



Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
PRIMARY INDUSTRY, FISHERIES AND RESOURCES

A discussion paper outlining key management issues and proposals to ensure a sustainable, professional and viable guided fishing tourism industry.

Planning for the future of the Northern Territory's guided fishing industry



AUGUST 2009

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Executive Summary

In March 2003 Fisheries circulated a discussion paper requesting comments from licensed fishing tour operators (FTOs) regarding various proposals to enhance the management and development of their industry at that time. The paper proposed the introduction of FTO licence fees and the use of licence fee revenue to enable the employment of a paid executive officer who would represent and promote the guided fishing industry.

The Northern Territory Guided Fishing Industry Association (NTGFIA) was established in 2005. The Association was supported by departmental funding grants until FTO licence fees were introduced in 2007. Since then the Association has been funded by grants approved by the Minister from the NT Fishing Industry Research and Development Fund.

The NTGFIA has raised a number of matters with Government seeking to improve standards within the industry and progress its development. This paper has been prepared to promote discussion on these and other matters affecting the industry. They have been broadly grouped under the three headings of Safety, Management and Licensing.

The Safety section discusses a range of matters including qualifications of operators, vessel seaworthiness, insurance requirements, marking FTO vessels to enable their identification and appropriate means of ensuring that all FTOs are deemed fit and proper to conduct commercial tours.

The Management section incorporates matters such as FTO reporting requirements, and the adequacy of current catch provisions for their clients. The Licensing section queries the suitability of current licensing arrangements, the possible need of a business based licence and capping FTO licence numbers.

As a separate initiative, the NTGFIA is developing a voluntary code of conduct for the industry in consultation with all licensed FTOs to promote standards and professionalism among operators. For the code to be effective, the Association believes the powers of the Executive Director of Fisheries should be strengthened with respect to licence renewal criteria.

You are invited to respond to matters raised in this discussion paper on the questionnaire attached. Completed questionnaires must be returned by COB on Friday 30 October 2009 and should be sent to:

Fisheries Reception
Berrimah Research Farm
GPO Box 3000, DARWIN NT 0801

Fax to (08) 8999 2065
or via email to Fisheries@nt.gov.au

To complete the questionnaire online visit:
<http://www.nt.gov.au/d/Fisheries/fto/questionnaire.cfm>

Section 1: Introduction

This discussion paper provides some historical insight to the Northern Territory's guided fishing industry, particularly its management and development. This has been included primarily to enable informed discussion regarding the paper's real objective, which is to identify the best way forward to ensure the sustainable management of this valuable industry and further enhance its excellent national and international reputation.

The guided fishing industry provides recreational fishing opportunities for locals, interstate and international visitors. The Territory's unique and relatively pristine waters provide a wealth of fishing opportunities. FTOs play an important role in providing services to people who want to experience high quality fishing, offering expert guidance and specialist equipment.

By the mid-1980s, a handful of barramundi guides and fishing lodges had begun operating in various locations throughout the Northern Territory. By 1989 there were twenty-four guided fishing businesses and a Fishing Tour Operator's Association. This was the beginning of a boom period in fishing tourism that was triggered by the Northern Territory Government's decision to begin reallocating barramundi resources in key rivers to recreational fishers.

The rapid growth of this industry over the next few years induced the need of more formal management. Consultation with members led to new legislation in 1993 that required people who conduct paid fishing tours to do so under a current FTO licence. These licences were issued and renewed free of charge pending the timely submission of statutory log returns, which provide essential management data. The most recent review of FTO licensing led to the introduction of new licence conditions in 1997.

FTO licence fees were introduced in 2006/7 following consultation between the NTGFIA and industry members. In March 2006 the NTGFIA recommended the adoption of a fishery management plan as the most effective way of maintaining and enhancing professional standards within the industry.

Against this background and the continued growth in recreational fishing and tourism across the Northern Territory, it is timely to review existing FTO management arrangements. The first step is to identify the key issues facing the industry and examine how best they can be addressed to ensure that it provides high quality, professional services in to the future. The department is working with the NTGFIA to review existing management arrangements. Comments received in response to this discussion paper will provide valuable input to the process. The primary objectives of the review are to:

- Ensure ongoing sustainability of fisheries and aquatic resources;
- Maintain and enhance standards of professionalism within industry;
- Ensure a safe and quality experience for FTO clients;
- Ensure a sustainable and viable industry; and
- Enhance business efficiency and profitably.

Changes to existing management arrangements could be implemented as licence conditions or by amendment of the *Fisheries Act*, Regulations under the Act and fishery management plans.

