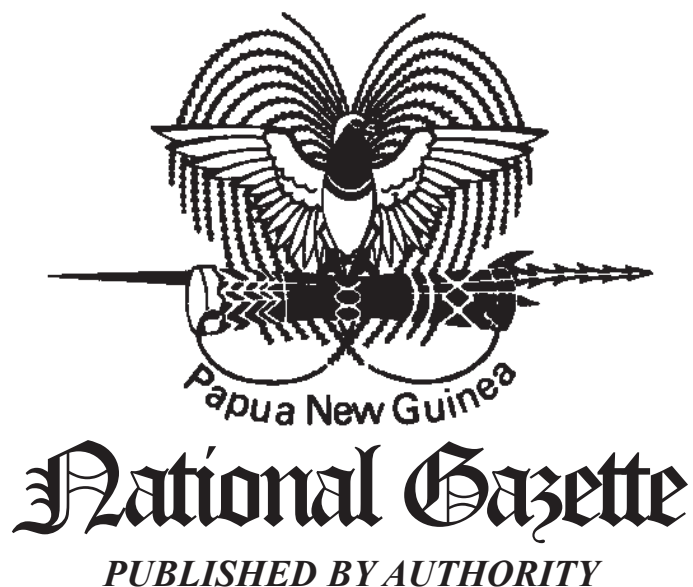




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No. G816]

PORT MORESBY, THURSDAY, 14th AUGUST

[2025



INDEPENDENT STATE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Fisheries Management Act 1998, as amended

GULF OF PAPUA PRAWN FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

National Tuna Fishery Management Plan—*continued*

Fisheries Management Act 1998 as amended

THE GULF OF PAPUA PRAWN FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

I, JELTA WONG, the Honourable Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, by virtue of the powers conferred by Section 28 of the Fisheries Management Act 1998, and all other powers me enabling, hereby give notice of my approval of the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan. This plan supersedes the previous plan of 2008 (Gazetted on National Gazette No: G235) and takes effect from the date of notification of this document in The *National Gazette* No. G816.

Dated this 28th of July, 2025.

Hon. Jelta Wong,
Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources.

THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AREA

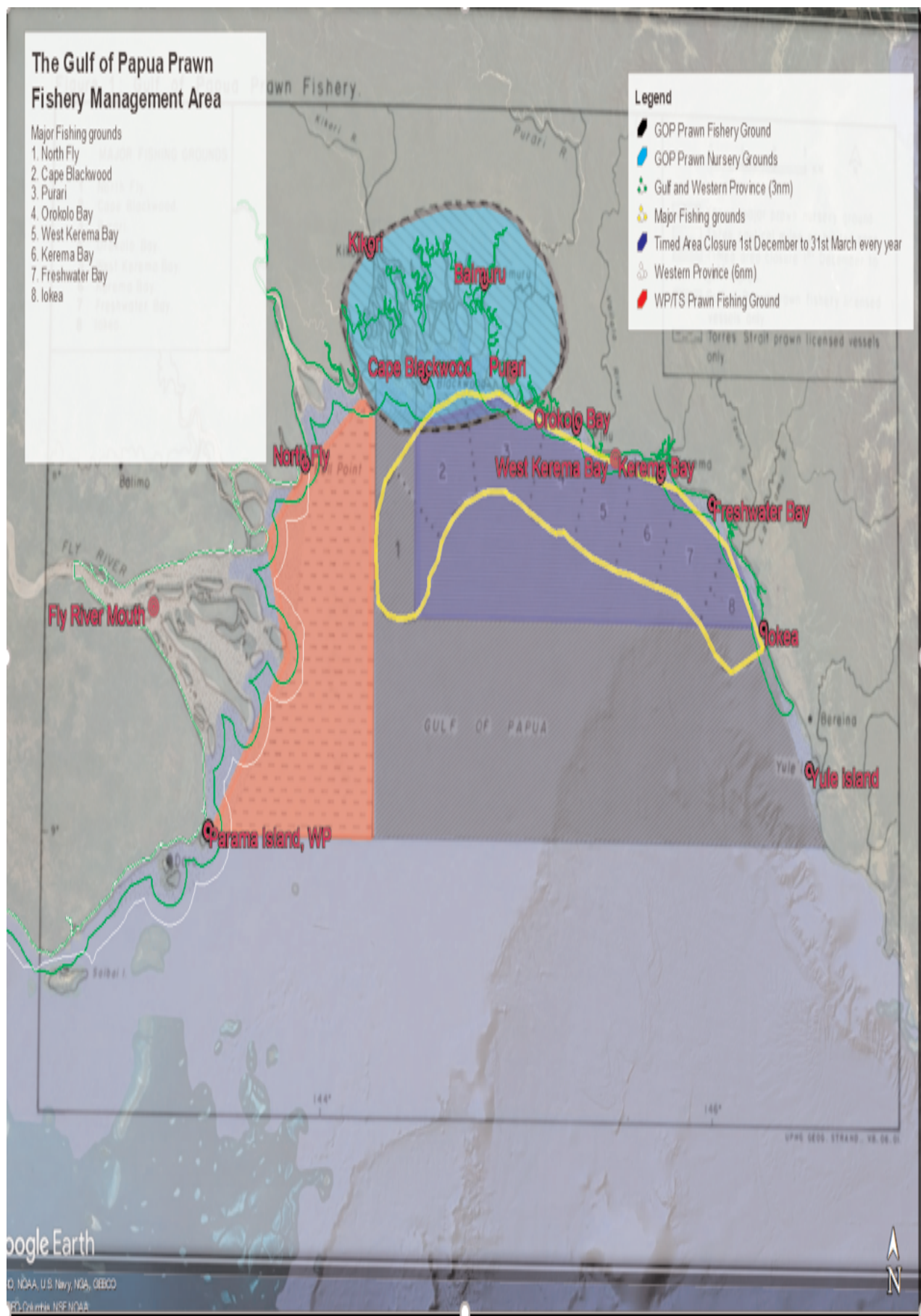


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THE GULF OF PAPUA PRAWN FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. CITATIONS

This Management Plan shall be cited as ‘The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan, 2025’ (referred to as the ‘Plan’).

2. APPLICATION OF THE PLAN

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan, 2025 only applies to the specified geographical area defined by the area described with coordinates as explained in this Management Plan.

- (i). The geographical area covered in this fishery Management Plan is the sea area that is bounded as follows:
 - (a). In the north: the coastline to Papua New Guinea from Parama Island (at the southern limit of the estuary of Fly River) to the border of Central and Gulf Provinces.
 - (b). In the east: shall be the boarder of Central and Gulf Province extending seaward to the intersection with latitude 9° parallel south.
 - (c). In the south: shall be the line of latitude 9° parallel south, which passes through Parama Island in the west and meets the border of Central and Gulf Provinces in the east.

- (ii). Species

This fishery management plan shall cover all species of the Family Penaeidae including: the principal species white banana prawn (*Penaeus merguensis*); the Indian banana prawn (*Penaeus indicus*); the (giant) black tiger prawn (*Penaeus monodon*); the brown tiger prawn (*Penaeus semisulcatus*); and including the lesser value endeavour species, *Metapanaeus* spp.

- (iii). Method

The fishery management plan covers the fishing method of single vessel otter trawl fishing (double and or quad-rigged nets) and the method of beam-trawl by dory or dinghy. Other methods are prohibited under this plan.

3. INTERPRETATION

In this Management Plan, unless the contrary intention applies,

“Fishery Management Area” means the specified area to which the fishery management plan relates.

“Growth Overfishing” means overfishing of prawns entering the fishing grounds for the first time by offshore migration from estuarine nursery areas are taken at an early stage before they have had sufficient time to grow and increase in size to obtain full market price value.

“Industrial Fishery” refers to the fishery outside of the three-mile zone and up to the two miles upon arrangements with resources owners, other than dories and dinghies, where vessels operate twin or quad rigged otter trawl gear.

“Juvenile Recruitment” means the offshore migration of juvenile prawns from estuarine nursery area (mangroves and sea grass) into the trawl (fishing) grounds, where they are liable to industry harvest for the first time.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued*

“Small-scale Fishery” refers to the small-scale prawn trawling operation employing dories and dinghies, which tow a beam trawl. This shall be the type of operation to be allowed within the three-mile zone and operated by local community persons or groups only.

“Three-mile Zone” refers to the sea area, which extends from the mean high water mark seaward by three nautical miles (as per the Maritime Zone Act 2015). Industrial trawling is prohibited within three-mile zone except only upon prior arrangements with traditional resource owners then it is allowed only up to 2 miles.

