within the southern inshore trawl region, the limit reference point is 20% and interim target reference point is 40% of unfished biomass. For central and southern offshore trawl regions, as identified as a secondary species, the reference level is 60%. The most recent stock assessment (French. 2023) involving saucer scallops from southern inshore and southern offshore trawl regions estimated the stock level to be at 15% of unfished biomass in 2021 (with confidence of the level ranging between 10% and 25%). The southern inshore and central trawl region have been closed to scallop harvest since September 2021 to help rebuild the stock.

Southern (inshore and offshore A and B) trawl regions

The southern (inshore and offshore A and B) trawl regions have historically been responsible for the largest harvest of saucer scallop. In the late 1990s, fishers raised concerns about the sustainability of the stock after periods of high harvest, and the effectiveness of the management arrangements in maintaining supply for established markets, particularly lucrative international markets.

Fishery-independent otter trawl surveys were used to investigate abundances and distributions of scallop, as well as provide an alternative dataset to produce biomass estimates in stock assessments.

While southern inshore and offshore regions have the same stock of scallop, previous work has suggested that scallop in the southern offshore region does not return juvenile scallops into the southern inshore region (Courtney et al. 2015). This is why saucer scallops were made no take in the southern inshore region in September 2021, while harvest continued in the southern offshore region.

Central trawl region

Queensland's central trawl region has been closed to the harvest of saucer scallop since 2021. This region has historically had a lower contribution to overall statewide harvest. With no scallop density surveys and no recent information on harvest and catch rates, the current production potential is unknown.

Industry provided observations of differences in morphometric (shape and dimension) characteristics between the scallops of the central and southern inshore and offshore regions. This resulted in a collaborative study with industry (published in 2024) that indicated scallop in the central region is a separate biological stock

Due to lack of information regarding stock structure and biomass, precaution in harvesting the central stock must be applied. Using precautionary principles, we have identified an opportunity to explore an adaptive management framework that will safeguard the long-term sustainable management of the newly defined stock in the central region and create economic opportunities from the harvest of scallops.

Regional contributions to scallop harvest

From 2010 to 2020, the contribution of the 3 fishery regions to landed saucer scallop ranged between:

- 20% – 95% (average 68%) for southern inshore
- 4% – 68% (25%) for southern offshore
- 1% – 13% (7%) for central region.

This demonstrates that the southern inshore region was the major source of saucer scallop harvest, the southern offshore region contributed significantly in certain years and the central region contributed the least to harvest (Figure 1).

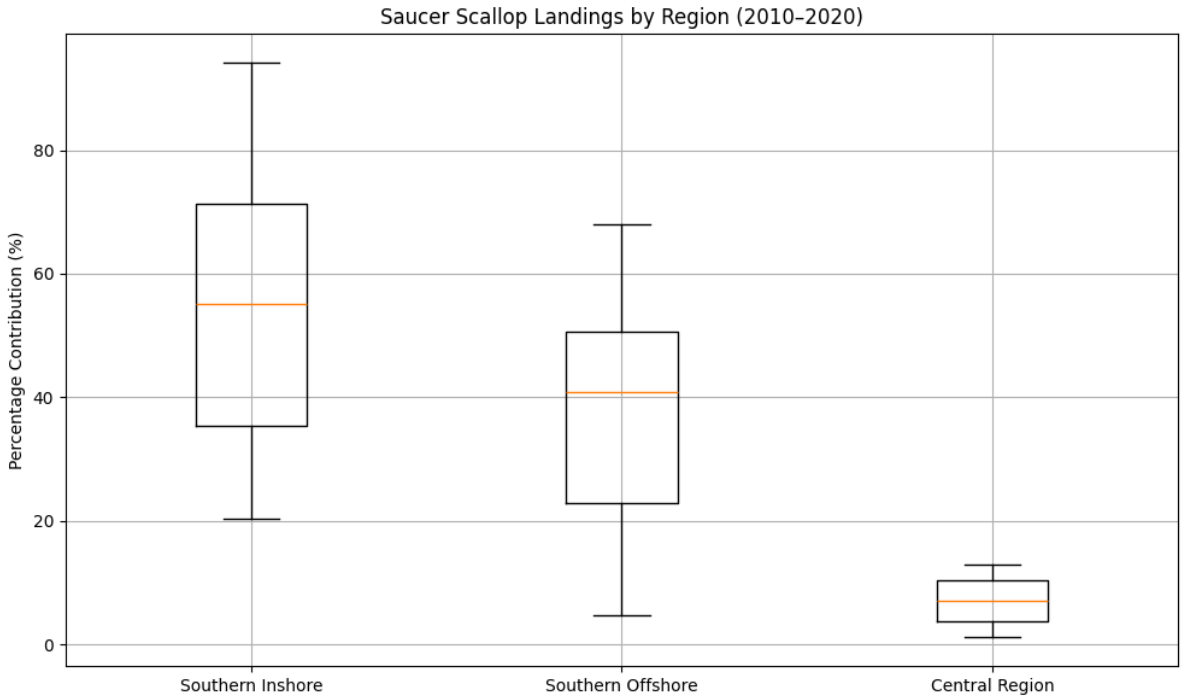

Figure 1: Regional contributions to the annual statewide harvest of scallop (2010–2020) – orange line is the median

NOTE: In this discussion paper, we will reference scallops in the central region as 'northern stock' and those from southern inshore and southern offshore regions as 'southern stock'.

Adaptive management framework

Other jurisdictions in Australia, such as Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Commonwealth, have moved to and currently use some form of adaptive management framework and weight-of-evidence approach to inform the levels of sustainable fishing pressure. This approach relies heavily on information collected during separate surveys. The survey of the northern and southern stocks scheduled in October this year (discussed below) offers a unique opportunity to collaborate with industry to co-deliver robust results.

Catch rates from commercial fishing logbooks are traditionally the most reliable long-term dataset to develop an index of abundance. However, using a catch rate from previous years to forecast abundance year on year without additional information does present significant risk for saucer scallop, given their fluctuating population levels and inconsistent recruitment.

We have been conducting fishery-independent surveys of the southern saucer scallop stock for some time. These surveys were originally used to identify scallop beds to implement scallop replenishment areas and to feed into biomass estimates by producing a comparative index of abundance to commercial catch and catch rates.

Although undertaken sporadically, the information collected during these surveys is essential to understand how the scallop population has changed through time and informs what is occurring in near real-time. Due to the reasonable time series of information and correlation against poor and good harvest years, the surveys now have the opportunity to inform abundance of the 2 stocks more broadly and inform setting sustainable catch limits year on year.

Scallop survey

The scallop survey is scheduled for October 2025, pending permit approval from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Justification for the timing of this fishery-independent survey has been established from previous research (Dichmont et al. 2000).

The survey methodology is consistent with previous surveys conducted in the primary scallop fishing areas between 1997 and 2006 and 2017 and 2022, with this survey intending to cover more than 420 sites. Most of these sites (300) are located within the original 18 survey locations of the southern inshore and southern offshore regions, including the scallop replenishment areas. In addition to the historical survey locations, information on saucer scallop densities will be collected in the central region, with over 120 sites identified in 4 new locations (Appendix 1).

To co-deliver this survey, we are working with commercial trawlers who will be partially renumerated to undertake the work. At each site, vessel skippers and crew will grade and count caught scallops between 0+ (less than 78 mm shell height) and 1+ sizes during a 1 nautical mile or 20-minute tow using common east coast commercial prawn trawl gear. Prawn nets are used to capture very small (pre-recruit) scallops (less than 15 mm shell height), as well as large adult scallops.

