



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

2011/04460

The Hon Michael O'Brien MP
Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
GPO Box 668
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as Delegate of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities in relation to the reassessment of the South Australian (SA) Lakes and Coorong Fishery under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

In March 2011, the Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) submitted the *Ecological Assessment of the Lakes and Coorong Fishery – Reassessment Report* for assessment under the EPBC Act to allow for further export approval of the product from the SA Lakes and Coorong Fishery. The PIRSA submission has been assessed for the purposes of the wildlife trade provisions of Part 13A of the EPBC Act. The assessment also took account of measures that have been developed by PIRSA in response to conditions that formed part of the previous Wildlife Trade Operation declaration to improve the management of the fishery.

I am pleased to advise that the reassessment of the fishery is now complete. The new assessment report will be available on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' (DSEWPoC) website at:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/sa/coorong/index.html>.

The management arrangements for the SA Lakes and Coorong Fishery meet most of the Australian Government *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition*. However, there remain a number of issues that need to be addressed to contain environmental risks in the longer term. These include:

- the implementation of ongoing measures to protect Murray cod in the fishery;
- continued monitoring of stock levels for key species;
- implementation of measures to reduce discarding; and
- continued monitoring of protected species interactions.

Given the management measures currently in place, which includes limited entry, a combination of input and output controls and gear restrictions, I am satisfied that the operation of the fishery remains consistent with the objects of the wildlife trade provisions of Part 13A of the EPBC Act. I am also satisfied that, for the period of the new Wildlife Trade Operation declaration, the fishery is unlikely to be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of any taxon to which the fishery operation relates, or threaten any relevant ecosystem.

Accordingly, I have decided to declare the SA Lakes and Coorong Fishery an approved Wildlife Trade Operation until 21 May 2014. The Wildlife Trade Operation declaration will be subject to the four conditions at **Attachment A**.

Officers from PIRSA and DSEWPaC have discussed key areas requiring ongoing attention. While there are some environmental risks associated with the SA Lakes and Coorong Fishery, I believe that PIRSA is committed to addressing these issues.

PIRSA and DSEWPaC officers have also agreed to two additional recommendations (**Attachment B**) to be implemented before the next Australian Government assessment of the fishery, focusing on continued stock monitoring, implementation of measures to reduce discarding and continued monitoring of protected species interactions in the fishery. The conditions and recommendations have been an important factor in my decision to declare the SA Lakes and Coorong an approved Wildlife Trade Operation. I look forward to receiving your confirmation that the conditions and recommendations will be implemented.

Please note that export decisions under the EPBC Act relate to the arrangements in force at the time of the assessment decision. To ensure that the Wildlife Trade Operation decision remains valid, DSEWPaC needs to be advised of any intended changes to the management regime and make an assessment that the new arrangements are equivalent or better, in terms of ecological sustainability, than those in place at the time of the original decision. This includes legislated amendments and operational changes that may affect the sustainability of the target species or negatively impact on byproduct, bycatch, protected species or the ecosystem.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Routh

Delegate of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

23 May 2011

Conditions on the Wildlife Trade Operation Declaration for the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery

Condition 1

Operation of the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery will be carried out in accordance with the *Management Plan for the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery 2005*, *South Australian Fisheries Management (Lakes and Coorong Fishery) Regulations 2009*, *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2007* and the *South Australian Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

Condition 2

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to inform the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities of any intended amendments to the management arrangements that may affect the criteria on which *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* decisions are based.

Condition 3

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to produce and present reports to the department annually as per Appendix B to the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition*.

Condition 4

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to:

- a. continue to protect Murray cod in the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery under current state-wide arrangements until 31 December 2012;
- b. from January 2013, implement interim arrangements to protect Murray cod in the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery until long-term arrangements are in place;
- c. review management arrangements for Murray cod in the fishery by June 2013; and
- d. implement measures, as appropriate, to ensure the ongoing protection of Murray cod by January 2014.

**Recommendations to the Department of Primary Industries and Resources
South Australia on the ecologically sustainable management of the Lakes and
Coorong Fishery**

The following recommendations have been made to further strengthen the effectiveness of the management arrangements for the fishery and minimise environmental risks in the medium to longer term. Unless a specific time frame is provided in the recommendation, each recommendation must be addressed within the life of the declaration.

Recommendation 1:

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to:

- a. continue to monitor trends in stock levels of mullocky, black bream, greenback flounder, golden perch and Goolwa cockles and implement measures to mitigate risks identified in the January 2011 risk assessment for the fishery;
- b. implement measures to reduce discarding of target species, particularly mullocky; and
- c. continue to implement measures to recover stocks of Goolwa cockles.

Recommendation 2:

The Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to:

- a. continue to monitor protected species interactions in the fishery; and
- b. develop and implement measures to mitigate interactions with protected species as appropriate.