Section 2: Background and description of fishery

Areas fished and fishing methods

Most FTOs target barramundi in coastal and inland areas but a growing number operate offshore targeting other species. Most are based in Darwin but Nhulunbuy and Borroloola are also well serviced. Resident FTOs are based on many of the big tidal rivers, and others operate from the various Aboriginal owned islands surrounding much of the Territory's coast. Several FTOs maintain financial agreements with landholders to operate exclusively from their land, often from camps and lodges. Some FTOs operate full time while others run smaller part time operations.

Licence numbers and licensing criteria

More than one FTO licence may be held by an individual, a partnership or a corporation. There are currently about 100 licensed FTOs in the industry holding 150 licences. Applicants must specify the nature of tours they conduct under one or more of the licensing categories shown in the Appendix and provide evidence that the relevant criteria are met.

Numbers of FTO licences fluctuate annually and the number issued between 1994 and 2007 is shown in Table 1 in the Appendix. Licence numbers are not limited, although there are restrictions on those allowed to operate in some parks and reserves. FTOs operating in Kakadu National Park require an additional permit issued by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

Following extensive consultation with FTOs, the NTGFIA agreed to the incremental introduction of licence fees over a three to five year time frame pending substantial progress towards establishing a more business oriented administrative environment for the industry. A \$400 fee became payable in the 2006/07 licensing year. This fee is increasing by \$100 each year until \$800 is payable in 2010/11. These fees contribute to the departmental costs of management, research and administration of licensing and logbooks, as well as grants to the NTGFIA for wages and other expenses.

Catch and fishing effort

Annual FTO log data summaries are compiled to show the number of each species caught and released, fishing methods used, areas fished and other information. These data are intrinsic to the management of Northern Territory fisheries. They are combined with those from recreational fishing surveys to provide a comprehensive overview of the guided and non-guided components of the recreational fishery. Fishery managers rely on these data when making recommendations regarding fishery controls, native title claims, fishing area closures and marine park planning.

The number of line hours fished using specific fishing methods is recorded. Line hours are those spent with gear in the water. The number of line hours fished each year between 1994 and 2007 is shown on Figure 1 in the Appendix, together with the various fishing methods used.

The numbers of fish species caught and released are also recorded. Figure 2 in the Appendix shows the number of line hours fished each year between 1994 and 2007 in relation to numbers of fish caught and released. Numbers of FTO clients and tour days fished between 1994 and 2007 are shown respectively in Figures 3 and 4 in the Appendix.

A consistently high release rate is one of the more notable attributes of this industry, particularly for barramundi. In 2006/07, eighty-six percent of all barramundi captured were released. Of all the different species of fish caught during in the 2006/07 licensing year, 76% were released. However, the figures mentioned above also show significantly increasing client numbers and particularly significant increases in line hours spent reef fishing.

Section 3: Key issues and possible management options

SAFETY

FTOs are responsible for the safety and well being of their clients. Ensuring high quality service standards will enhance safety and elevate public perceptions of the industry. The adoption of higher safety standards has been suggested to help meet these objectives, with a particular focus on vessel operator qualifications and survey requirements.

Vessel operator qualifications

FTOs operating from boats less than five metres require no skipper's qualification but are restricted to sheltered waters. Those operating vessels over five metres require a qualification. Given the responsibility of operators for the safety of clients, it needs to be considered whether all FTOs should possess some qualification, including those operating vessels less than five metres.

One option is to apply the same qualifications for FTOs operating vessels larger than 5 metres to those who operate smaller vessels. However, this may be onerous for smaller vessel operators, particularly when they are restricted to sheltered waters. Alternatively, less comprehensive qualifications could be introduced for smaller vessel operators, such as an Inshore Coxswain Certificate of Competency or an equivalent minimum standard.

Small boat operator courses, including the Inshore Coxswain Certificate of Competency, are convened in Darwin by the Seafood Maritime Industry Council and Charles Darwin University. However, consideration would need to be given to the demand and provision of these services in remote locations like Nhulunbuy and Borroloola.

Refer to Question 1

Should all FTOs who operate a vessel possess a vessel operator's qualification? If so, do you think an Inshore Coxswains Certificate of Competency is an appropriate minimum standard, or some other qualification?

Vessel seaworthiness

Vessels less than 5 metres are not required to be surveyed providing there are less than 4 people onboard and they remain within sheltered waters. As above, safety concerns and the desire to improve professionalism in the industry warrant some review of this situation. Unsurveyed FTO vessels under five metres could be made subject to the same annual inspections and safety gear requirements applied to hire and drive dinghies under the *Northern Territory Marine Act*. These are considered the most compatible existing standards for FTOs operating vessels under five metres.