Each vessel will make as many shots as possible at allocated locations to collect information on the size and abundance of scallops simultaneously. As well as surveying allocated sites, they will be utilising their specific expertise to sample new targeted sites nominated by the skipper. This information will be useful in testing the effectiveness of the current survey design and to optimise future survey designs.

Short-term (5-year) fishery objectives

Underpinning an amendment to the trawl (southern inshore) harvest strategy, the key short-term objectives being proposed for saucer scallop are to:

- protect the biomass of saucer scallops by ensuring spawning biomass is maintained above the limit reference point of 20% and increases towards the interim target reference point of 40% within 5 years
- enable some harvest of saucer scallops to support industry using the best available science.

To achieve these key objectives, 4 short-term approaches have been identified:

1. Determine if saucer scallop spawning biomass in the southern inshore trawl region has rebuilt above the limit reference point (with 90% confidence).
    a. If not above the limit reference point, continue to rebuild stock by making saucer scallops in this region no-take.
    b. If above the limit reference point, rebuild stock to the interim target reference point using a precautionary harvest limit informed by survey densities.
2. Allow saucer scallop northern stock in the central region to be taken sustainably to reduce effort on the southern stock.
3. Implement a similar precautionary harvest limit to ensure the long-term viability of the northern stock until stock assessment biomass outputs can be developed.
4. Implement complementary industry-led initiatives to reduce unacceptable risk to saucer scallop aggregations (beds).

Management considerations for each approach are discussed below.

Management consideration of approach 1: Scallop abundance

To determine if the stock has rebuilt to a suitable level to open the fishery, the densities of 1+ size scallops in the 2025 survey can be benchmarked against reference points using previous stock assessments. To assess this, densities can be gauged against a limit reference point density, considering the harvest strategy policy for 90% confidence. Also, survey densities can be assessed against other benchmarks, such as the interim target reference point of 40% biomass. Analysis of survey densities and comparison against benchmarks will be completed immediately following the scallop survey.

Accurate survey scallop counts, and estimated 1+ densities are key data we can use to estimate recovery in the spawning biomass in 2025. This is reliant on the successful completion of the scallop survey and sampling sites. If the survey shows that scallops have rebuilt above the limit reference point, confidence in the results will be achieved by understanding the extent of scientific uncertainty and accounting for observation and process error.

Additional evidence on how healthy the spawning stock might be in 2025 will be derived from correlating survey densities against historical harvests and catch rates. The survey densities of 1+ and legal sized scallop mostly correlate to the success of the harvest in a given fishing year.

Finally, the survey can also be used as a line of evidence to estimate biomass by expanding density estimates by area (e.g. see the survey biomass method in management consideration 3 below).

Management consideration of approach 2: Reopening the central region

Historically, the central region represented a lower proportion of saucer scallop harvest, and now with research establishing this as a separate biological stock there is an opportunity to permit the harvest of scallops in the central region. Current information gaps in the stock structure means a certain degree of precaution needs to be applied to any future level of harvest.

When investigating a precautionary approach, observations of the current effort and seasonality of the fleet since 2022 show that the fleet is currently mostly active outside the spawning season for saucer scallops and all 3 regions are currently at relatively high effort levels in the months of March and April (Figure 2).

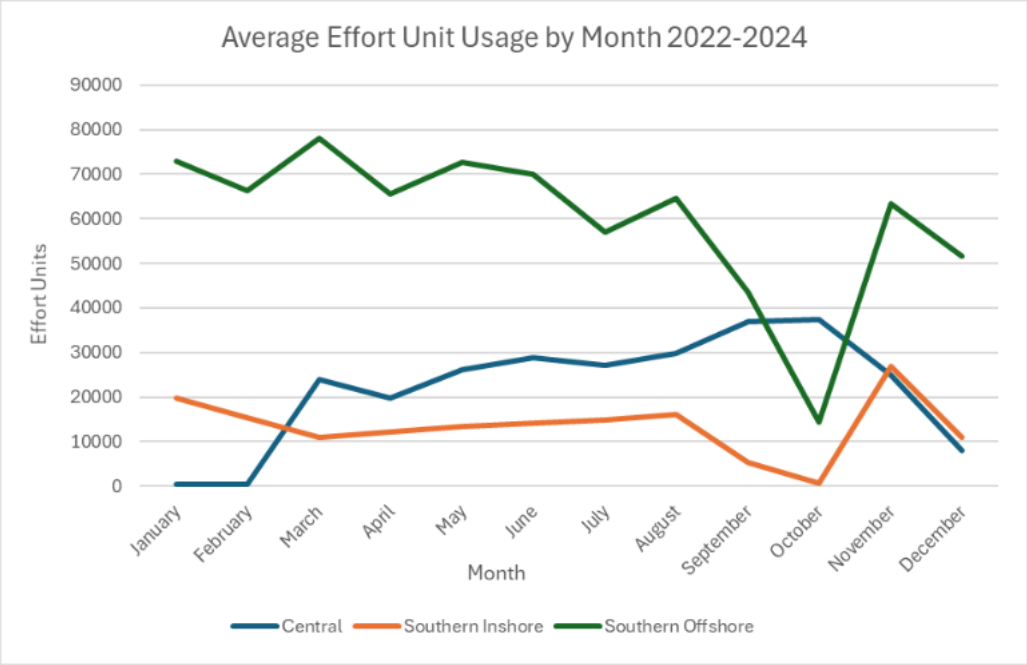

Figure 2: Average effort unit usage in the 3 major trawl regions (2022–2024)

The effort trends indicate there is an opportunity to reduce pulse fishing of a mobile fleet, reduce risk to spawning scallop and allow precautionary harvest of the stock. This can be best achieved by opening all trawl regions in the austral autumn for the same period. To maintain equity amongst the fleet in all regions, it is proposed that all regions are allowed to retain scallops from midday 1 March until midday 1 May annually until significant recovery has been observed in the stock.

Management consideration of approach 3: Precautionary harvest limits

As the 2025 survey will be distributed across potential trawl areas, legal sized scallop biomasses can be calculated per area and region to develop suitable harvest limits for the 2026 season. For the southern inshore region, this is dependent on the scallop density being greater than the 20% reference point (with 90% confidence).

This process is called the 'survey biomass method', which expands scallop densities by the relevant trawlable area to be opened, to estimate potential biomass of scallops in an area during October.

To determine harvest limits, the survey biomass method calculation will consider:

- commercial legal sized density (≥ 9 cm shell height, numbers per hectare)
- fishing area (hectares)
- size of scallop when fishing opens to determine shell weight (t)
- target harvest rate (fraction of scallop to exploit) fixed at 0.21
- uncertainty adjustment.

The target harvest rate (percentage of scallops that can be taken from the survey densities) will be applied at 0.21. This rate represents a yield reference point from the 2018 survey when the stock in the southern inshore region was estimated at 22% of unfished biomass. This reference point would have produced a recommended biological catch that would not have exceeded fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield, aligning with available information (O'Neill et al. 2020).

This target harvest rate would be applied to central and southern offshore region populations in the absence of more informed rates. Future stock assessments would be required to adjust this target harvest rate. In addition, the southern stock growth rate and a natural mortality rate will be applied from the survey to determine the harvestable biomass from the October survey to a 1 March season opening.

Using this method, total allowable commercial catch (TACC) limits can be applied to central, southern inshore and southern offshore regions respectively as required. This ensures that fishing mortality of the stock is controlled by allowing a safe amount of stock biomass to remain available for the winter spawning season.

Future management of saucer scallop in the southern inshore region will continue to include closed areas such as scallop replenishment areas and marine national park (green) and conservation park (yellow) zones that restrict access, with no additional areas required to be identified under precautionary harvest arrangements at this time. In addition to this, historical areas of high saucer scallop abundance in the central region are within, or adjacent to, current marine national park zones (Figure 3).

