



Fisheries and Oceans  
Canada

Pêches et Océans  
Canada

## Q's & A's

17 November 2004

### TOPIC: Recreational prawn fishing closures, 2004/2005

Q1. What areas are being closed?

A1.

- Quadra – Cortez Islands, subareas 13-13, 13-15, 13-16
  - Pender Hbr., Agamemnon Channel, subareas 16-2, 16-3, 16-4, 16-10, 16-16, 16-17, 16-18
  - Stuart Channel, subareas 17-5, 17-6, 17-7, 17-9
  - Saanich Inlet, subareas 19-7 to 19-12
  - Alberni Canal, subareas 23-1 to 23-3
- Howe Sound was also sampled and does not require closure.
- Other areas were sampled and we are waiting on those results, for Nanaimo, Powell River and Salmon and Sechelt Inlets.

Q2. When will the areas close?

A2. All gear must be removed from the water prior to Monday Nov. 22, 2004.

Q3. Can I continue to fish other species of shrimp?

A3. No, all recreational shrimp fishing including prawns is closed in the affected areas.

Q4. Where can I get a map of the Areas being closed?

A4. Public notices with maps are available from all local DFO offices and from fishery managers. Maps of Areas and Subareas are available on the internet, at:

[http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/Areas/areamap\\_e.htm](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/Areas/areamap_e.htm)  
[http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/Areas/areamap\\_f.htm](http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/Areas/areamap_f.htm)

Q5. What if there's a storm and I can't get my gear out of the water?

A5. Call your local Fishery Office and make arrangements to remove your gear as soon as possible. If you are removing gear after the close date, you will be required to release all of the catch.

Q6. How long will the areas be closed?

A6. Fishing gear can be put back in the water April 1.

- Q7. Why are the areas being closed?
- A7. Scientific sampling in these areas has established that there are low numbers of female prawns carrying eggs. The closure will allow the prawns to complete their spawning cycle.
- Q8. Why are you closing? – I'm catching large numbers of prawns without eggs.
- A8. At this time of year the prawn population includes both adult female prawns carrying eggs, and prawns that are only slightly smaller in size that are not carrying eggs. Prawns not carrying eggs are a year younger and are in a "transitional stage" changing from their male life stage to their female life stage. Even if there is an abundance of the transition prawns, the closure is necessary to protect the adult females that are now completing their life cycle. Transition prawns will still be there when the recreational fishery re-opens in April.
- Q9. Is this a conservation concern?
- A9. No. There is an abundance of younger prawns and no risk of the stocks being eliminated. These closures ensure that there will be sufficient numbers of prawns in future to allow for fishing to continue, by all sectors.
- Q10. Can the recreational fishery recommence in April without harming stocks?
- A10. Prawns will finish the egg incubation period and the larvae will hatch out of the eggs by April. Those prawns die several weeks later. Fishing in April will catch the younger 3 year old prawns, of which there is an abundance.
- Q11. When will the commercial fishery open?
- A11. The commercial prawn fishery is scheduled to commence May 1, annually.
- Q12. Will the commercial fishery affect conservation?
- A12. Upcoming prawn stocks are abundant. The commercial fishery has 11 observers trained in scientific sampling that sample throughout the commercial fishery, throughout the coast, to ensure conservation.
- Q13. What is the spawner index?
- A13. The spawner index is a measure of the average number of female prawns caught in a standardized trap fished for a 24 hour period.
- Q14. How big is the recreational fishery?
- A14. The recreational fishery has increased in recent years due to reduced fishing opportunities for salmon and groundfish. Recreational fishing is growing quickly.

There is no estimate of the numbers of recreational prawn fishers. However in Saanich Inlet, Stuart Channel and Alberni Canal, 100's of traps are set throughout the year.

Q15. How big is the commercial prawn fishery?

A15. 218 commercial boats fished in last year's commercial fishing season. Prawns are one of the top 10 commercial fisheries on the B.C. coast, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> most valuable invertebrate fishery after geoducks and crabs. The fishery usually has a landed value in excess of \$25 M.

Q16. What happens to gear pulled out of the water by Fishery Officers?

A16. The prawns in the traps are released. The gear is taken back to the local fishery office where it may be picked up. If the identification on the buoy includes a telephone number, then the owner is contacted.

Q17. Do prawns survive if they are released?

A17. Prawns can survive if they are hauled to the surface and released, because they don't have a swim bladder so are unaffected by the depth change. However, there will always be some mortality due to handling, predators, and surface water conditions. Release prawns carrying eggs as quickly as possible at the site where they were caught, to improve survival.

Q18. Where can I get additional information about prawns?

A18. Additional general prawn information is available on the Fisheries and Oceans web site at: <http://www-ops2.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/xnet/content/shellfish/prawn/default.htm>

Q19. Who did the sampling?

A19. Commercial vessels did the sampling under scientific licence issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Each vessel had a DFO trained prawn observer on board for every haul day. Observers undergo annual training and testing.

Q20. Was the sampling conducted in the same manner/area/time frame as past years?

A20. The sampling was conducted in the same manner as past years. Specific set locations may have varied, but then so do prawn stock locations from year to year.

Q21. Does this mean that the commercial fishery overfished?

- A21. The 2004 fishery was managed more aggressively and conservatively to protect stocks than any previous commercial prawn fishery. In-season escapement targets were met.
- Q22. Why do stocks decline after the commercial fishery closes?
- A22. Natural mortality will reduce the abundance of adult females. In the past we have estimated this to be about 10% per month. Recreational harvesting will also have an effect in reducing abundance. In some areas, natural mortality plus recreational harvesting may increase overall mortality rates by more than 20%.
- Q23. Why are the First Nation's FSC fisheries allowed to continue?
- A23. FSC fisheries are only closed when needed for conservation purposes. The present closures are important for the sustainability of the fisheries, which is at a level above conservation requirements. All coastal First Nations in affected areas have been advised of the closures and have been requested to relocate FSC fisheries outside of affected areas, or to release prawns carrying eggs.

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