It is likely that many FTO vessels less than five metres will not meet full survey requirements. Survey requirements for commercial vessels exceed those for hire and drive vessels and those for hire and drive vessels exceed those for pleasure craft. Survey exempt vessels are currently only subject to pleasure craft standards. Ensuring vessels meet hire and drive dingy standards would significantly enhance industry standards, and probably require amendment of the *Northern Territory Marine Act* and some regulations. If new requirements are approved for introduction, it has been suggested that they are phased in over an agreed period.

Marine surveyors of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's (DPI) Marine Safety Branch service regional and remote area survey requirements on an annual schedule. FTOs requiring vessel inspections would need to pre-arrange inspections accordingly.

Outboard motor pods, bow sprits and variable hull designs can create uncertainty over the exact length of a vessel. In the past, some FTO vessels thought to be less than five metres length have been measured longer. Any doubt regarding a vessel's length should be resolved by marine surveyors of DPI's Marine Safety Branch.

Refer to Question 2

Should all FTO vessels be required to meet prescribed standards? Do you think hire and drive dingy standards are appropriate for unsurveyed vessels less than five metres?

Insurance

The department has a responsibility to promote duty of care with respect to the protection of clients, FTOs and their employees. This entails a requirement to ensure that FTOs maintain adequate liability insurance. As such, minimum \$5 million insurance policies are maintained as a condition of FTO licences. This indemnifies operators in the event of accidents or injury while on tour. However, because \$10 million policies are becoming more common in various business scenarios, it has been suggested that FTO policies should be increased to that level.

Because it is essential that this insurance covers all activities at all times during a paid tour, broad form policies have been recommended as the most appropriate insurance option for FTOs. The term, broad form policy, is used to describe a comprehensive general liability insurance policy which provides a wide range of coverage that can be tailored to suit the specific needs of the insured.

Refer to Question 3

Should the current \$5 million minimum FTO insurance requirement be increased to \$10 million?

Refer to Question 4

Should broad form insurance policies be introduced as a minimum standard FTO licence condition?

Identifying unlicensed FTOs

There is currently no requirement for FTOs to mark their vessels to enable their identification. While many FTO vessels are often obvious by promotional advertising displayed on them, some are less obvious and others are kept free of any indication that they engage fishing tour operations. Marking vessels would assist the detection of unlicensed FTOs, who undermine the industry and do not observe the same legal requirements and standards as legitimate licensed operators.

A requirement for FTO vessel marking would ensure that licensed vessels can be identified easily by clients and fisheries enforcement personnel, and would enhance professionalism within the industry. Any marking method that may be agreed would need to be visible at all times during commercial tours whether the vessel is on land or water. Options include a sticker or more permanent marking that may be covered when the operator is using the vessel privately.

Refer to Question 5

Should all FTO vessels be made readily identifiable while on commercial tours?

Refer to Question 6

If you answered yes to Question 5 above, what method of vessel marking do you consider most appropriate?

Should fit and proper person checks apply for all FTOs?

As mentioned above, FTOs are responsible for the well-being and safety of their clients while on tour, including elderly people, children and people with disabilities. In accordance with the *Motor Vehicles Act and the Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act*, DPI reviews commercial passenger vehicle driver licence applicants for criminal history and traffic offence records, records of complaints, work history and referee reports. Criminal history checks assist in determining whether a person has a disqualifying offence or whether they are deemed fit and proper to conduct commercial tours. Existing licence holders are subject to these reviews every five years.

This level of background checking only applies to FTOs who incorporate a motor vehicle in their business activities. However, it may be appropriate for all FTO licensees and applicants to undergo similar checking. This would be particularly relevant with respect to convictions recorded against the Fisheries or Marine Acts. However, consideration would need to be given to other skills, qualities and attributes a person should possess to be deemed a fit and proper fishing tour operator.

In consultation with the industry, the NTGFIA has developed a voluntary code of conduct to further promote standards and professionalism among operators. The Association believes that for its code of conduct to be effective, Fisheries' powers regarding the issue and renewal of FTO licences should be strengthened.

Refer to Question 7

Should all FTOs be subject to background checks to assess their suitability to conduct commercial tours?

Refer to Question 8

Should there be clear legislative powers to refuse the issue or renewal of FTO licences if the applicant has breached the Fisheries Act?