“Three-mile limit” is the seaward boundary of the three-mile zone and extends along the coastline from Parama Island to the border of the Gulf and Central Provinces.

“Timed Area Closure” means that a specified area is closed to fishing for a specific time.

“Traditional Resource Owners” means family groups or a person who have fished for both prawn and other coastal resources at the near shore coastal waters and are recognised as having traditional ownership rights to the prawn and other coastal fisheries resources.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE GULF OF PAPUA PRAWN FISHERY

- (a). The first survey was carried out in 1955 by then the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries. In 1965 the same Department carried out further surveys. These surveys identified the existence of commercial quantities of prawns in the Gulf of Papua.
- (b). The fishing grounds in the Gulf of Papua run from the Fly River mouth in the south-west to the village of Iokea in the south-east and extend seaward to approximately 40 metre depth contours. The main fishing grounds of Kerema Bay and Orokol Bay are about 18 - 20 hours steaming from Port Moresby.
- (c). The vessels remain at sea for extended period (about four to five weeks). The fishing takes place on a 24-hour basis for about 200 days per year during the eight months open season. They may spend 4-5 days in port for unloading, provisioning and refuelling.
- (d). Most vessels are twin-rigged with 12 fathoms (24 m) (footrope), except three vessels that are quad-rigged. “Twin-rigged” means towing two main nets, and “quad-rigged” means towing four main nets. The total width of the swept area is 60 metres, and this may be achieved by having two large main nets or four smaller size main nets. It has been shown that quad-rigged nets are more efficient over heavy silted bottom.
- (e). Trawling takes place mostly along the depth contour of 10 – 35 metres. Commercial quantities of prawns are searched and checked by a smaller net known simply as the “try net” across a certain depth range. This net is towed from the mid-ship and is checked about every 15 minutes. When the try net brings up good catch, the vessel trawls back and forth along the depth contour until no more prawn show up on the try net or the captain has estimated that there is a good size catch in his main nets. The duration per main net shot is about four hours but varies according to the abundance of banana prawns. If the catch is high, the duration is reduced to about two hours. Trawling speed is at an average of 3 knots. All sorting, grading, processing packing and freezing is done on board. When the product is landed in Port Moresby, it is ready for export.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued*

4. Description of the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery—*continued*

- (f). Production from the Gulf of Papua varies from 400 to 1,300 (all species) tonnes per year. About 50 - 60 % consist of the banana prawn (*Penaeus merguensis*, *P. indicus*), 10 -15% tiger prawns (*Penaeus monodon*, *Penaeus semisulcatus*), 15 - 20% endeavour prawns (*Metapenaeus ensis*, *M. endeavouri*, and *M. demani*). The rest is mostly packed as mixed grades, consisting of broken tails and soft shells of all species.
- (g). In 1989, annual harvests of prawn (Banana species) were worth K12 million in exports alone. The industry was overcapitalized, and after strict controls on fishing effort introduced in 1989, the value of exports increased to about K23million in1999. Although, there is a steady decline in the value, falling to around K5 million in 2006, climbing back to K10-15 million in 2010-2015 respectfully, however, the fishery is profitable because the CPUE remains steady at over 76kg/hour (CPUE) and can increase if there is more effort, especially modernisation of the gear used. In recent times, 2019-22, the export hangs just above K7 million and this is something to work hard to improve catch. All in all, every year less than 50% (45%) of total biomass is taken out or harvested.
- (h). Bio-Economic Studies funded by the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) and the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) in 2002 to 2006 and undertaken by the Commonwealth, Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO/NFA) have established that the fishery was operating sustainably at existing effort levels of 15 vessels at the time. It also established the Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) for the fishery and what fishing effort levels are required to reach the MEY.
- (i). A Socio-economic survey was undertaken during the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery – REBYC II CTI Project which was implemented in 2015/16. This work showed that benefits from the Gulf of Papua Prawn fisheries does not go to the local resource owners, and a massive fraction of bycatch is discarded as waste at sea, hence the artisanal sector needs some level of interventional projects.
- (j). A major first ever study, “Implementing Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) and Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRD) in the Gulf of Papua Prawn”, was conducted and concluded in 2016and the report of the findings was made available in 2017. The report strongly recommended the use of TEDs & BRDs to reduce trawl bycatch by 30% in the fishery and fulfils the bycatch mitigation action plan if this fishery is to be MSC certified. A suitable TED & BRD combination has been recommended from the outcome of the trial study and will be made available to licenced vessels, hence made mandatory under the new licence conditions. Part of gear modernisation and minimise fuel consumption and to maximise catch.
- (k). Consecutive annual independent biological recruitment monitoring scientific surveys carried out in the years 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2022.

