



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Q's & A's

TOPIC: Recreational prawn fishing closures, 2005/2006

Q1. What areas are being closed?

A1.

- Hoskyn, Sutil and Calm Channels near Campbell River, Subareas 13-12, 13-16 and 13-18
- Lower Malaspina St. and Pender Hbr. to Nelson Island and Agamemnon Channel, subareas 16-1, 16-10, 16-17
- Sechelt Inlet Subarea 16-5 and a portion of 16-6 south of a line west of Kuchin Point, and Salmon Inlet Subarea 16-7
- Saanich Inlet, subareas 19-7 to 19-12
- Northumberland and Pyllades Channels, Subareas 17-13, 17-15, 17-16, 17-17
- Barkley Sound Subareas 23-4 and 23-5
- Howe Sound, Stuart Channel, Alberni Canal and other waters near Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Campbell River and Sechelt Peninsula were also sampled and do not require closure.

Q2. How does this compare to last year?

A2. Closures are less extensive than last year, and other than Saanich Inlet they are usually located in areas with limited recreational prawn fishing effort.

Q3. When will the areas close?

A3. All gear must be removed from the water prior to Monday Nov. 28, 2005

Q4. Can I continue to fish other species of shrimp?

A4. No, all recreational shrimp fishing including prawns is closed in the affected areas.

Q5. Where can I get a map of the Areas being closed?

A5. Public notices with maps are available from all local DFO offices and from fishery managers. Maps will be posted to the internet.

Q6. What if there's a storm and I can't get my gear out of the water?

A6. Call your local Fishery Office listed on the inside front cover of the Sport Fishing Guide 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.

Q7. How long will the areas be closed?

A7. Fishing gear can be put back in the water April 1.

Q8. Why are the areas being closed?

A8. 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.

Q9. Why are you closing? – I'm catching large numbers of prawns without eggs.

A9. At this time of year the prawn population includes both adult female prawns carrying eggs, prawns 1 year younger that are only slightly smaller in size that are not carrying eggs, and prawns 2 years younger that are much smaller. Even if there is an abundance of the prawns without eggs, the closure is necessary to protect the adult females carrying eggs that are now completing their life cycle. Prawns without eggs will still be there when the recreational fishery re-opens.

Q10. Is this a conservation concern?

A10. There is an abundance of younger prawns and no risk of the stocks being eliminated. These closures ensure that there will be a sufficient hatch of prawns for fishing to continue several years in the future. In that respect, it is a closure for sustainability of fisheries, rather than conservation of stocks.

Q11. When will the commercial fishery open?

A11. The commercial prawn fishery is scheduled to commence May 1, annually.

Q12. Will there be testing before the recreational or commercial fisheries re-open?

A12. No, the testing already done has shown an abundance of the younger age classes that will support both the recreational and commercial fishery openings.

Q13. What is the spawner index?

A13. The spawner index is a measure of the average number of female prawns caught in a standardized prawn trap fished for a 24 hour period.

Q14. What happens to gear pulled out of the water by Fishery Officers?

A14. 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.

Q15. Do prawns survive if they are released?

A15. 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.

Q16. Where can I get additional information about prawns?

A16. 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>

Q17. Who did the fall sampling?

A17. 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. Observers undergo annual training and testing.

Q18. Does this mean that the commercial fishery overfished last season?

A18. No. The commercial fishery was managed more aggressively and conservatively last season than any previous commercial prawn fishery. New measures were introduced in 2005 which left 25% more female prawns in the water.

Q19. Why do stocks decline after the commercial fishery closes?

A19. Natural mortality will reduce the abundance of adult females. On average this is about 17% per month. Recreational, First Nations and illegal harvesting further reduce the abundance.

Q20. Why are the First Nation's FSC fisheries allowed to continue?

A20. 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.

Q21. Why are recreational catches low?

A21. Bottom type, bait, soak time and possibly, trap movement will affect catch rates. Prawns prefer hard bottom habitat – rocky reefs or coral, in particular the edges and drop offs of this type of habitat. It is essential that the gear be placed on the right habitat. Bait – two factors. The bait has to be good, and it has to be fixed in

the center of the trap. Otherwise the prawns just go to the corner where the bait has landed and try to pick it through the mesh instead of trying to find the entrance to the trap. Soak time. Commercial fishers use a minimum of 12 hours and an average of 24. This gives enough time for prawns to be attracted to the bait. Also, prawns will migrate up and down a slope during the day and night. If you fish short soaks, they don't have time to walk past the trap on this daily migration, and may not have enough time to walk across to the trap unless you have landed right on top of them. Trap movement might be a big unknown factor. Commercial fishers insist that catches decline if the traps are moving or vibrating. Given that recreational traps are often lighter, even the buoy bobbing in the current or wind at the surface may be transmitting vibrations to the trap on the bottom if there's no extra weight or chain on the buoy line on the bottom. We're not sure about this one, so try some chain out on the line on one of your traps and let us know how it works for you.

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