Refer to Question 9

Should compliance with the NTGFIA's Code of Conduct be a consideration when deciding the issue or renewal of FTO licences?

MANAGEMENT

Special catch controls for FTOs

Possession limits are currently the primary control used in the Northern Territory to contain recreational catches to sustainable levels. A possession limit is the maximum number of fish each person can have in their possession at any time, other than in their place of permanent residence. It is not a daily bag limit or boat limit.

A general personal possession limit of 30 fish (or equivalent if the fish are trunked or filleted) applies irrespective of how long someone has been fishing. The existing limit is therefore designed to accommodate requirements of anglers who may be fishing over several days. Within this overall limit, specific possession limits also apply to some key species such as barramundi, black jewfish, golden snapper and Spanish mackerel. Separate possession limits also apply to mud crabs, tropical rock lobster and molluscs.

Government recently announced some changes to possession limits which will take effect on 1 January 2010. The changes include a reduction of the personal possession limits for black jewfish and Spanish mackerel from five to two, a new limit of three sharks (with a prohibition on taking sawfish), a new limit of thirty cherabin and/or red claw yabbies and a prohibition on taking giant clams other than by licensed or indigenous people.

FTO clients are recreational fishers and the same limits apply as for general anglers. Some FTOs self impose lower limits on their vessels to avoid excessive catches and help maintain the quality of their fishing spots. Because FTOs are usually more efficient and may carry a large number of anglers, some states have introduced special catch controls for FTOs to help reduce impacts on populations of key fish species.

Over the years, some FTOs have proposed increased catch limits for their clients, typically for extended trips, while others have proposed reduced limits particularly in high use areas like Darwin. At the NTGFIA annual general meeting, some operators requested that this matter be reviewed and the following questions are included.

Refer to Question 10

Should FTO client catch limits be different from those that apply to general recreational fishers?

Refer to Question 11

Should a tiered FTO trip possession limit based on trip duration be considered for clients; for example, different possession limits for a day trip, a 2-3 day trip, and a trips of a week or more?

Refer to Question 12

Should a fillet kilogram weight possession limit be considered as an alternative to a number of fish?

Monitoring catch and activity through log returns

Fisheries monitors fishing activity across all sectors to ensure the sustainable management of Northern Territory fishery resources. FTOs and commercial fishery licensees are required to meet specific reporting requirements as a condition of their licence. Daily log returns for each month are submitted within twenty-eight days from the end of each month.

To enhance the accuracy of log returns in Western Australia, legislation requires FTOs to record specific details before their clients disembark the vessel/vehicle/fishing platform. This ensures that catch and other important details are recorded accurately in the clients' presence and are not subject to the operator's memory.

Numbered map grids used to record areas fished each day on FTO log returns represent one degree of latitude and longitude (ie 60 square nautical miles). FTOs record the relevant grid number together with the name of the reef, headland or other geographical site they fish on or near. However, they often fish in more than one grid in a day, and the names of specific sites fished are not always those used formally on maps.

It is often necessary for fisheries managers to pinpoint areas of fishing activity more precisely to assist in stock assessments, consider resource sharing issues or when making submissions on matters that may impact on FTOs. This is because sites that become subject to these proposals are usually much smaller than sixty square nautical miles. It would therefore be of considerable benefit if reporting was undertaken on smaller grids of 10 or 15 square nautical miles.

It would be of great value to fisheries managers if FTOs recorded lengths of the more significant species their clients catch and/or release, especially managed species. This would be time consuming for some FTOs and require that fish intended for release are kept out of the water for any additional time required to measure them. The department would be interested to know if any FTOs would be prepared to voluntarily record lengths of more significant species in addition to their normal log reporting responsibilities in order to provide more detailed management information.

Digitisation of catch returns

The introduction of electronic log returns has been suggested to improve the effectiveness of log reporting. The department is currently undertaking a review of data reporting needs and feedback from this process will be used to consider this option further. A full electronic reporting system, which enables data to be automatically entered in to a database, would present a substantial cost to the department and require significant upgrading of its database.

Refer to Question 13

Should FTOs be required to complete client/catch records before any of their clients disembark their vessel or fishing platform to improve the accuracy of the details provided?

Refer to Question 14

Should the grid squares used for daily log recording be reduced to represent smaller areas of 10 to 15 square nautical miles to enhance reporting accuracy of fishing areas?

Refer to Question 15 (for FTOs only)

Would you be prepared to voluntarily record lengths of significant species in addition to your normal log reporting responsibilities?