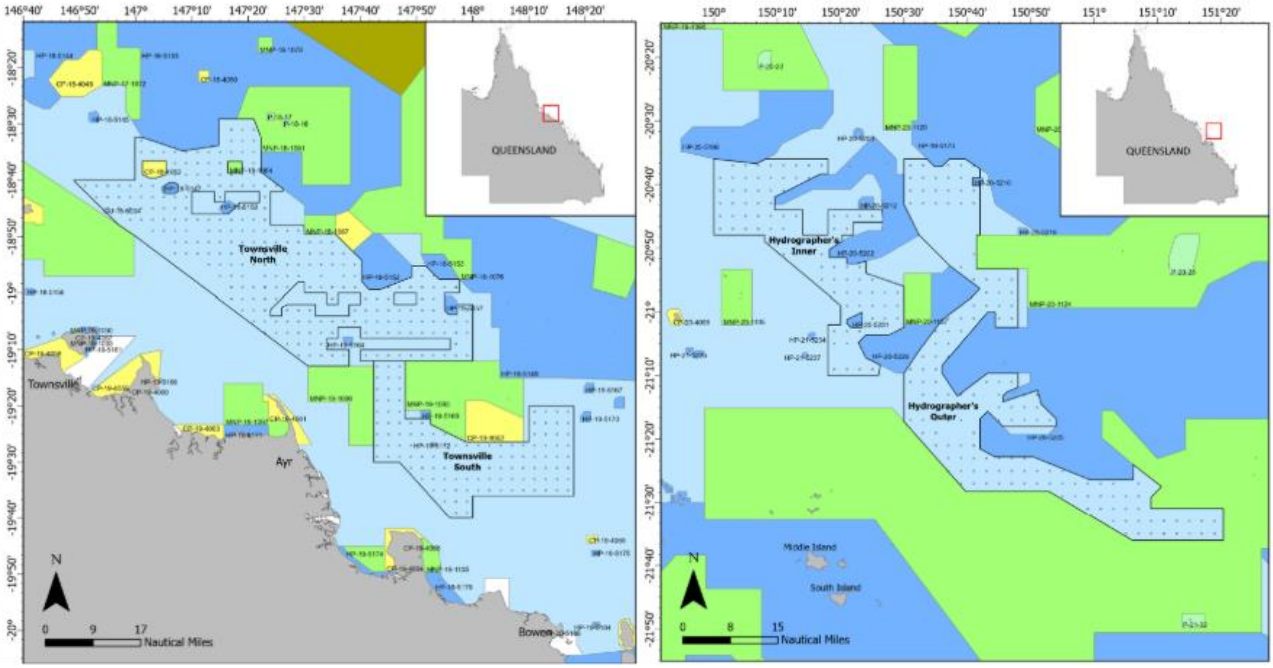

Figure 3: Proposed 2025 survey strata locations for the central region

Management consideration of approaches 2, 3 and 4: Precautionary harvest arrangements

The best available science is that saucer scallops spawn in winter and early spring in the southern inshore region (Dredge 1981). Although the new northern stock's biological characteristics are unknown, the best information is that this stock follows a similar spawning time and, like the southern stock, limiting targeted fishing pressure on mature scallop during peak spawning season is recommended as best practice.

Austral spring and summer seasons are when juvenile scallops are recently settled and are most vulnerable to environmental and fishing pressures. As the reproductive systems in the saucer scallop are less marketable, low meat count yields (muscle is largest) are more desirable as less of the reproductive organs are present in the animal. This means that targeting scallops in winter and spring is likely less sustainable and profitable. Taking scallop prior to entering the spawning season, when they have reconditioned and increased the weight of the muscle inside, reconfirms the short-term future fishery needing to operate in the austral autumn.

Using this approach to support precautionary harvest setting arrangements can also address equity issues. The fishing power of an effective and mobile trawl fleet has historically been one of the most significant risks within scallop fisheries, with the historically high-value market demand and the boom-and-bust nature of the fishery. Significant feedback has been received from all stakeholders to investigate options to reduce the pulse fishing and effort shifting nature of the fishery, which may drive higher depletion rates of scallop beds and reduce long-term economic profitability of the fleet.

Management consideration of approach 4: Supporting industry through co-management

It is in the best interest of all stakeholders to harvest scallop sustainably. While key components of the fishery can be regulated to reduce risk, there is an onus on the operators to support management through their own voluntary codes of practice or industry-adopted initiatives. We will always support these initiatives and acknowledge past developments, such as bycatch reduction research and adoption of square mesh cod ends.

Historically, the targeting of saucer scallop has varied significantly between regions, gear types and business models to target a volume of scallops or keep them as a byproduct of fishing for other target species. We encourage the voluntary adoption scallop gear by fishers in known scallop grounds during the proposed season.

Trawl operators are also encouraged to reconsider using tumblers to grade legal sized scallops where possible. While these are more efficient at ensuring fishers adhere to size limits, previous research suggests they decrease survival rates of released undersized scallop significantly (Campbell et al. 2010).

We do not intend to mandate the use of scallop gear or restrict the use of tumblers at this time. Industry members are encouraged to establish and maintain best practice methods when targeting scallops.

To support industry, **we propose to publish the hotspot locations of 0+ scallops from the survey prior to the season opening**, to allow businesses to make informed decisions around the year's fishing effort in the hope of reducing impacts on future stocks. While there is a risk of being unable to avoid undersized scallop, **it is recommended that industry move away from ground that shows a higher abundance of undersized scallop** in their try-gear or when sorting catch.

We are not proposing to publish the localised densities of 1+ scallops from the survey to inform fishing. While doing this could encourage the more efficient targeting of the fleet, significant feedback has been received that when higher density areas are known (such as when scallop replenishment areas were periodically opened), very high competition causes significant safety concerns for the fleet and depletes these highly productive and critically important beds.

Furthermore, **it is encouraged that the operating fleet increases information sharing while at-sea** using between-vessel communications and focuses on disincentivising other fishers from trawling in an area with undersized or high-density scallop, and sharing information on the real-time status of the TACC.

Proposal 1: Options to manage a limited sustainable harvest of saucer scallop

If the information from the 2025 survey data indicates a sufficient biomass of scallop on the ground (based on the scientific approaches outlined in the precautionary harvest limit and precautionary harvest arrangements outlined above), the following 3 management options are presented for consideration.

Option 1: Regional TACC limits

As detailed previously, historical fisheries management arrangements for saucer scallop have allowed open access to scallop provided the fisher held the symbol and more recently, effort units. While there have been demonstrated sustainability problems in the past due to the efficiency of the fleet in harvesting scallops, managing the total harvest of the fishery with a TACC can manage risk.

There has been some support from industry to allow future harvesting under an 'open' or competitive model, as the fleet can maximise the targeting of scallops to service markets that rely upon high-volume supply and can make better use of periods of high abundance of scallops.

It also allows fishers to target areas of legal sized scallop and move away when the season closes or the TACC is reached. An added benefit that may be realised is the shifting of effort away from other target or secondary species such as prawns and Moreton Bay bugs.

Finally, it allows for catch rates from the proposed fishery to be compared against catch rates from the fishery prior to 2021 – this will be useful for future stock assessment modelling to confirm biomass of the central and southern inshore regions.

This option still presents a risk caused by potential pulse fishing and localised depletion of scallop beds. It also increases the risk of inequitable access of the fleet, if weather or access to viable areas is limited each year. There are limited options to mitigate these risks under this model based on the current knowledge of the fishery. However, the biggest risk to sustainability would be mitigated by a TACC and short season when the scallops are least vulnerable.

NOTE: For more detail about this option, refer to Attachment 1 on our engagement hub.