5. OBJECTIVE

- (a). To manage the Prawn fishery so that the size of the stock tends towards a stock that will give the Maximum Economic Yield (MEY), chiefly through control of fishing effort (fishing gear transformation to increasing efficiency, sustainability, and reducing bycatch.
- (b). Provision of sustainable economic benefit through prevention of growth overfishing on the target species, the banana and tiger prawns, in order to maximise economic returns.
- (c). Promote conservation initiatives that limit bycatch of demersal fish species, sharks, rays and turtles.
- (d). Promotion of routine scientific and socio-economic data collection and application of sustainable fisheries management practices.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***5. Objective—*continued***

- (e). Development of controlled sustainable small-scale fisheries of the prawn species within selected areas of the three-mile zone, for the participation and benefit of the traditional resources' owners.

6. PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH TO PRAWN MANAGEMENT

Consistent with the regional and international management principles, precautionary approaches shall apply for Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a). In the absence of adequate scientific data, the National Fisheries Authority may take into account the uncertainties with respect to the size and productivity of the stock, to other management reference points such as maximum sustainable yield, the level and distribution of fishing mortality, the impact of fishing activities on associated and dependent species, and including climatic, oceanic, environmental and socio-economic conditions.
- (b). In managing the Prawn fishery, the Authority may consider the associated ecosystems on reefs within the Management Area. The Authority may develop data collection and research projects to assess the impact of fishing on non-target species and their environment, adopt plans as necessary to ensure the conservation of non-target species and consider the protection of habitats of special concern.
- (c). The absence of adequate scientific information may not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to make measures to protect the target and non-target species in the Gulf of Papua Prawn fishery.

7. MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The following management measures, which are to realise the objectives in Section 4, are to take effect immediately:

(1) Licensing

- a) Types of licenses
 - i. Shore-based facility license
 - ii. Fishing Vessel license
 - iii. Onboard facility license
 - iv. Processing and storage license
 - v. Export license
- b) License conditions

The number of fishing vessel licences for the industrial fishery operating outside the 3 nautical miles shall be maintained at 15 vessels.

- (i) Three (3) of the industrial fishery licenses operating outside the 3 nautical miles are reserved for local resource owners.
- (ii) This fishery is a reserved activity for PNG Nationals only. As such, licenses will only be issued to fully nationally owned and flagged PNG prawn fishing vessels.
- (iii) The licenses shall be endorsed for every 5 years. However, the review and renewal of the licenses shall be done annually.
- (iv) Preference shall be given to licence applications from resources owners within the Gulf Province for new licences.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***7. Management Measures—*continued***

- (v) Prawn trawlers of the GoP Prawn fishery may be endorsed to operate in the PNG Torres Strait fishery fishing zone. Endorsement shall be made by the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources in accordance with the *PNG Fisheries (Torres Strait Protected Zone) Act 1984*.
- (vi) There shall be a maximum of 10 (ten) licences for small-scale commercial dories or dinghies fishing by beam trawl operating in the inshore small-scale fishery within the 3 mile area. The target inshore catch shall be less than 50 tonnes annually.
- (vii) There shall be mandatory license condition that observers must be placed on-board all prawn trawling vessels or as directed by the National Fisheries Authority.
- (viii) There shall be a mandatory license condition that By-catch Exclusion Devices (BEDs) and Turtle Exclusion Devices (TEDs) must be placed on all prawn trawling nets of licensed fishing vessels. Effectively implemented within 2 years of the gazettal of this document.
- (ix) Non-targeted catch or By-catch must be declared and made available for local consumption through a local market outlet by all operators.