Establishment of entry/career path for school leavers

The NTGFIA has suggested that the industry should consider career opportunities for school leavers and entry paths for prospective stakeholders in the various licence categories. For school leavers this might involve some sort of apprenticeship or VET training associated with on-the-job experience. For other (adult) prospective stakeholders it could include accreditation levels and perhaps minimal plant and equipment standards (over and above survey requirements) for new licence categories such as eco-tourism.

Refer to Question 16

Do you see benefit in establishing a training/apprenticeship program to foster entry and help people pursue careers in the guided fishing industry?

LICENSING

Licensing arrangements for short term operators

Fishery licence holders may appoint one appropriately qualified person to become a temporary operator of the licence if the licensee is unable to operate. This provision is intended to allow continued operation of the business. The licensee must show the department that the relieving operator has all necessary qualifications before they are allowed to conduct a commercial tour. This is a temporary provision for which approvals automatically terminate at the end of each licensing year and must be renewed.

Multiple licence holders

Some FTOs hold more than one licence and employ guides to operate each one, often exclusively to the licence holder's business. Under these circumstances, the licence holder must ensure that all conditions are met for each licence. This scenario is commonly favoured by lodge and mother ship operators. Some FTOs employ guides who hold their own licence. The licensee is then responsible for meeting their own licence requirements. This scenario is commonly favoured by employers who do not want to bear the cost or responsibility of meeting the licence conditions personally, and guides who want to work for more than one business. Both scenarios are valid, and it is worth noting that licensed guides can also be employed by unlicensed people who do not conduct tours.

NTGFIA proposal for business based licence

The NTGFIA believes that a new licensing framework is required to meet the needs of multiple licence holders. The Association has proposed business based FTO licences which would allow a specified number of guides to operate under a single licence. This proposal would allow for a principal licensee, a nominee (if required), and a set number of fishing guides.

The NTGFIA believes such a framework would streamline current licensing processes and provide greater autonomy for multi-platform operators in the day to day running of their businesses.

However, this would reduce the revenue base that supports the Association and the department unless a proportionately higher licence fee is payable. A restructure of the licensing framework would therefore need to incorporate a review of the FTO licence fee structure.

Refer to Question 17

Should a business based FTO licence framework be introduced that allows a principal licence holder to employ multiple operators under his/her licence, and what would be the advantages or disadvantages of such a scheme?

Refer to Question 18

If you answered yes to Question 17 above, how many operators should be allowed to conduct tours under each licence?

FTO licence numbers, licence limitation and transfer

Some FTOs have asked why FTO licences are not limited or made transferable, as they believe this would enhance business security and licence certainty. Any person over eighteen years of age may apply for an FTO licence, and they may be issued providing the applicant meets the necessary criteria. Because new FTO licences can be granted at any time, there is currently no practical need to enable their transfer.

Licence numbers are limited in commercial fisheries in the Northern Territory to help cap levels of fishing effort. Charter licences have been limited in some jurisdictions for similar reasons. These licences are generally transferable, and the only way a person can enter a limited entry fishery is to purchase an existing licence.

Industry proposals to limit the number of FTO licences and allow their transfer and sale have been considered by the then Attorney General's Department in 1996 and the Department of Justice in 2002. On both occasions the department was advised that this would potentially restrict access to public resources and create inequitable business opportunities.

While the National Competition Policy (NCP) is established to prevent inequities of this nature, some states restrict the number of FTO licences rather than strictly limit the number issued. For example, while a set number of licences may be renewed annually, additional new licences may be issued if demand for guided fishing services is not met in a specific area, or if the applicant demonstrates that they will not target fish stocks at risk of over exploitation. Under these circumstances a business warning notice is usually issued to advise the public that no new licences will be issued from a specific date two years thence.

A restriction on the number of licences issued would likely reduce the number of 'fly-by-night' operators and potential for overcapitalisation within the industry. It would also enhance business viability for more committed operators and, therefore, elevate service provision and industry standards generally. It is also likely that licensees would adopt more of a stewardship role in the management of the natural resources they depend on. In states where FTO licence numbers are controlled in this way, licences can be bought and sold on an open market.

There is considerable scope to develop guided fishing tourism opportunities on waters within and around aboriginal land and some pastoral land where current fishing pressure is low. These opportunities, the ongoing release of over seventy percent of FTO catch and legal advice regarding the NCP make it difficult to justify limiting licence numbers. However, in view of the significant and ever increasing fishing effort and potential risks to sustainability, there may be a case for limiting effort around some major population centres, especially Darwin.

