

Rock Lobster FAQs

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES - TASMANIA

Answers to questions frequently asked by recreational fishers about the rules applying to taking rock lobster in Tasmania.



Rock Lobster Regions

Where are the regions for the recreational rock lobster fishery?

State fishing waters, including all islands, have been divided into two rock lobster management regions, the Eastern and Western Fishing Regions. See the map on the back page.

Does the line separating the rock lobster regions separate mainland Tasmania?

No. The Regions apply to the waters and islands contained within. The lines separating the regions do not extend through mainland Tasmania.

Catch Limits and Extended Trips

What are the catch limits for the rock lobster fishery?

See bag and possession limits for the Eastern and Western Regions on the map on the back page or on the DPIPWE website at: www.fishing.tas.gov.au

When does a bag limit and possession limit apply? How do people prove they are on an extended trip?

A **bag limit** is the number of fish that can be taken in any one calendar day (24 hour period commencing at midnight). The **possession limit** is the amount of fish you can possess at any one time. If you are on state waters with more than the daily bag limit for that Region, you will need to establish that you have fished for more than one day and not exceeded your daily bag limits.

The possession limit allows for fishing over a number of

days from camps at islands or in 'live aboard' vessels and return across the water. There are no transiting provisions to allow different catch limits between regions.

There is a possession limit applying to the entire Tasmanian mainland. Different possession limits apply in the Eastern Region, which are currently lower. Daily bag limits still apply.

What if I live on one of the islands within the Eastern Region such as Bruny or Flinders Island?

You can not possess more than the Eastern Region possession limit. The Eastern Region possession limit applies to all waters and all the islands within the Eastern Region eastward of Point Sorell (near Port Sorell) and Whale Head on the South Coast.

What possession limits apply if I am in a shack such as at Bruny Island or camping on one of the islands in the Eastern

Region like. Clarke or Schouten Island and I also have rock lobster at home on mainland Tasmania such as Launceston or Hobart?

While you are in your shack or camp, as you are in the Eastern Region you may possess the amount for the rock lobster Eastern Region possession limit. This can include cauded fish. You may possess rock lobster in your home on mainland Tasmania providing that the number you possess in the Eastern Region and anywhere else in Tasmania does not exceed the mainland possession limit.

What if I live on mainland Tasmania on the East Coast such as at St Marys, and I tow my boat to the West Coast to fish?

The Western Region daily bag limit applies, as you are fishing the Western Region as does the Western Region possession limit. Eastern Region limits do not apply as you will not be in that region, so if you fish longer than a day and have not exceeded the daily bag limits you should abide by the Western Region possession limit. This includes the number of rock lobster you possess anywhere in Tasmania such as in your freezer at home and those that you possess driving back to your home.

What if I fish in the Western Region and want to return on water through to the

Eastern Region? Do the Eastern limits apply?

Yes. While you are in the Western Region you can have rock lobster numbers within the bag possession and boat limit that apply to the Western Region. Once you cross into the Eastern Region, you must keep within the Eastern Region limits.

Why aren't arrangements in place to allow Western Region catch limits to be taken across the Whale Head boundary into the Eastern Region?

Transiting arrangements between Regions were considered during the rock lobster review but were not introduced because any rules would have been complicated and increased policing costs and compliance risks. Regional management was a less restrictive way of applying the limits needed to address East Coast stock issues.

Some fishers have indicated that the different catch limits and boundaries associated with the South Coast may encourage them to take compliance risks or have to 'throw fish back'. Fishers should plan their fishing so they don't find themselves in a position where they need to release catch. You are allowed to dismember and eat one rock lobster per licensed fisher, and that these are included in the daily bag limits.

Although catch rates may be

relatively high on the South Coast, management measures are designed so catch is limited on the East Coast including the South East and that these measures are less restrictive than if applied statewide.

Possession Limit for Non Fishers

See the back page and www.fishing.tas.gov.au for information on possession limits for non-fishers.

Special Rock Lobster Licence



Special rock lobster licences are only issued for the Western Region and allows a slightly higher possession limit for a 14 day period. The licensee cannot fish for rock lobster in the Eastern Region during the 14 day period of the licence.

How do I apply for a special rock lobster licence?

A recreational fisher who holds a rock lobster licence (either rock lobster dive, ring or pot) may apply for only one 14 day special rock lobster licence per season in

the Western Region. You can buy this licence online or from Service Tasmania. The person applying nominates the 14 day period.

What happens if I buy a special licence and then I can't fish during the nominated 14 day period?