Option 2: Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits

A second option to further reduce risk, and one that has been canvassed with industry, is to implement daily (night) limits and/or monthly limits. Catch and effort logbooks record harvest per day fished and allows for a daily limit to be investigated. While this could allow a daily limit to be set, daily limits are impractical for at-sea and in-port inspections to ensure compliance with management arrangements. A potential alternative could be to require an in-possession (trip) limit for each vessel in the fishery as a proxy to a daily or monthly limit.

A trip limit provides opportunity to reduce target fishing of the stock and the effects of pulse fishing on scallop beds, provide greater access equity and mitigate the risk of oversaturation of markets. In developing an appropriate limit, a balance will need to be determined to ensure that discards of legal

scallops are minimised while maintaining sustainable access to scallops, particularly as repeated trawling of scallop beds is detrimental to the survival of discards.

If the fishery is managed under a TACC, a limit will need to solely consider how to reduce the impacts of pulse or target fishing to maintain equity for the fleet and reduce localised depletion risks, while being enforceable.

To investigate a suitable trip limit for each trawl region, 10 years of logbook information (prior to the 2021 closure) for each region's fishing effort during the first 2 months of the season has been reviewed. A daily limit can be simulated as a percentage of the 10 years against the reported harvest for those years, to determine how many of those years would have reduced harvest – for example, 70% represents 7 of the 10 years the proposed daily basket limit would have impacted harvest (Table 1).

NOTE: During this period, scallop replenishment areas were rotationally opened in the southern inshore region, the central region biomass was unknown, the southern inshore component of the stock had depleted, and this was a target fishery that previous stock assessments demonstrated fishing mortality may have exceeded maximum sustainable yield for that year.

Table 1: Potential daily limit impacts on reported harvest for years 2010 to 2020

	Percentage of years impacted by proposed daily limit						
Number of baskets per fishing day:	**2**	**5**	**10**	**13**	**15**	**20**	**30**
Central	70%	40%	20%	20%	20%	20%	10%
Southern inshore	100%	100%	80%	50%	40%	20%	0%
Southern offshore	100%	90%	80%	60%	60%	50%	40%

When the number of landed baskets for the fishery over this time are used, it can be observed that in periods of historically very high landings, daily limits will significantly limit the output of the fishery, likely causing discards. If the region's TACC was set at these levels, it may result in the TACC not being reached for that year.

It is therefore considered appropriate that to reduce this risk while ensuring discards are minimised in years of reasonable abundance, daily limits of between 2 and 5 baskets for central, 10 and 15 baskets for southern inshore, and 20 and 30 baskets for southern offshore are proposed.

Extrapolating the daily limit to represent a trip limit is difficult given the different length of time vessels are at sea or how they choose to operate their individual vessels. Given this would be managed under a TACC, allowing a trip limit as opposed to a daily limit will allow operators some flexibility depending on their vessel configuration and market demand.

In addition, it is acknowledged that due to no standardised container or basket size, the number and weight of scallops between baskets for different operators varies greatly. While trip limits have been discussed, these may also be multiplied by an assumed basket weight of 35 kg to determine a candidate trip weight limit of scallops (Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of basket and weight trip limits

Region	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
Trip limit – equivalent baskets	80 baskets/trip	100 baskets/trip	260 baskets/trip	400 baskets/trip
Trip limit – shell weight	2,800 kg	3,500 kg	9,100 kg	14,000 kg

NOTE: For more detail about this option, refer to Attachment 2 on our engagement hub.

Option 3: Same trip limit and regional TACC limits

Another option is to implement the same trip limit across the 3 regions for consistency. While this allows for consistent management of the stock, it should be noted that any nominal limit will either not reduce effort-shift risk by setting the limit too high or significantly reduce harvest if set too low.

It is proposed that a trip limit applied across all 3 regions would be set at the central region's value (adjusted slightly). The benefits of this approach are that it would provide equity amongst all operators in the fleet, further reduce localised depletion risk, reduce saturation of markets, and reduces some compliance risk.

Firstly, a trip limit fishery would need to be informed by the survey responses regarding trip length from this consultation and corroborated against vessel tracking information. Secondly, feedback from this consultation will identify support for either a different trip limit for each region or the same trip limit across all regions.

Proposal 2: Reporting options for a saucer scallop competitive TACC

Under current reporting arrangements, T1 and T2 fishers are required to complete and submit a catch and effort logbook. With plans to reopen parts of the saucer scallop fishery under a TACC, T1 and T2 fishers targeting this species will also need to undertake quota reporting. In Queensland, fishers currently have 2 reporting options – electronically via the Qld eFisher app or via paper logbooks combined with the Automated Interactive Voice Response (AIVR) system.

With management proposals such as competitive TACC limits for separate trawl regions being considered, a new process would need to be implemented to facilitate the reporting of saucer scallop as a quota species based on whole shell weight (kg). The Qld eFisher app, already available for T1 and T2 fishers to complete logbooks electronically, can be updated to support reporting new quota species. Electronic reporting offers the advantage of instant data submission, enabling real-time monitoring of quota seasons. The app includes built-in validation features to ensure all required fields are completed before submission.

To use the Qld eFisher app, a fisher must first be registered as a 'commercial fisher in control' by the authority holder. Before commencing a fishing operation, the commercial fisher in control must submit a pre-trip notice, which allows them to complete the logbook offline. Fishers are required to update the logbook daily and submit it prior to landing at the end of the fishing operation. The app automatically generates a prior notice based on the quota species recorded in the logbook. Following landing, the weights notice and catch disposal record must be completed within 48 hours or before the next fishing operation begins. All reporting, including catch and effort logbooks and catch disposal records, can be completed through the app. Copies of these records are emailed to the fisher and are also accessible via FishNet Secure.

Alternatively, fishers can report using paper logbooks in conjunction with the AIVR telephone system for quota reporting or FishNet Secure to complete their reporting. Through the AIVR system, fishers can submit a prior notice for containers of quota species before landing and provide a weights notice once the fish are weighed. They must then complete and submit a paper catch disposal record detailing the quantity and first point of disposal for the quota species. While the AIVR system provides instant data, there is a significant delay in processing paper logbooks. Currently, the backlog for processing OT2 paper logbook entries ranges from 10 to 15 weeks. See Appendix 2 for the current reporting flow for the east coast otter trawl fishery, the reporting flow with paper logbooks and AIVR, and the reporting flow with the Qld eFisher app.

As T1 and T2 operators do not currently report quota, they are mostly unfamiliar with the AIVR system and would require significant onboarding resources. With the transition towards electronic reporting, we are prioritising training opportunities to increase uptake of the Qld eFisher app over legacy systems such as paper logbooks and AIVR.

Proposal 3: Limit saucer scallop fishing to one region per trip

In addition, it is proposed that to support the accurate reporting of scallop and reduce compliance and sustainability risk to the fishery, the regional TACC limits would require the T1 fisher to operate in only one region when fishing for saucer scallop.

It is not proposed to impose the same condition on T2 operators, as they can only take scallop in southern offshore trawl region B. T1 and T2 fishers would be able to transit through another region provided they can demonstrate that fishing had not been conducted when travelling to a landing or port area.

Proposal 4: Close shucking areas

Under the proposed precautionary harvest arrangements involving a 2-month season and a new framework for reporting saucer scallops, it has been identified that the shucking of saucer scallops and landing them in a form other than whole-shell (such as half shelf) invites significant quota integrity risk.

It is acknowledged that some operators have historically built businesses around the shucking of scallop at sea to maximise profitability. However, it is considered inappropriate to allow this as part of this current proposed management framework to ensure the highest confidence in the fishery operation.