Refer to Question 19

Do you think the number of FTO licences issued in the NT should be limited and why?

Refer to Question 20

Should FTO numbers be limited in specific areas? If so, in which areas?

NTGFIA proposal for FTO levy

The NTGFIA is currently funded by a Government grant of \$40,000. The Northern Territory Seafood Council is partly funded through levy payments made by members. This provides the Council with a revenue source that is independent of government grants and expendable at its own discretion. The NTGFIA supports the introduction of a similar levy, in addition to licence fees, to cover business costs not met by membership fees or other income.

Refer to Question 21

Should all licensed FTOs be required to pay a levy to help fund the NTGFIA's business costs?

Appendix

FTO licensing categories and respective requirements

1. Vehicle and boat operator
 - Commercial passenger vehicle accreditation issued or by the NT Department of Planning and Infrastructure
 - NT Tourist Vehicle registration certificate
 - NT driver's licence with an "H" endorsement
 - Appropriate vessel survey certification
 - Appropriate vessel operator qualification
 - \$5 million minimum third party liability insurance
 - Senior First Aid Certificate
 - NT Driver's Licence with an "H" endorsement
2. Boat only operators
 - Appropriate vessel survey certification
 - Appropriate vessel operator qualification
 - \$5 million minimum third part liability insurance
 - Senior First Aid Certificate
3. Lodges and accommodations
 - Appropriate vessel survey certification
 - Appropriate vessel operator qualification
 - \$5 million minimum third party liability insurance
 - Senior First Aid Certificate
4. Bus tour operators
 - Accreditation issued or approved by the NT Motor Vehicle registry
 - Appropriate vessel survey certification
 - Appropriate vessel operator qualifications
 - \$5 million minimum third party liability insurance
 - Senior First Aid certificate
5. Mother ship operators
 - Appropriate vessel survey certification
 - Appropriate vessel operator qualification
 - \$5 million minimum third party liability insurance
 - Senior First Aid Certificate.

Table 1.

Numbers of FTO licences issued each calendar year from 1994 to 2008 showing active and inactive licences.

| Year | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Licences issued | 93 | 137 | 155 | 218 | 152 | 145 | 124 | 121 | 116 | 108 | 120 | 160 | 168 | 142 | 145 |
| Active licences | 62 | 71 | 97 | 126 | 104 | 110 | 69 | 88 | 82 | 75 | 88 | 117 | 122 | 75 | 99 |

Figure 1.

Line hours spent using various fishing methods.

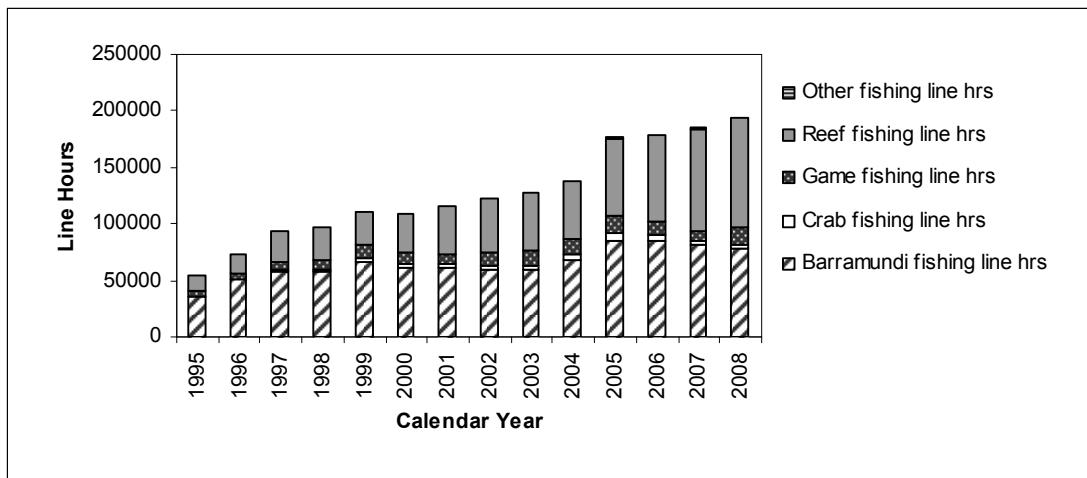


Figure 2.

Catch, release and line hours 1995 to 2008.