You may cancel or amend your special rock lobster licence at Service Tasmania or online **prior** to the commencement of the 14 day licence period. Once the licence period has started you can't amend your licence and you can't fish for rock lobster in the Eastern Region.

Can I still go out in a boat in the Eastern Region during the 14 day period of my special licence?

Yes, you can fish for other species, however you cannot use any rock lobster gear or fish for rock lobster.

Boat Limits

There are limits on the number of rock lobster that can be on a boat. See the current boat limits for each region on the back page.

Eastern Region – A person in charge of a vessel in the Eastern Region must ensure that not more than the nominated boat limit for rock lobster are on the vessel. An extended fishing trip limit (more than 24 hours) also applies.

Western Region – A person in charge of a vessel in the Western Region must ensure that not more than the nominated boat limit for rock lobster are on the vessel. An extended fishing trip limit (more than 24 hours) also applies.

Who is responsible for ensuring the boat limits are adhered to?

The person in charge of the vessel.

Boat Gear Limits

Boat gear limits apply to the number of rock lobster rings and pots that can be possessed or used from a boat. See the current boat gear limits at www.fishing.tas.gov.au.

Who is responsible for ensuring the boat gear limits are adhered to?

The person in charge of the vessel.

Does the boat gear limit include the pots set in the water?

Yes.

What happens if another person uses the boat including taking charge of the vessel and starting a new fishing trip?

The boat gear limit includes all rock lobster pots being used from the vessel.

Irrespective of who uses the vessel not more than the total number of pots for that gear limit can be used at any one time.

How do boat gear limits work if a boat is shared and different people operate the boat?

If a person in charge of a boat has set or allowed to be used the full boat gear limit from the boat during a fishing trip, they cannot use, set or allow to be used any more rock lobster pots until a number of pots have been retrieved and removed from State waters. If one of these pots are taken back to land, then the boat can take a 'new' fisher out to set their pot.

Why are there boat limits?

The introduction of boat limits aims to confine non-commercial fishing activities within the spirit of recreational fishing. This type of fishing should reflect a non-commercial fishing operation that does not provide significant opportunities for illegal fishing.

Boat limits are intended to limit the overall recreational fishing catch and prevent the circumvention of personal daily bag limits or possession limits by individual fishers through the carrying of non-fishing crew in a boat. The individual gear, bag and possession limits still apply.

Boat limits can also be a

useful management tool as they provide the capacity to limit the potential for localised depletion. Localised depletion can occur as a consequence of the fishing impact of vessels with a large number of fishers on-board, whether from charter or private vessels.

In the case of these vessels, such limits are appropriate as the expertise of the vessel operator associated with modern fishing and navigational aids potentially increases the amount of catch.

Hauling Pots



What happens if the weather is too rough and I cannot retrieve my pot?

Your safety is important. If you cannot retrieve your gear due to bad weather, wait until the weather improves. If it will be more than 48 hours, phone Fishwatch on 0427 655 557 and provide your details including your licence number.

Can someone set or pull my rock lobster pot without me on the boat?

No.

Do I have to set or pull my own pot?

The licence holder or aboriginal fisher must be participating in the fishing activity. For example a light bodied person or a person with a disability may need assistance in pulling or setting their gear.

You need to consider that a person in control of fishing gear may be deemed in possession of that gear. Therefore a person could be considered to be using excess gear if they are controlling gear that is owned by someone else. Reasonable discretion and practicality should apply.

Can fishers share rock lobster pots by changing the marker buoy on a pot that was previously set by another person?

First, you must ensure that the licence holder is on board the boat when the pots are possessed on the boat or being set or retrieved. A fisher can retrieve their rock lobster pot and remove their marker buoys. Another fisher can then set the rock lobster pot using their marker buoys.

Can both rock lobster rings and pots be used from the same boat?

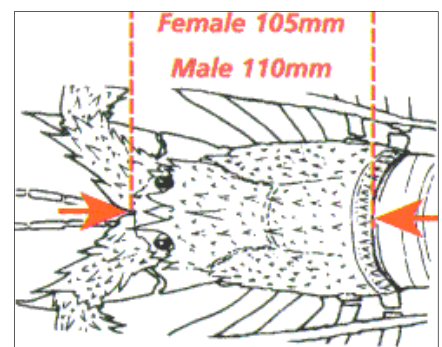
Irrespective of the size of the vessel, private or charter, boat operators can carry the full boat gear limit of both pots and rings.