We will reinvestigate shucking areas once information can be collected and used to determine appropriate reporting arrangements to reduce the quota integrity risk.

Proposal 5: Amend the harvest strategies

Harvest strategies are an important tool to ensure stakeholder confidence in agreed approaches and manage a fishery under clear objectives and decision rules. The sustainability of stocks, increased economic performance and recognised social licence of a fishery are synonymous with well-recognised harvest strategies.

Despite this, there are situations in which a harvest strategy is not fit for purpose to manage a target or secondary species well – such as for saucer scallops in the east coast otter trawl fishery's 3 harvest strategies for the central, southern inshore and southern offshore regions.

The current *Queensland harvest strategy policy* and 3 harvest strategies do allow for some flexibility if there is new information that suggests there is a better rationale for managing a target or secondary species. Exceptional circumstances can be applied to amend relevant harvest strategies if or when new information becomes available.

The identification of the new stock in central region, the need to maintain wildlife trade operation export approvals for the east coast otter trawl fishery, and the requirement for the publication of a rebuilding strategy in the southern inshore trawl region requires amendment to the 3 harvest

strategies. Due to the relationship between the southern inshore region and southern offshore regions A and B in terms of the southern stock, it is considered necessary to apply a new and equitable management framework to the southern offshore region.

Under the *Queensland harvest strategy policy*, we are proposing to amend sections in the following harvest strategies to manage saucer scallop separately:

- *Trawl fishery (central) harvest strategy: 2021–2026*
- *Trawl fishery (inshore) harvest strategy: 2021–2026*
- *Trawl fishery (southern offshore A and B regions) harvest strategy: 2021–2026*

The intention is that the amendments will refer any performance indicator, reference level and decision rule around saucer scallop to a rebuilding strategy in the appendices. The proposed changes to the relevant harvest strategies will be released for public consultation for a period of at least 28 days.

Year 1 implementation

Due to the timing of legislation implementation and to not further impact upon the existing scallop fishery of the southern offshore region, it is proposed to keep the current scallop management arrangements for southern offshore in place until 1 March 2026.

The scallop fishery would commence on 20 January 2026 in southern offshore trawl regions A and B under current arrangements, with the new arrangements resulting from this consultation commencing 1 March 2026. While this is not preferable to address pulse fishing risk, this risk is mitigated by the southern inshore stock somewhat, as oceanographic modelling suggests that the spawning stock in the southern offshore region might not seed other zones (Courtney et al. 2015).

As described previously, reopening the scallop fishery in the southern inshore region is reliant on information captured from the October 2025 scallop survey. Should the weight of evidence suggest that the southern stock in this region has not rebuilt above the 20% limit reference point, the fishery will remain closed. Despite this, there is still an opportunity to enact the same precautionary harvest arrangements proposed for the central and southern offshore regions to allow and continue fishing in 2026 (Figure 4, Scenario 1).

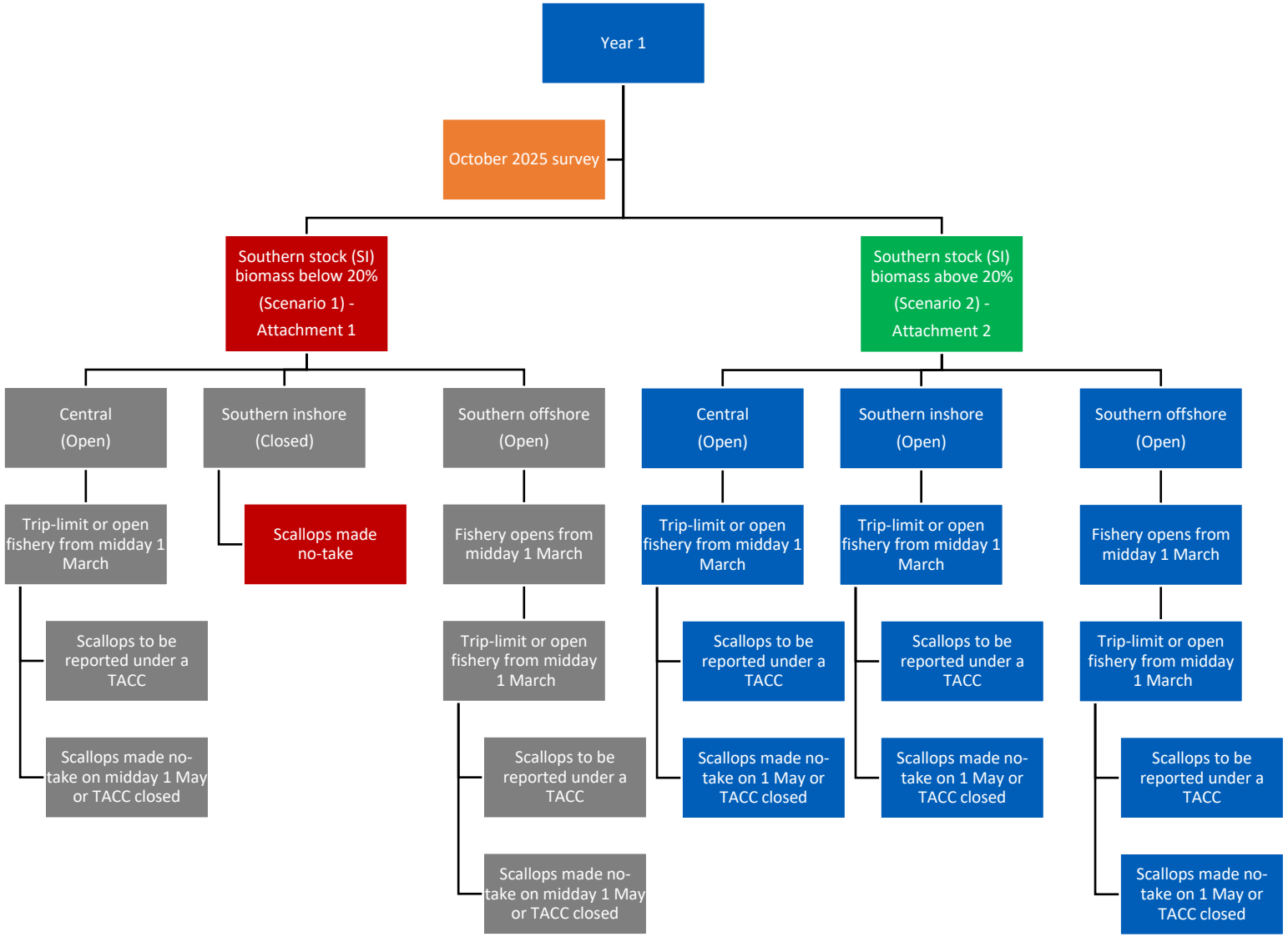

Figure 4: Proposed decision tree following the outcomes of the October 2025 scallop survey

Survey questions

Your say matters and we want to hear from you about options to manage the future harvest of saucer scallops. The questions with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

The Department of Primary Industries is collecting the information on this form to inform management options, which will be used in the publication of a 5-year scallop rebuilding strategy and to draft amendments to the trawl region harvest strategies.

Your personal information will not be disclosed to any other parties unless authorised or required by law.

Question 1. Your information

Name:

Address:

Postcode*:

Email address*:

Question 2. Which sector best describes your interest in the fishery? (*Select any which apply*)

☐ Commercial fisher

☐ Seafood wholesaler/marketer

☐ Industry peak body

☐ Conservation sector

☐ Recreational fisher

☐ Other (*Please specify*_____)

Question 3. Do you agree with the proposed short-term fishery objective of protecting the biomass of saucer scallops by ensuring spawning biomass is maintained above the limit reference point of 20% and increases towards the interim target reference point of 40% within 5 years?

☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree

Comments

Question 4. Do you agree with the proposed short-term fishery objective of enabling some harvest of saucer scallops to support industry using the best available science?

☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree

Comments

Question 5. To ensure regional stock sustainability, do you support the proposal for an operator to be limited to take saucer scallop from one management region per trip only?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Comments

Question 6. To reduce quota integrity risk, do you support the closure of scallop shucking areas until more information can be collected to reduce the risk?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments

Question 7. Do you support the proposal to amend the *Trawl fishery (central region) harvest strategy: 2021–2026* to reflect identified future management for saucer scallops in the scallop rebuilding strategy?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments

Question 8. Do you support the proposal to amend the *Trawl fishery (southern inshore region) harvest strategy: 2021–2026* to reflect identified future management for saucer scallops in the scallop rebuilding strategy?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments

Question 9. Do you support the proposal to amend the *Trawl fishery (southern offshore region) harvest strategy: 2021–2026* to reflect identified future management for saucer scallops in the scallop rebuilding strategy?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments

Question 10. To enable responsive fisheries management, please indicate your level of support for electronic reporting when taking and landing saucer scallop?

☐ Strongly support
☐ Support
☐ Neither support nor unsuppor
☐ Unsupport
☐ Strongly unsupport

Comments

Question 11. To ensure compliance with, and be informed electronically of, the status of the proposed regional total allowable commercial catch limits, do you currently have internet connectivity while at sea?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not applicable

Comments

Question 12. To determine proposed regional trip limits, what is the average number of days of your fishing trips during the last 12 months in each region?

Central: _____ days ☐ N/A

Southern inshore: _____ days ☐ N/A

Southern offshore: _____ days ☐ N/A

Comments

Question 13. If the southern inshore trawl region CANNOT reopen due to low abundance, which of the following options do you support to take saucer scallop under precautionary harvest arrangements in the CENTRAL REGION from 1 March 2026?

☐ Regional TACC limits only
☐ Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits

Comments

Question 14. If the southern inshore trawl region CANNOT reopen due to low abundance, which of the following options do you support to take saucer scallop under precautionary harvest arrangements in the SOUTHERN OFFSHORE REGION from 1 March 2026?

☐ Regional TACC limits only
☐ Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits

Comments

Question 15. If the southern inshore trawl region CAN reopen, which of the following options do you support in the CENTRAL REGION?

☐ Regional TACC limits only
☐ Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits
☐ Same trip limit and regional TACC limits

Comments

Question 16. If the southern inshore trawl region CAN re-open, which of the following options do you support in the SOUTHERN INSHORE REGION?

☐ Regional TACC limits only
☐ Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits
☐ Same trip limit and regional TACC limits

Comments

Question 17. If the southern inshore trawl region CAN re-open, which of the following options do you support in the SOUTHERN OFFSHORE REGION?

☐ Regional TACC limits only
☐ Regional trip limits and regional TACC limits
☐ Same trip limit and regional TACC limits

Comments

References

Courtney, A. J., C. M. Spillman, R. T. Lemos, J. Thomas, G. M. Leigh, and A. B. Campbell (2015). *Physical oceanographic influences on Queensland reef fish and scallops.* Final Report FRDC project no. 2013/020. Canberra, Australia: Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

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Dredge, M. C. L. (1981*). Reproductive biology of the saucer scallop Amusium japonicum balloti (Bernardi) in central Queensland waters*. In: Marine and Freshwater Research 32.5, pp. 775–787

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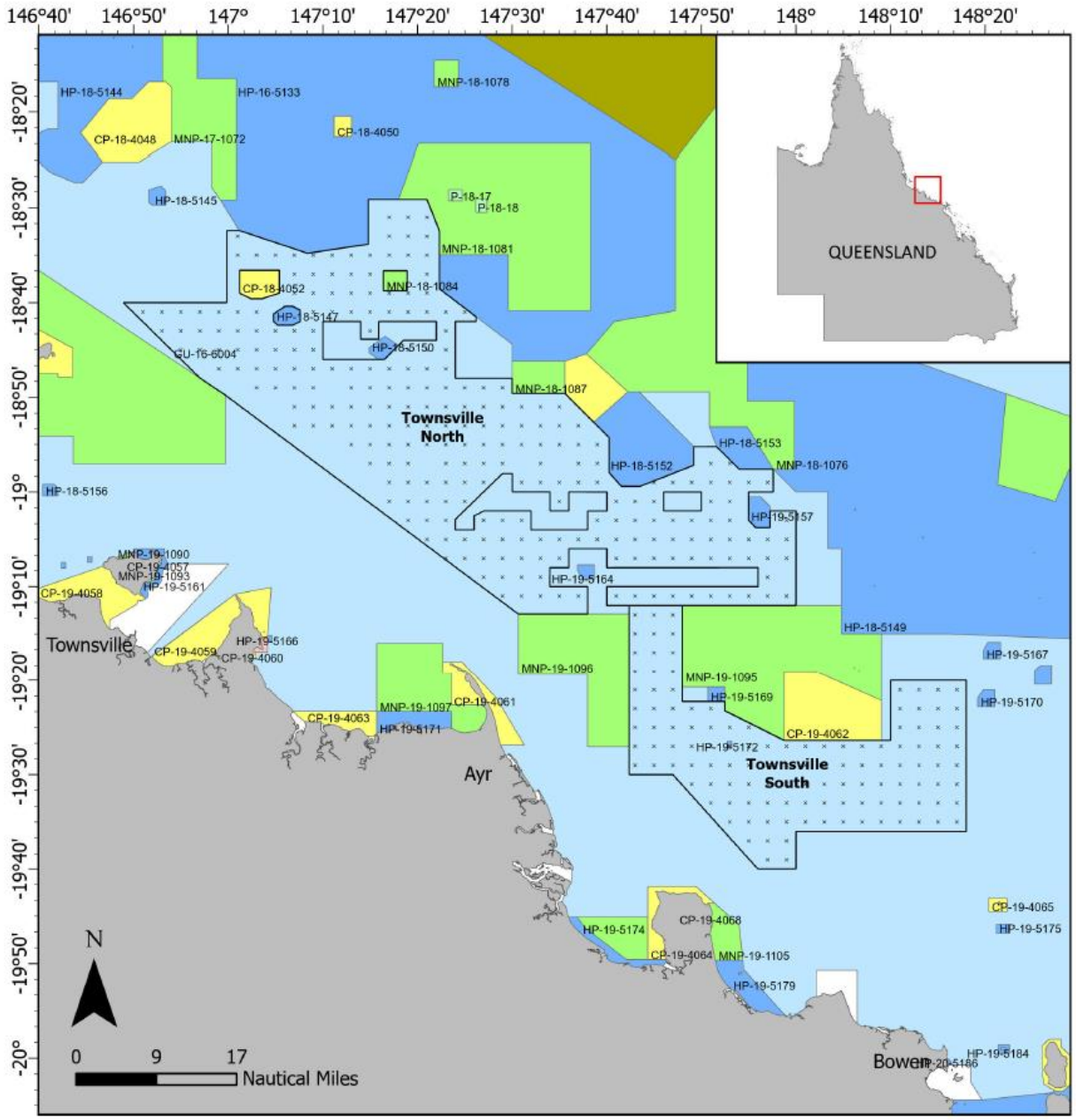
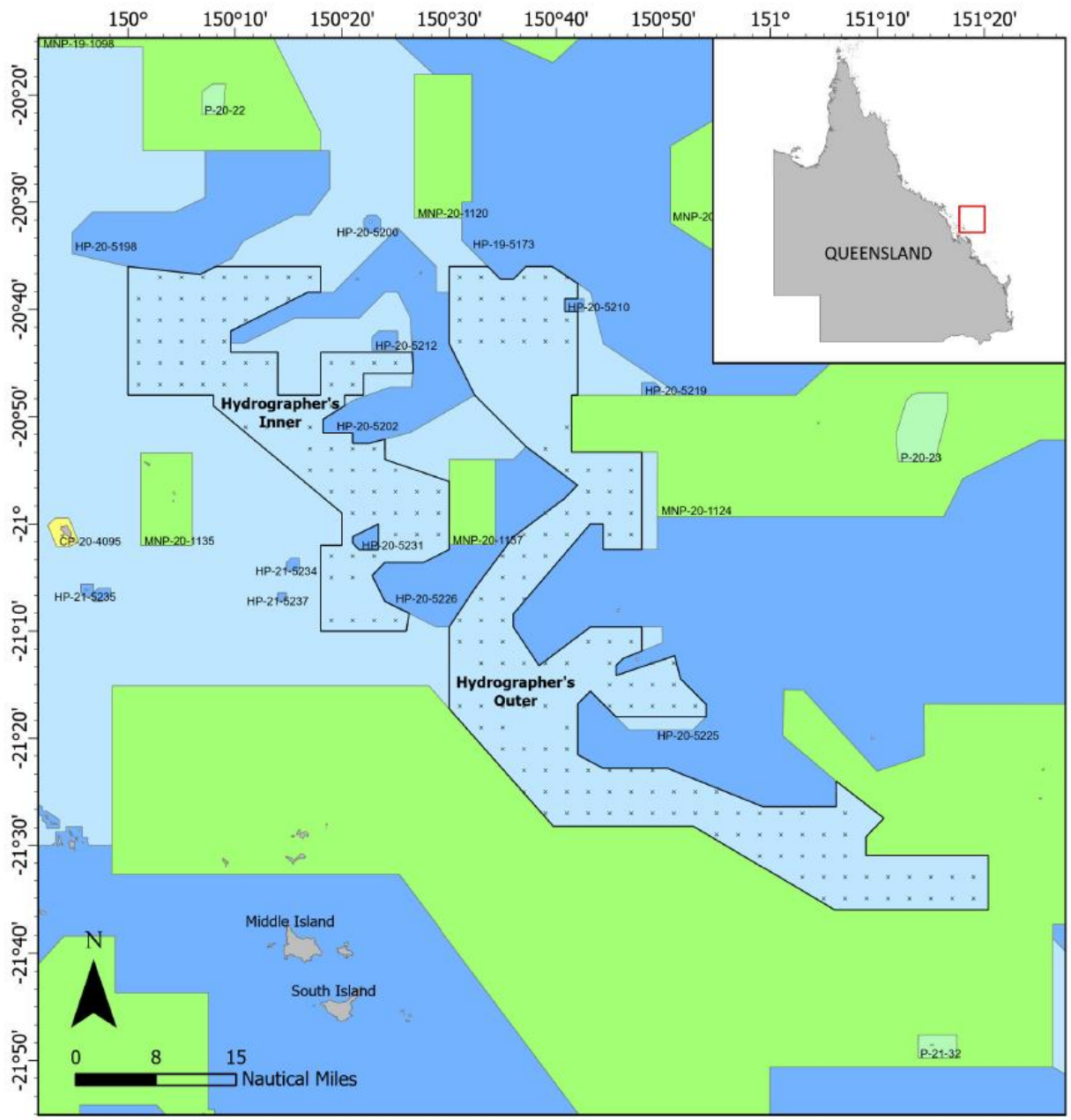
O'Neill, M. F., Yang, W.-H., Wortmann, J., Courtney, A. J., Leigh, G. M., Campbell, M. J., and Filar, J. A. (2020). *Stock predictions and spatial population indicators for Australia's east coast saucer scallop fishery.* Final Report FRDC Project no. 2017/057. Brisbane, Australia: Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Appendix 1: October 2025 scallop survey strata and potential sites