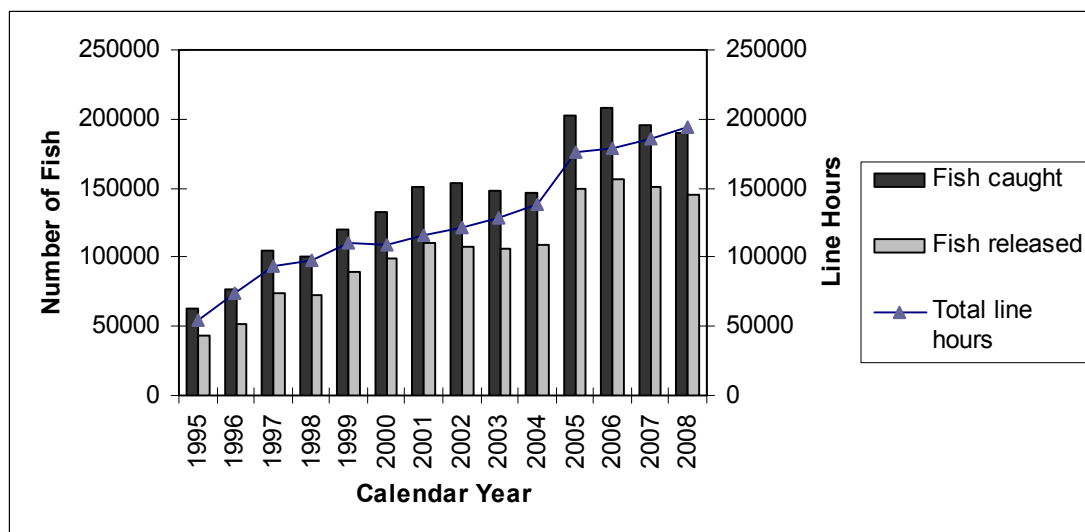


Figure 3.

Numbers of client days fished each year between 1994 and 2008.

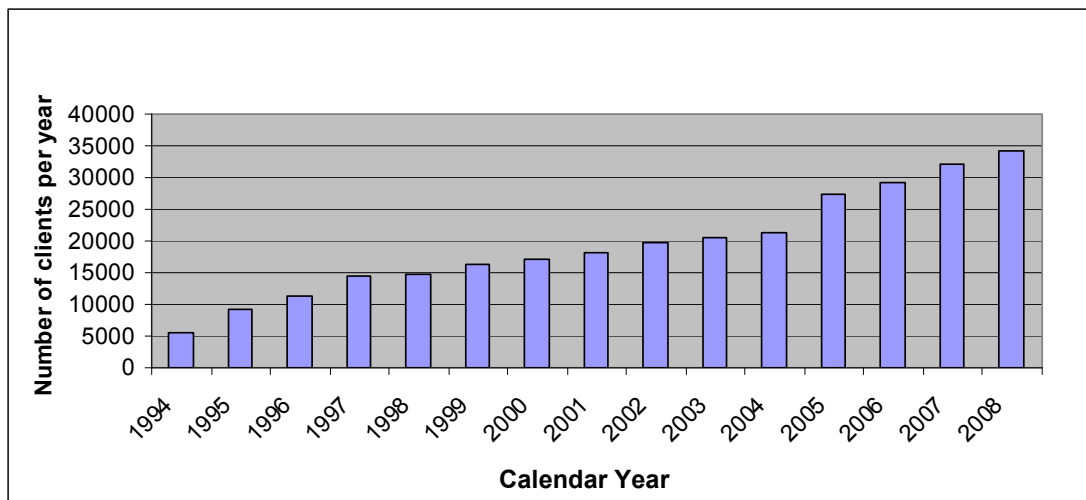
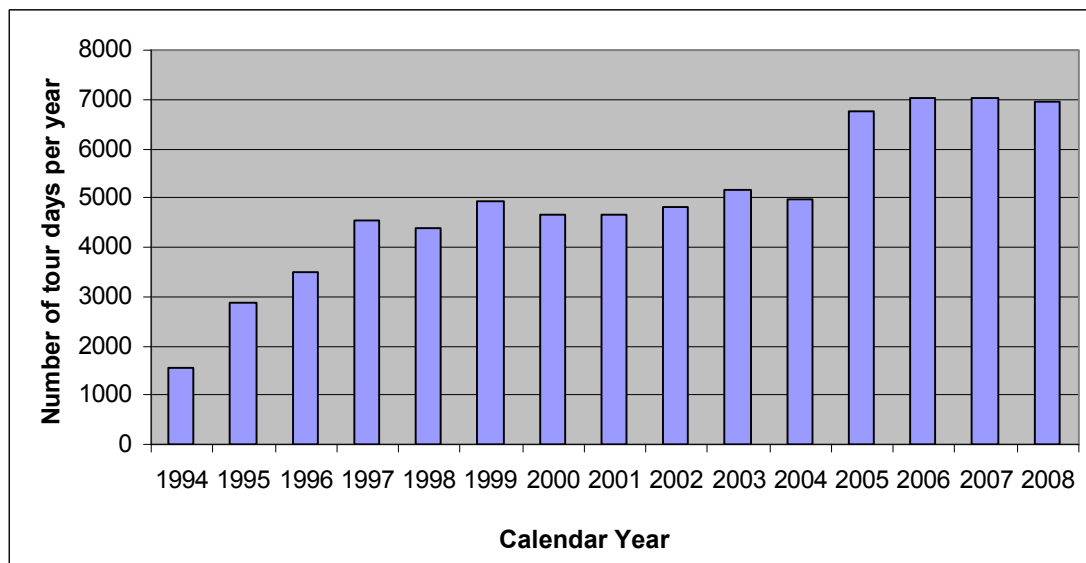