Size Limits

The minimum legal size that applies for rock lobster is the length of the carapace or shell – see current size limits.at

www.fishing.tas.gov.au.

The length is obtained by measuring the rock lobster from the gap between the antennal horns to the rear of the carapace.



Free rock lobster measuring gauges are available at Service Tasmania. They are also available from the Fishcare Tasmania trailers. Metal gauges can also be purchased from tackle shops.

When do I need to measure and release undersize rock lobster?

It is illegal to take or possess undersize rock lobster. Obviously, at times you will catch an undersize fish, so you should release it as soon as practical such as when you pull your pot and there are undersize rock lobster. Release them as quickly and gently as soon as you can over the reef area they were taken from. Do not throw

them up in the air. If you have drifted off the reef, keep them aside and immediately go to the reef to release them. To increase the survival of released fish, don't hold rock lobster in the wind or heat on the deck of a boat, or release them over sand.

When taking rock lobster by diving, measure them in the water and return it to the crevice it was taken. Recheck your catch when you get back to the boat or shore.

Can I take more than the catch limit and sort my catch later?

You must sort your catch as soon as practical. This means releasing all undersize and berried rock lobster, as well as keeping within your individual catch limits. For divers, this means that you should measure your catch as you go because you cannot exceed your bag limit. It is not an excuse to say that you have taken more than the bag limit and were going to release the smaller ones (known as 'high grading') or undersize fish once getting back to the boat or shore.

Diving for Rock Lobster

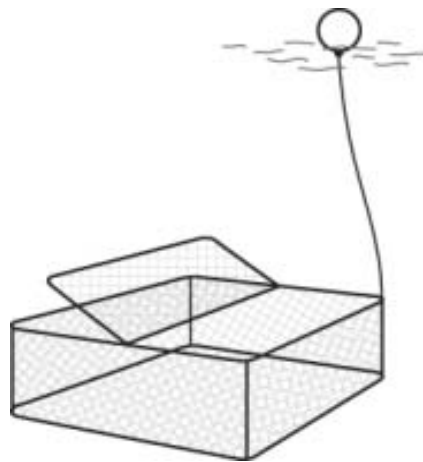
What gear can I use when diving for rock lobster.

The possession of a noose on a vessel (unless it is being used for game fishing) and the possession of a crook when diving is banned.

Can a fisher use rock lobster pots or rings or dive at the same time?

Yes. Providing they are licensed. Divers cannot place any rock lobster in a set pot or remove rock lobster underwater. They must keep within the catch limits.

Rock Lobster Caufs



What are the rules when storing lobster in a cauf?

Fishers may only use one fish cauf - see specifications at www.fishing.tas.gov.au. If a fish cauf is used by more than one person, each fisher's rock lobster must be placed into separate compartments. Each compartment must be marked with the fisher's licence number or unique identification code.

How do I separate rock lobster in a cauf?

There is no prescribed way to make separate compartments in a cauf. One suggestion is to use wire mesh and tie wire to form

separate compartments and possibly a door. The compartments could be labelled with plastic card which is attached inside the compartment with electrical ties.

Does each person need to use marker bouys?

Yes. Each person that uses a cauf must attach a yellow marker buoy that is the standard size which has their licence number or unique identifying code in the case of Aboriginal fishers in standard lettering.

Can someone remove rock lobster from the cauf on my behalf?

You must be present and participate in placing or removing your rock lobster from the fish cauf. There are a number of reasons for this; including that a person who has rock lobster in their control may be deemed to possess more rock lobster than their possession limit allows.

Do fish need to be separated in the well of a boat?

The well of a boat is not a fish cauf. The rule relating to separation of catch in to separate compartments only applies to fish caufs. Holding fish in a well of a boat is the same as if they are held on any other part of the vessel. Bag and possession limits apply.

Gifting Rock Lobster

If I give away rock lobster, does it count toward my bag limit?

Yes. The bag limit is the amount of fish you can personally take in one day.

Can I swap rock lobster for something in return such as for a slab of beer?

No, if you barter goods in exchange for fish that have not been caught commercially, it is considered the same as if you sold the fish. Both the person that receives the reward and the fish are liable for prosecution.

Can our club raffle rock lobster?

Recreational fish cannot be raffled because under the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995* this is defined as a commercial transaction where reward is involved.

If the lobster are bought or donated from the commercial fishery they can be raffled. They are counted as part of the commercial quota system and are marked with commercial tags. A receipt should be provided.

Eating Rock Lobster on a Boat

Can I eat rock lobster on a boat?

Yes, with conditions.

On a boat only one rock lobster can be cut up ready for eating per licensed fisher. This rock lobster is counted in the fisher's daily bag limit.

Seasons

What are the season open dates for recreational rock lobster?

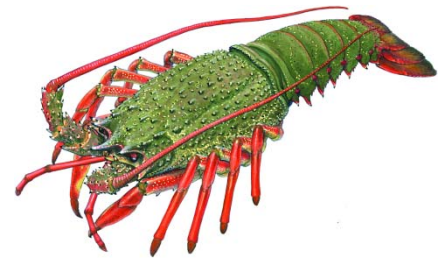
The recreational rock lobster fishery in the Eastern Region will open on the third Saturday in November each year. The season start is unchanged for the Western Region and opens on the first Saturday in November each year. Current season dates are at: www.fishing.tas.gov.au/rec/seasons

Can you possess rock lobster pots in an area having a closed season?

You may only possess a rock lobster pot on state waters from 6 am and set a pot after 1 pm the day before the season opens for that area. Pots may then be pulled after midnight when the season is officially open.

Fishers should be aware that having pots aboard their boat may affect their ability to transit to open areas.

Eastern (Green) Rock Lobster



Do the catch and size limits apply to Eastern (Green) Rock lobster?

Eastern (green) rock lobster (*Jasus verreauxi*) have a green body and brownish-orange legs. They are found along the east coast of Australia including around the north and east coasts of Tasmania. They are considerably less common in Tasmanian waters than the southern rock lobster (*Jasus edwardsii*).

Tasmanian rock lobster rules apply to **all rock lobster** of the genus *Jasus* so the rules applying to southern rock lobster also apply to eastern rock lobster as well.

Management Changes

Why have there been catch reductions for rock lobster?

Rock lobster stocks have been in decline over the past five years.

Why has the recreational season open date changed for the Eastern Region?

Consultation on season dates was part of the rock lobster fishery review held between 2009 and 2011. The final report recommended targeted management changes for the East Coast fishery. Lower catch limits were implemented for the Eastern Region but season adjustments were held over. These are part of a package of additional catch limitations for the recreational and commercial sectors.

Why does it seem as though most of the cuts have been made to the recreational fishery?

Commercial fishers have also taken significant cuts to their total catch. Their Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) has been reduced. The TACC is reviewed annually. There are also moves to limit the total commercial catch for the East Coast by introducing a commercial catch cap.

How does the Department know how much the recreational sector fishers take?

In Tasmania, scientifically designed surveys provide estimates of recreational fishing participation and catch by sampling a proportion of licence holders. The sampled fishers are engaged for a 12 month period, issued a diary to complete and contacted regularly by phone by a trained interviewer.

Around 1000 rock lobster licence holders are contacted

every two years. These surveys have been conducted since the late 90s and provide estimates of days fished by fishing methods (dive, pot, ring) for areas around Tasmania. The survey methodology has been improved over time by increasing the statewide and regional sample size.

The survey results for the 2012/13 season will be published in early 2014. The next survey is planned for November 2014/15.

Why has the recreational rock lobster season been reduced?

The report to the Minister on the rock lobster review flagged that shortening the recreational season will be considered along with other measures for the East Coast. The recommendation for reduced Eastern Region bag limits was made on the basis that a season reduction also be considered if necessary. The alternative was a lower bag limit without the season reduction.

Why have all these lines been drawn on the water?

The purpose of area management is to target management actions at the most affected fishing area and limit the fishing impacts on other areas. There are consequences of area management and boundary lines, particularly in regard to compliance risks. Balanced against applying the management actions

statewide, the area management approach is intended to have less impact while meeting the management objective.

Isn't the East Coast important to recreational fishers?

The East Coast is important for the recreational fishery because around 70% of the total recreational rock lobster catch is taken from the Eastern Region. Therefore recreational fishers are likely to benefit from additional sustainability measures.

Will there be more changes or cuts to recreational fishery?

Even with the new rules in place, a cautious approach to managing this fishery is necessary due to declining stock levels. The fishery will continue to be monitored and adjustments considered if necessary. The Department is also investigating whether an individual maximum season limit is appropriate.

More information at:
www.fishing.tas.gov.au

Download the interactive *Tasmanian Sea Fishing Guide* phone app for iPhone and Android.

www.fishing.tas.gov.au/phoneapp

Pick up a copy of the *Recreational Sea Fishing Guide* from Service Tasmania.

Rock Lobster Regions