(2) Fishing Restrictions

- i. A one (1) kilometre radius from any oil rig or terminal is a no fishing range.
- ii. Trial Fishing outside of the management area may be permitted for a 12-month period as directed by the National Fisheries Board.
- iii. The gear restrictions for the industrial fishery shall be as follows.
 - (a) The taking of penaeid prawn is prohibited at all times.
 - (b) ~ by boats exceeding 30 meters overall length (LOA) according to Papua New Guinea registered survey length.
 - (c) ~ by boats with main engines with shaft power exceeding 410 kilowatts or 550 horsepower, as set out in the manufacturer's specifications.
 - (d) ~ by method of more than 4 (four) main nets and 1(one) try net towed at the same time.
 - (e) ~ by a method whereby the aggregate head rope (with mesh attached) for the main nets exceeds 60 metres and 1 (one) try net exceeds 6 metres headline.
 - (f) ~ by method whereby the headline of any one single main net exceeds 30 metres.
 - (g) ~ by method whereby the meshes for all nets, when measured diagonally stretched from knots to knots are less than 50 millimetres both on the body and cod end.
 - (h) ~ by method using an otter board that is more than 5 (five) square metres in area, per board; and
 - (i) ~ by beam trawl of greater than 6 (six) meters beam length.
- iv. The fishing vessels shall be installed with By-Catch Reduction Devices (BRDs) and Turtle Exclusion Devices (TEDs) to improve prawn catch quality and also for conservation implications.
- v. The gear restriction for small-scale fishery employing beam trawl towed by dory or dinghy, shall be as follows:
- vi. The taking of penaeid prawns is prohibited at all times:

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***7. Management Measures—*continued*****(2) Fishing Restrictions—*continued***

- (a) ~ by method where the width of all beam trawls exceeds 4 (four) metres; and
- (b) ~ by methods whereby the meshes of all nets when measured from knot to knot, are less than 50 millimetres (2.0 inches); and
- (c) ~ by method of beam trawl that does not incorporate a fish escape panel at the neck of the cod-end, consisting of 1 (one) metre wide panel of net of 50 millimetres (2.0 inches) mesh laid crosswise and which forms the body of the net at the neck of the cod-end.

(3) Performance Target.

- (a) The Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) for banana prawns being 580 tonnes and black tiger prawns at 110-120 tonnes is a standard benchmark. However, whether these yields remain unchanged would depend on recent assessments and updates in fisheries management plans. If the banana prawn catch exceeds 580 tonnes, the trimming of the season length is a common control measure. As for effort controls beyond Total Allowable Catch (TAC), alternative measures like limiting fishing days, gear restrictions, or spatial closures could be considered to manage fishing effort effectively.
- (b) The MEY maybe reviewed every three years as a prudent approach to account for fluctuations in market prices and operational costs. The trigger mechanism for such reviews include:
 - (i) Significant changes in market prices for prawns.
 - (ii) Variations in operational costs like fuel or labour.
 - (iii) Environmental factors affecting prawn populations.
 - (iv) Stakeholder feedback, socio-economic research or scientific recommendations from recent studies.

(4) Timed area closure

- (a) The trawl grounds from Iokea to Cape Blackwood shall be closed from 1st December (of the last year) to 31st March (of the current year). Refer to Schedule 1 for designated boundaries for the closed area. This is the seasonal breeding closure period of 4 months.
- (5) Industrial fishing is prohibited within the three-mile zone from Parama Island to the border of the Gulf and Central Provinces, except on special arrangements in which prawn vessels shall fish into the 3 nautical miles (nm) zone with high compliance and observer coverage and submission to NFA of signed joint venture agreement between parties for research and annual stock assessment surveys.
- (6) Marketing standards shall continue to be based on the standards established by the relevant Government authorities for domestic markets, and by relevant International Standards Authorities for international markets.
- (7) The prawn operators shall be required to submit to the National Fisheries Authority.
 - (a) Catch and effort data on the by-catch including non-fish species.
 - (b) All by-catch shall be reported to NFA on the mandatory catch logbook.
 - (c) All mammals and turtles shall be returned to the sea alive.
 - (d) Removing of fins from shark and returning them to sea is strictly prohibited.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued*

7. Management Measures—*continued*

(8) Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and Surveillance

- (a) All prawn fishing vessels must be installed with PNG type-approved Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMSs) to facilitate the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management plan adherence and increase safety in navigation.
- (b) Trained Observers of the National Fisheries Authority and the Gulf Province Division of Fisheries shall be placed at random on-board licensed prawn trawlers to monitor the fishing activities, undertake surveillance and conduct research.