Figure 4.

Numbers of tour days recorded between 1994 and 2008.



QUESTIONNAIRE

Members of the public are invited to complete and submit this questionnaire before COB on Friday 30 October 2009.

Return to Fisheries Reception, Berrimah Research Farm
GPO Box 3000, DARWIN NT 0801 or fax to (08) 8999 2065.
E-mail responses can be delivered to Fisheries@nt.gov.au

To complete this **questionnaire online** visit:
www.nt.gov.au/d/Fisheries/fto/questionnaire.cfm

Question 1

Should all FTOs who operate a vessel possess a vessel operator's qualification? If so, do you think an Inshore Coxswains Certificate of Competency is an appropriate minimum standard, or some other qualification?

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Question 2

Should all FTO vessels be required to meet prescribed standards? Do you think hire and drive dingy standards are appropriate for unsurveyed vessels less than five metres?

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Question 3

Should the current \$5 million minimum FTO insurance requirement be increased to \$10 million?

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Question 4

Should broad form insurance policies be introduced as a minimum standard FTO licence condition?

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Question 5

Should all FTO vessels be made readily identifiable while on commercial tours?

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Question 6

If you answered yes to question 5 above, what method of vessel marking do you consider most appropriate?

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Question 7

Should all FTOs be subject to background checks to assess their suitability to conduct commercial tours?

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Question 8

Should there be clear legislative powers to refuse the issue or renewal of FTO licences if the applicant has breached the Fisheries Act?

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Question 9

Should compliance with the NTGFIA's Code of Conduct be a consideration when deciding the issue or renewal of FTO licences?

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Question 10

Should FTO client catch limits be different from those that apply to general recreational fishers?

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Question 11

Should a tiered FTO trip limit based on trip duration be considered for clients for example; a possession limit for a 2-3 day trip, and a possession limit for trips of a week or more?

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Question 12

Should a fillet kilogram weight possession limit be considered as an alternative to a number of fish?

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Question 13

Should FTOs be required to complete client/catch records before any of their clients disembark their vessel or fishing platform to improve the accuracy of the details provided?

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Question 14

Should the grid squares used for daily log recording be reduced to represent smaller areas of 10 to 15 square nautical miles to enhance reporting accuracy of fishing areas?

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Question 15 (for FTOs only)

Would you be prepared to voluntarily record lengths of significant species in addition to your normal log reporting responsibilities?

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Question 16

Do you see benefit in establishing a training/apprenticeship program to foster entry and help people pursue careers in the guided fishing industry?

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Question 17

Should a business based FTO licence framework be introduced that allows a principal licence holder to employ multiple operators under his/her licence, and what would be the advantages or disadvantages of such a scheme?

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Question 18

If you answered yes to Question 17 above, how many operators should be allowed to conduct tours under each licence?

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Question 19

Do you think the number of FTO licences issued in the NT should be limited and why?

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Question 20

Should FTO numbers be limited in specific areas? If so, in which areas?

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Question 21

Should all licensed FTOs be required to pay a levy to help fund the NTGFIA's business costs?

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Your contact details (optional)

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|-------------|
| Name: |
| Address: |
| |
| Phone No's: |
| Email: |

Please note:

All responses to this questionnaire will be handled by the department in compliance with the Northern Territory *Information Act*. The information collected through this questionnaire will influence decisions regarding the future management and development of the Northern Territory's guided fishing industry.

The provision of your name and contact details is optional.