



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

30 November 2011

Mr Nigel Routh
Assistant Secretary
Marine Biodiversity Policy
Department of the Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Routh *Nigel*

High Seas Fisheries – delay in Sustainability Assessment

On 24 October 2011, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) submitted to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPAC) an application in support of the renewal of the entry on the List of Exempt Native Specimens (LENS) of species taken in the high seas fisheries. The existing entry on the LENS expires on 17 December 2011.

In the submission, it was noted that AFMA had commissioned the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) to assess the sustainability of harvest rates of Australian flagged vessels of target species in the high seas (Sustainability Assessment).

While it was anticipated that the Sustainability Assessment would be completed in mid-November 2011, there have been delays in confirming catch and effort data for the High Seas Fishery as:

- the data used in the assessment covers an extended historic period back to 1999 and is held in several locations
- the data has not been used in such a way before, so requires careful checking before it can be analysed
- high seas permits have not existed in their current form for much of the period. Accordingly, operators were not subject to the same record keeping requirements and in many cases data were entered in logbooks for other fisheries. This has meant an extended consultation period with industry to ensure that the best available data were used in the assessment
- data extraction across agencies needed to be coordinated to ensure consistency of approach.

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These factors have meant that the Sustainability Assessment has now been delayed until mid-December 2011 and remains subject to resolution of data issues.

Given the expiry of the current LENS in mid December, we ask for your consideration of an extension or equivalent arrangement to enable the Sustainability Assessment to be completed and considered by agencies.

If you require additional information please contact Beth Gibson, Senior Manager, Demersal and Midwater Trawl Fisheries on 6225 5305.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nick Rayns
Executive Manager, Fisheries