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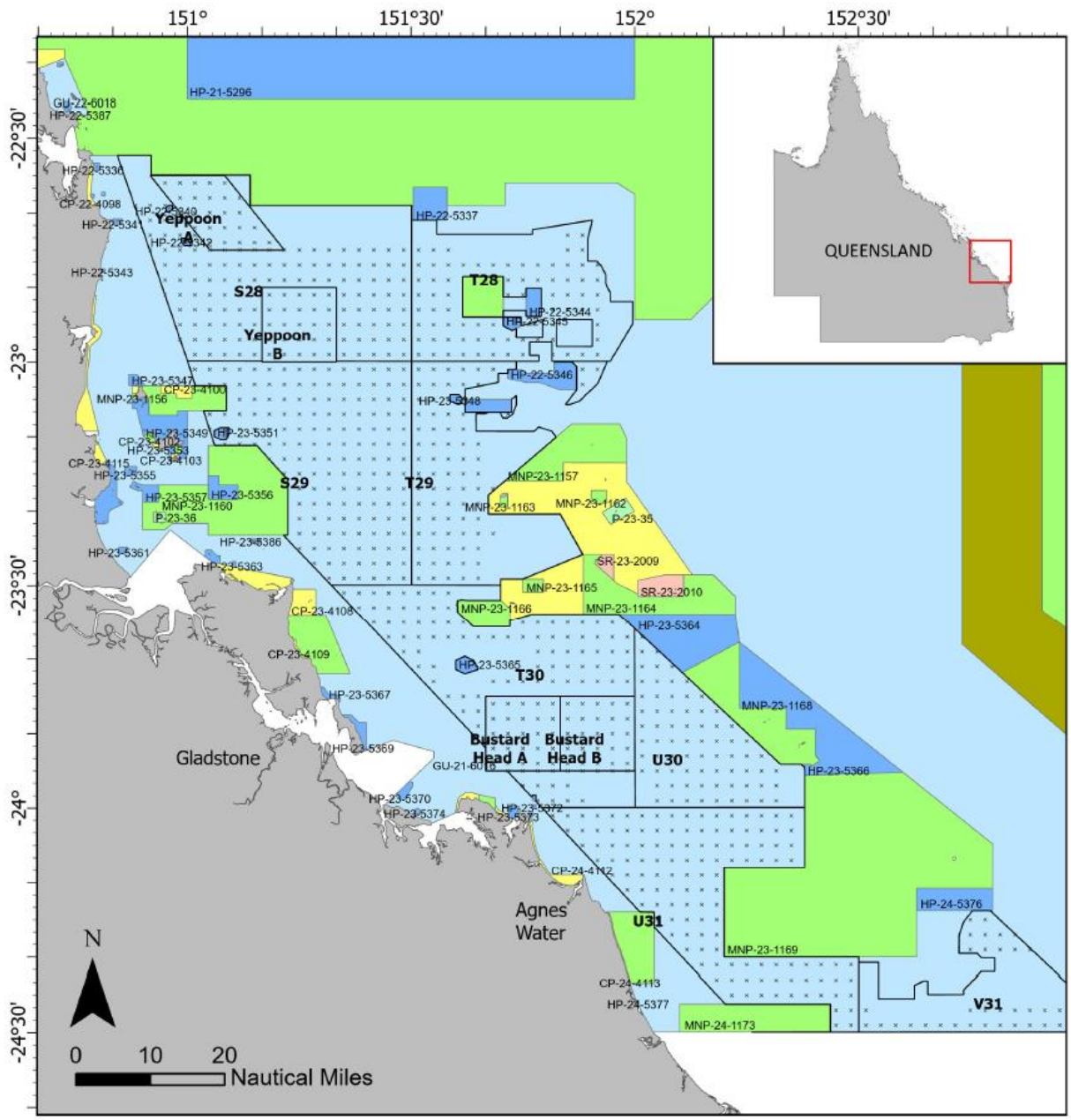
150°20'
150°30'
150°40'
150°50'
151°
151°10'
151°20'
-20°20'
-20°30'
-20°40'
-20°50'
-21°
-21°10'
-21°20'
-21°30'
-21°40'
-21°50'
MNP-19-1098
P-20-22
HP-20-5198
MNP-20-1120
HP-20-5200
HP-19-5173
HP-20-5210
HP-20-5212
HP-20-5219
Hydrographer's Inner
HP-20-5202
P-20-23
MNP-20-1124
CP-20-4095
MNP-20-1135
HP-20-5231
MNP-20-1137
HP-21-5234
HP-21-5235
HP-21-5237
HP-20-5226
Hydrographer's Outer
HP-20-5225
QUEENSLAND
Middle Island
South Island
N
0
8
15
Nautical Miles
P-21-32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151°30'
152°
152°30'
-22°30'
-23°
-23°30'
-24°
-24°30'
QUEENSLAND
HP-21-5296
GU-22-6018
HP-22-5387
HP-22-5336
CP-22-4098
HP-22-5349
Yeppoon A
HP-22-5341
HP-22-5342
HP-22-5337
HP-22-5343
S28
T28
HP-22-5344
HP-22-5345
Yeppoon B
HP-22-5346
HP-23-5347
CP-23-4100
MNP-23-1156
HP-23-5348
HP-23-5349
HP-23-5351
CP-23-4102
HP-23-5352
CP-23-4115
CP-23-4103
HP-23-5355
S29
T29
MNP-23-1157
HP-23-5357
HP-23-5356
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MNP-23-1162
P-23-36
P-23-35
HP-23-5386
HP-23-5361
HP-23-5363
SR-23-2009
MNP-23-1165
SR-23-2010
CP-23-4108
MNP-23-1166
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HP-23-5364
CP-23-4109
HP-23-5365
T30
HP-23-5367
MNP-23-1168
Gladstone
HP-23-5369
Bustard Head A
Bustard Head B
U30
GU-21-6016
HP-23-5366
HP-23-5370
HP-23-5374
HP-23-5372
HP-23-5373
CP-24-4112
HP-24-5376
Agnes Water
U31
MNP-23-1169
CP-24-4113
HP-24-5377
V31
MNP-24-1173
N
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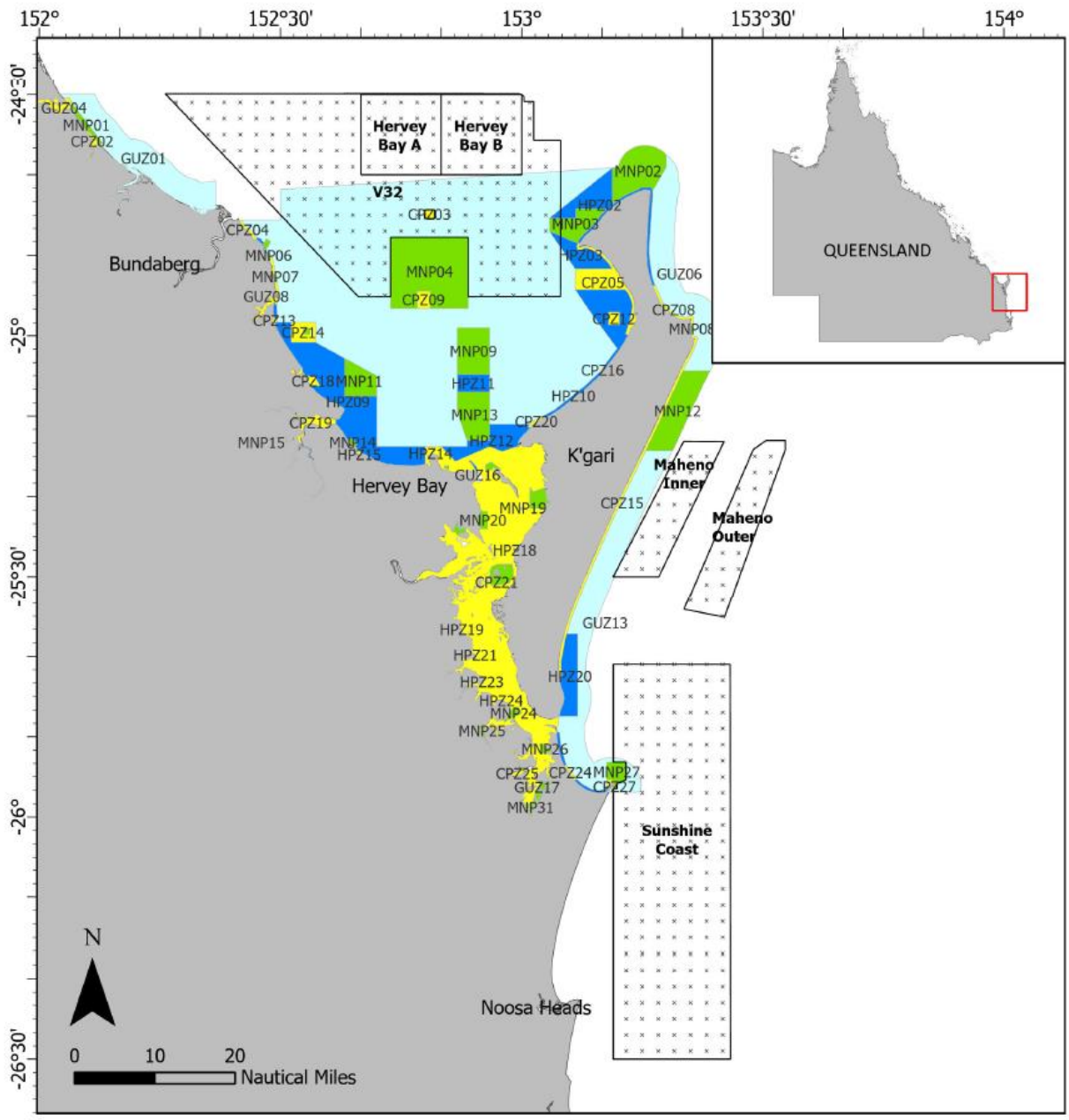
10
20
Nautical Miles


