

# NT Mud Crab Fishery

Understanding the views, needs and aspirations

**Katherine Winchester**

Chief Executive Officer

NT Seafood Council

Territory Natural Resources Management Conference

Darwin 23 November 2016

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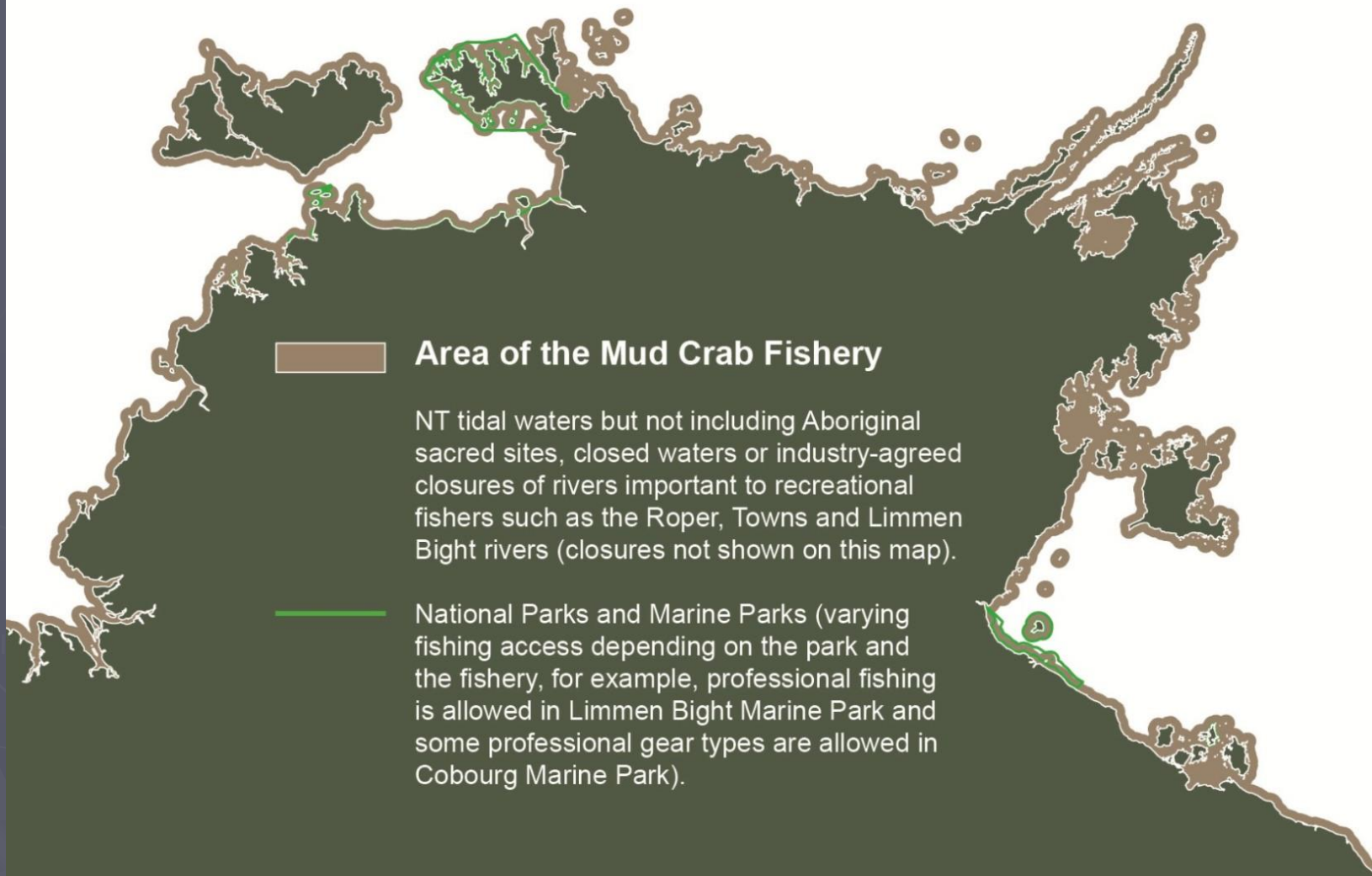
**NORTHERN TERRITORY  
Seafood Council**

# NT Mud Crab Fishery

- 4 key sectors: professional, recreational, indigenous and fishing tour operators
- 49 licences to professionally harvest mud crabs in NT
- Iconic and highly sought after



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### Area of the Mud Crab Fishery

NT tidal waters but not including Aboriginal sacred sites, closed waters or industry-agreed closures of rivers important to recreational fishers such as the Roper, Towns and Limmen Bight rivers (closures not shown on this map).