8. MONITORING

- (a) In accordance with Section 29 of the *Fisheries Management Act* 1998, licensed operators are required to submit data on catch and effort, as well as marketing data, for the purpose of implementing this fishery management plan.
- (b) An annual scientific monitoring/research programme mutually agreed between the industry and NFA may be set up to monitor the fishery and to make recommendations for any relevant changes for the improvement of the fishery management plan to achieve the objectives in Section 4. The industry may be requested to provide logistic support and other form of assistance to implement the research programme in relation to prawns as well as other alternate fishery resources in the Gulf of Papua.
- (c) If there are indications of low recruitment through monitoring of reference limits, the National Fisheries Authority shall convene a consultative meeting with the industry to determine management measures to control effort.
- (d) The monitoring reference limits are;
 - (i) Monitoring CPUE for banana prawns:
 - (a) CPUE can be tracked through logbooks, observer programs, or electronic reporting (e-reporting). E-reporting is increasingly being adopted in fisheries management for real-time data collection and improved accuracy.
 - (b) Response to CPUE Drops: If CPUE falls below 7.0 kg/hr, management actions could include (however, 14.0 kg/hr is a warning):
 - (i) Closing the fishery temporarily to allow stock recovery.
 - (ii) Reducing fishing effort, such as limiting the number of fishing days or vessels.
 - (iii) Deciding which boats drop off: This could be based on criteria like historical catch performance, vessel size, or a lottery system to ensure fairness.
 - (ii) Species composition of prawns:
 - (a) Maintaining a minimum of 45% by weight in commercial catches ensures the sustainability of the target species. Monitoring could involve sampling catches at landing sites or using e-reporting systems for species identification.
 - (b) If the composition falls below the threshold, similar measures as above (effort reduction or closures) could be implemented.
 - (iii) Size composition of banana prawns:
 - (a) Ensuring that grades 51, 61, and 71 do not exceed 25% by weight helps maintain stock health and market value. Monitoring could involve size grading at processing facilities or onboard inspections.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***8. Monitoring—*continued***

- (b) If the size composition exceeds the limit, management could impose gear modifications (e.g., mesh size changes) or adjust fishing zones to target larger prawns

9. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR TRADITIONAL RESOURCE OWNERS