152°
152°30'
153°
153°30'
154°
-24°30'
-25°
-25°30'
-26°
-26°30'
QUEENSLAND
Hervey Bay A
Hervey Bay B
V32
Bundaberg
Hervey Bay
K'gari
Maheno Inner
Maheno Outer
Sunshine Coast
Noosa Heads
GUZ04
MNP01
CPZ02
GUZ01
CPZ04
MNP06
MNP07
GUZ08
CPZ13
CPZ14
CPZ18
MNP11
HPZ09
CPZ19
MNP15
MNP14
HPZ15
HPZ14
GUZ16
MNP19
MNP20
HPZ18
CPZ21
HPZ19
HPZ21
HPZ23
HPZ24
MNP24
MNP25
MNP26
CPZ25
CPZ24
MNP27
CPZ27
GUZ17
MNP31
MNP04
CPZ09
CPZ03
MNP02
HPZ02
MNP03
HPZ03
CPZ05
GUZ06
CPZ12
CPZ08
MNP08
MNP09
HPZ11
CPZ16
HPZ10
MNP13
CPZ20
HPZ12
MNP12
CPZ15
HPZ20
GUZ13
N
0
10
20
Nautical Miles

Appendix 2: East coast otter trawl fishery reporting flow

East coast otter trawl fishery reporting flow under:

- current arrangements
- a saucer scallop TACC with paper logbooks and AIVR
- a saucer scallop TACC with the Qld eFisher app.