National Parks and Marine Parks (varying fishing access depending on the park and the fishery, for example, professional fishing is allowed in Limmen Bight Marine Park and some professional gear types are allowed in Cobourg Marine Park).

Note: Map is indicative only

© Northern Territory Seafood Council



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# Industry has claws out

MARIA BILLIAS

## Calls for NT Govt to toughen up mud crabbing laws

THE Territory's lucrative mud crab industry could be on the brink of collapse if the NT Government fails to mitigate another poor Wet Season, the Amateur Fishermen Association of the NT (AFANT) has said.

AFANT President Warren De With this week called on the NT Government to shut Bynoe Harbour to commercial crabbing, adding that recre-

ational fishers would also "play their part" if it meant the livelihood of the mud crab industry in the Northern Territory.

The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year.

Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay.

Mr De With said mud crab

catches fluctuated depending on the length of the Wet Season and with four consecutive years of low rain the stocks had reached dangerously low numbers.

"The Government needs to do something now about arresting the problem - it is ridiculous to turn a blind eye and pray that another Wet Season will fix the problem. It has been

quite well-documented that there has been a decline."

He said the ban should be enforced until levels were back at sustainable numbers, adding that the Gulf of Carpentaria had suffered a decline in the numbers of mud crabs in recent years which had pushed commercial crabbers into the Bynoe area.

"Both commercial and recre-

ational fishermen will tell you if stocks are good or not - you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out," he said.

"We are happy to look at all necessary steps to restore stocks to levels of sustainability - levels where everyone can catch a mud crab. If we need to also take the pain and have stricter bag measures on crab-

bing then so be it. We are not abdicating our responsibility.

"We are simply saying we want the Government to step up to plate and make a decision because the population is so low at the moment."

Primary Industries Minister Gary Higgins was reluctant to commit to any decision, saying the stakeholder-based Mud Crab Management Advisory Committee had been set up to provide the NT Government with advice on the industry.

Source:  
NT News, page 03 Saturday 16 April 2016  
<http://ntnews.newspaperdirect.com/>



**NORTHERN TERRITORY  
Seafood Council**

# Industry has claw

## Calls for NT Govt to toughen up mud crab

MARIA BILLIAS

THE Territory's lucrative mud crab industry could be on the brink of collapse if the NT Government fails to mitigate another poor Wet Season, Amateur Fishermen Association of the NT (AFACT) has said.

AFACT President Warren De Witth this week called on the NT Government to shut Byrre Harbour to commercial crabbing, adding that several fishers would also "play their part" if it meant the livelihood of the mud crab industry in the Northern Territory.

The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in most creeks and in most adjoining coastal bays.

"Mr De Witth said mud crab

catcher fluctuated depending on the length of the Wet Season and with four consecutive years of low rain the stocks had reached dangerously low numbers.

"The Government needs to do something now about addressing the problem - it is ridiculous to turn a blind eye and pray that another Wet Season will fix the problem. It has been well-documented that there has been a decline."

He said the ban should be extended until levels were at sustainable numbers, adding that the Gulf of Carpentaria had suffered a decline in numbers of mud crabs in recent years which had commercial crabbers in the Byrre area.

Both commercial



Multi award-winning Australian chef Matt Moran with a mudcrab yesterday during his live cooking demonstration at the Territory Taste Festival at Darwin Convention Centre. Picture: JUSTIN KENNEDY

## Moran's taste of success leaves fans wanting more

ASHLEY MANKAROS

CELEBRITY chef Matt Moran was the star of the inaugural Territory Taste weekend and he didn't disappoint the thousands who flocked to see him.

In between his crammed cooking displays projected on three massive television screens as he turned the Terri-

tory favourite mudcrab into a mouth-watering meal, Moran posed for selfies and signed autographs.