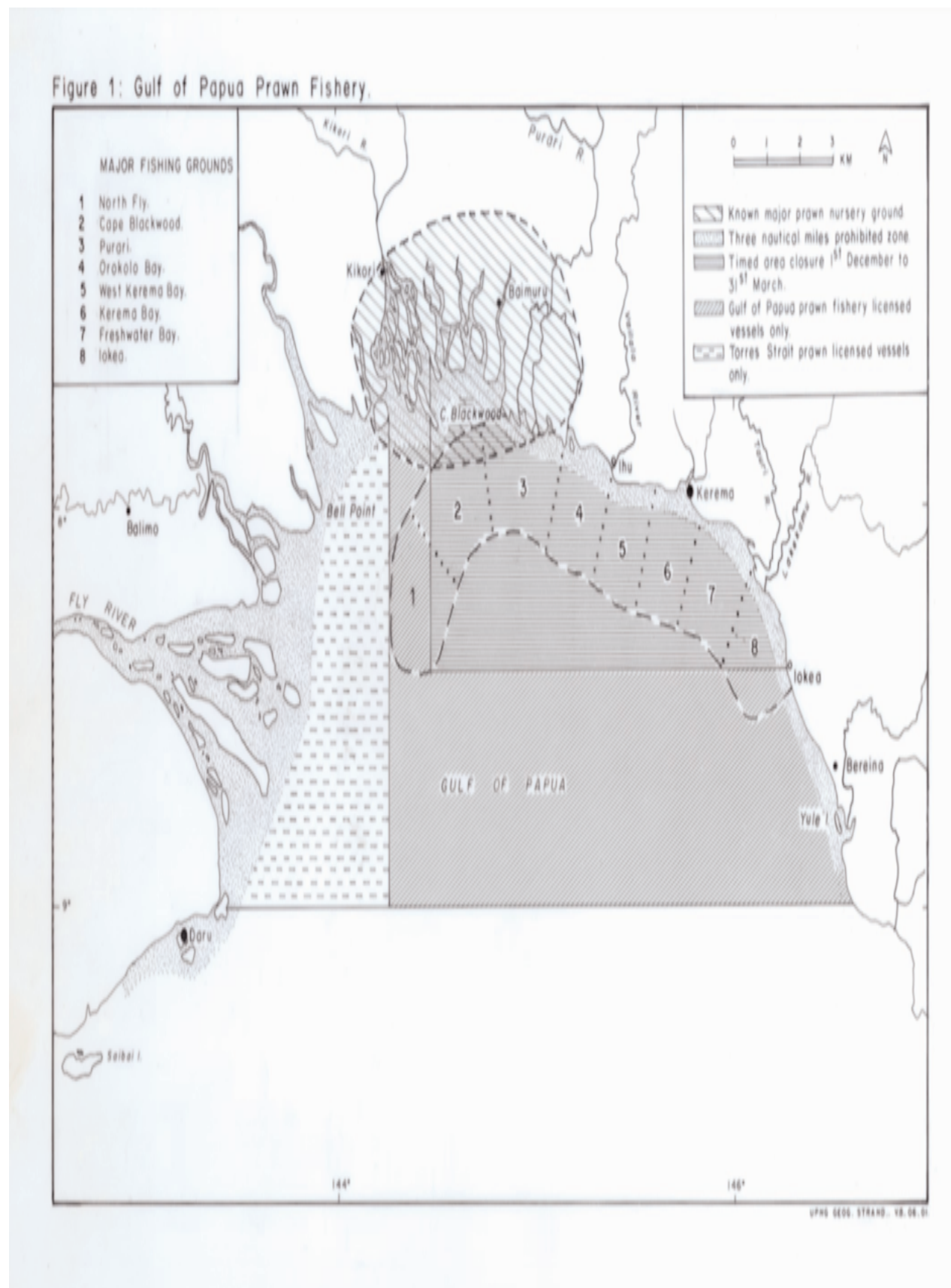
- (a) Special consideration is reserved in this fishery management plan for the needs of the traditional resource owners to avoid adverse impact on subsistence and small-scale commercial fisheries activities for livelihoods and food security.
- (b) Ownership of the near-shore fisheries resources (i.e. resources inside the three-mile limit) by traditional resources owners is recognised.
- (c) Where possible, effort shall be made to document and promote traditional conservation and management measures in the three-mile zone where small scale prawn trawling operations may be developed/conducted. In order to enhance the conservation and management practices of the fisheries resources within the traditional waters, traditional resource owners are allowed to fish within the 3-mile zone.
- (d) Preference will be given to licence applications from traditional resources owners, both for fishing by method of industrial trawling and by method of beam trawl towed by dory or dinghy.
- (e) The National Fisheries Authority in collaboration with the industry and provincial authority shall work towards facilitation and establishment of small-scale fisheries development of the prawn and associated finfish resources within certain parts of the three-mile zone.

10. RESEARCH PLAN

There shall be an annual recruitment and stock assessment research programme to be jointly carried out by industry and NFA to monitor the biological reference limits for CPUE, species and size compositions of the fishery.

11. AMENDMENTS

- (1) This management plan shall be kept under review every 4 years by the Authority as new information is obtained in order to meet its objectives.
- (2) Any amendment to this Management Plan shall be endorsed by the National Fisheries Board; and submitted to the Minister for approval and notified in the *National Gazette*.

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***SCHEDULE 1. The Map of the Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Area
(specifying the Boundaries for the Closed Area – 1st December to 31st March annually)**

The Gulf of Papua Prawn Fishery Management Plan—*continued***Western Boundary**

The western boundary shall be the line 145 degrees 10 minutes 00 seconds east (145° 10' 00"E) extending north to south from cape Blackwood to the Latitude 8 degrees 24 minutes 42 south (8°24'42" S).

Southern Boundary

The southern boundary shall be the line of latitude 8 degrees 24 minutes 42 seconds south (8°24'42" S) extending west to east from the termination of the western boundary to the coast at the village of Iokea.

Northern and Eastern Boundary

The northern and eastern boundary shall be the coast from the southern point of Cape Blackwood to Iokea village in the east.

Dated this 28th day of July, 2025.

Hon. J. WONG,
Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources.