

Question on Notice

No. 973

Asked on 1 September 2021

MRS J GILBERT ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline how the Palaszczuk Government is supporting vital research to assist in sustainable management of Queensland Fisheries?

ANSWER:

Accurate, reliable and timely data is one of the foundations of sustainable fisheries management. It is one of the foundational areas of the Palaszczuk Government's Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027 (the Strategy).

As part of implementing the Strategy in 2017, the Government has made a significant investment in fisheries monitoring, science and research to collect, store, validate and analyse fisheries data.

The state-wide fisheries monitoring program collects biological, economic and social data from both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, using a variety of methods. Key components of the program include:

- The state-wide recreational fishing survey that provides recreational fishing catch and effort data using telephone surveys and angler diaries.
- The boat ramp survey program that collects recreational catch and effort data by conducting regular interviews with anglers at 48 boat ramps in 15 regions across Queensland.
- The fishery monitoring program that collects biological data on a range of key target species using samples donated by recreational fishers, commercial fishers and seafood processors.
- For certain species, Fisheries Queensland also conducts fishery independent surveys (e.g. Fishery Independent Saucer Scallop Survey) to examine the health, status and size of a stock independent of other fishery information.

The commercial fishing reporting program collects data on catch and effort across all our commercial fisheries through mandatory reporting requirements. A range of other tools, including the requirement for vessel tracking on all commercial fishing vessels, are used to validate this information.

Commercial catch information is publicly available through QFish that is available at <https://qfish.fisheries.qld.gov.au/>.

The information from various fishery monitoring programs and the commercial fishing reporting program are combined to inform stock assessment models, which estimate the biomass of key target stocks and inform consideration of sustainable harvest limits.

The data sets used to inform these assessments are based on significant quantities of historical and recent information. For example:

- The most recent stock assessment for East Coast Spanish mackerel incorporated 78 years of commercial catch and effort data; length data from 72 140 fish caught by commercial fishers; 19 178 samples where fish age was determined; and 4 700 measured recreational catches. In this fishery, 10-13 per cent of the total commercial catch of Spanish mackerel is measured by Fisheries Queensland each year.
- The most recent stock assessment for saucer scallop incorporates 65 years' worth of commercial catch and effort data available to be analysed. In addition, fishery independent surveys have collected eight years of scallop density data and 487 902 scallops have been measured.
- The most recent stock assessment for king threadfin on the east coast incorporates 68 years of commercial catch and effort data; 3 067 measured commercial samples; 1 959 fish that were aged; and data from eight statewide recreational fishing surveys.

Information from the fishery monitoring programs including interactive maps and explanatory videos is available at www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/monitoring-research

The examples provided here typify the long history of catch, effort and biological data available to inform management for fisheries resources in Queensland. The stock assessment program has recently been expanded to provide routine stock assessments for key target species, which are a key indicator to monitor performance of our fisheries and make management decision under the 15 harvest strategies in Queensland.

Stock assessment reports, explanatory material and the schedule of upcoming stock assessments 2020-2023 is available at www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/monitoring-research/data.

Another recent initiative is a monitoring program collecting economic and social data to develop economic indicators for improved fisheries management. This information is being collected by a third party, BDO EconSearch, to ensure the confidentiality of information provided by commercial fishers. This monitoring program has developed economic and social indicator reports for 14 commercial fisheries and a consolidated report for charter fishers.

Agri-Science Queensland (ASQ) also provides a fisheries research capability to support sustainable management of fisheries resources. The ASQ research team supports Fisheries Queensland by conducting research to address key management questions or issues raised by fishery managers, fishery working groups and the commercial and recreational fishing sectors. The ASQ fisheries research team has a current research portfolio of over \$9 million worth of projects currently underway.

More information about the ASQ program is available at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/research>.