The crowd groaned as he sampled some of the 2kg flesh: "You ever notice why when you order chicken at a restaurant no wings come out," he teased. "It is one of the perks of the job."

The Convention Centre was filled with a variety of aromas from more than a dozen restaurants and food vendors.

More than 5000 flocked to the event and ate their way around, washing down the seafood paella and assorted dishes with the popular espresso martini, a One Mile beer or a selection of Darryl Thomas's wines.

The centre stage filled with cooking displays from the likes of Moran, local boy Lynton Tapp and visiting international chefs including Chris Urbano.

"I didn't know what to expect," Moran said. "Having it inside the Convention Centre was a great idea."

Event organiser Anya Lorimer ensured Moran had the

best products — three locals went crabbing especially for the celebrity chef.

Ms Lorimer said the big screens were one of the reasons people were so understanding when waiting in line took a bit longer.

"Having the screens positioned as we did, people could see what was happening when

they were getting served or when they were sitting down at the tables," she said. "They never missed out on anything and every one had a view."

Ms Lorimer said the weekend exceeded expectations.

"We pre-sold 3000 tickets for the weekend," she said. "It looks like we've exceeded that figure for Sunday alone."

Source:  
 Sunday Territorian  
 Page 03 Sunday 17 April 2016  
<http://ntnews.newspaperdirect.com/>



**NORTHERN TERRITORY  
 Seafood Council**



# Industry has claws out

to toughen up mud crabbing laws

MARIA BILLIUS  
THE Territory's lucrative crab industry could be on the brink of collapse, if the Government fails to take another step. Warren De With, Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT, said AFANT President Warren De With called on the NT Government to shut Bynoe Harbour to commercial crabbing, due to unsustainable

SUNDAY MAY 8 2016

NEWS 05

# Mud crab fight heats up

PHILLIPPA BUTT

## Seafood council hits back at 'sensationalised' claims

THE Northern Territory Seafood Council has responded angrily to claims the mud crab fishery is on the brink of collapse. The NT News last month reported the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory president Warren De With called on the NT Government to shut Bynoe Harbour to commercial crabbing, due to unsustainable

crabbing. However, NTSC chairman Rob Fish said the "sensationalised claims" were a plot to close down the fishery. "If the claim of fishery collapse was even close to being the truth we would be seeking urgent action from the Minister to limit all fishing pressure, not just one sector," he said. "The industry is more aware

and concerned than anyone about the poor wet seasons and a decline in crab numbers. To present this situation as a collapsing fishery shows either a scary lack of understanding about fisheries resource management, and/or something more sinister." The Mud Crab Management Advisory Committee is responsible for advising the

Government on management and research needs. Both the NTSC and AFANT are members of the committee. "All stakeholders helped develop and are committed to the Resource Sharing Framework, to ensure the best outcome for Territorians and fisheries resources," Mr Fish said. "Yet what we are seeing unfold in the media is a greedy

grab with outlandish claims attempting to bypass this agreed and well-established fishery management process." Previously, Mr De With said recreational fishers would also "play their part". "If we need to also take the pain and have stricter bag measures on crabbing, then so be it. We are not abdicating our responsibility," he said.

"We are simply saying we want the Government to step up to the plate and make a decision because the population is so low at the moment." The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. The limits for amateur crab catchers are 10 crabs per person or 30 per boat.



Inventory Centre Photo: JEFF HADFIELD

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Source:  
Sunday Territorian, page 05 Sunday 8 May 2016  
<http://ntnews.newspaperdirect.com/>



# Shaky deal in muddy fight

PHILLIPPA BUTT

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The NT Seafood Council claimed an agreement reached yesterday with the Amateur Fishermen's Association NT was mutually accepted.

However, AFANT executive officer Tristan Sloan said they had only "agreed to disagree".

"We agreed to disagree on the (main) issue which was the closing of the Gulf of the Carpentaria (for recreational and commercial fishing)," Mr

Sloan said. "The only good news that comes out of this is that (the council) has agreed not to start fishing in Shoal Bay which is obviously a vital recreational fishing ground close to Darwin."

New research presented to the MCFMAC found a stock collapse was not a risk, according to NTSC Chairman Rob Fish.

Mr Fish said the council would have supported closing the Gulf if there was proof that a collapse was imminent.

"The issue is ... the science wasn't showing that this was the case," Mr Fish said.

"And both parties came to an agreement that the fishery should stay open for recreational and commercial fishermen,

and that we'd look at more detailed management in the future."

Crab numbers are affected by rainfall, which has been significantly low over the past few wet seasons.

"That species has always relied on rains turning up. We've had a lot longer dry spells in the past," Mr Fish said.

"Additional research is underway.

"The first month of results are positive with mud crabs of all sizes being found in the Gulf of Carpentaria, indicating that new crabs have continued to enter the fishery despite the low rain."

There are currently 25 commercial mud crab operators in the Gulf.

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"If the claim of fishery collapse was even close to being the truth we would be seeking urgent action from the Minister to limit all fishing pressure, not just one sector," he said. "The industry is more aware

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grab with outlandish claims attempting to bypass this agreed and well-established fishery management process."

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"We are simply saying we want the Government to step up to the plate and make a decision because the population is so low at the moment."

The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. The limits for amateur crab catchers are 10 crabs per person or 30 per boat.

## Industry has

### Calls for NT Govt to toughen

MARIA WILLIAMS

THE Territory's lucrative mud crab industry could be on the brink of collapse if the NT Government fails to mitigate another poor wet season, the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT (AFANT) has said. AFANT President Warren De With this week called on the NT Government to shut Bynoe Harbour to commercial crabbing, adding that recreational fishers would also "play their part" if it meant the livelihood of the mud crab industry in the Northern Territory. The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. Mr De With said mud crab catches fluctuated depending on the length of the wet season and with four consecutive years of low rain the stocks had reached dangerously low numbers. "The Government needs to do something now about a problem that is turning into a crisis that another Wet Season will fix the problem. It has to be done now."



With a mud crab yesterday during his cooking demonstration at the Territory Taste Festival at Darwin Convention Centre. Photo: JEFF HENNING

## Success leaves fans wanting more

A mud crab is a delicacy in the NT. The Convention Centre was filled with a variety of aromas from more than a dozen restaurants and food vendors. More than 5000 flocked to the event and ate their way around, walking down the seafood paths and snatched fishes with the popular agreement. One fish been or a selection of Darryl Thomas's view. The centre stage filled with cooking displays from the likes of Moran, local by Lyman restaurants and food vendors. Mr Lorimer said the big screens were one of the reasons people were so understanding when waiting in line took a bit longer. "Having the screens posted as we did, people could see what was happening when they were getting served or when they were sitting down at the tables," she said. "They never raised an eye on anything and every one had a view." Mr Lorimer said the weekend on exceeded expectations. "We pre-sold 3000 tickets for the weekend," she said. "It looks like we've exceeded that figure for Sunday alone."

Source: NT News, page 06 Saturday 14 May 2016 <http://ntnews.newspaperdirect.com/>





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# Nipping mud crab breeding issues in the bud

THE NT Seafood Council believes a short-term move to protect female mud crabs now will speed the recovery of the fishery when recruitment is bolstered by normal wet seasons.

"High dependence on rainfall and low stock numbers following three unprecedented poor wet seasons has left NT Seafood Council supporting taking action now that could improve the future of the mud crab fishery," said NT Seafood Council CEO Katherine Winchester.

"A 'no take' of female mud crabs from the Gulf of Carpentaria for all fishers is being recommended to take place effective 1 September 2016 until the end of the 2017 season to allow as much breeding and growth of females as possible.

"The fishery is not in danger of collapsing and recruitment is still occurring despite the recent series of low wets, however, with more favourable wets forecast it would seem

prudent to do everything to maximise recruitment when this occurs.

"Forecast modelling scenarios show a slow recovery, leaving industry faced with a dilemma of ongoing lower catches with a slow increase each year or taking short-term action to boost the recovery.

"We have written to all our Mud Crab members advising our intention to take this recommendation to the next Mud Crab Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MCFMAC) meeting, which is scheduled for August 18."

Making this recommendation doesn't come lightly as industry acknowledges that there is a significant financial and social cost to undertake this action.

"Further solutions must be developed to aid both the recovery of mud crabs in the Gulf and the livelihoods of the people that rely on the fishery for income," Mrs Winchester said.



The NT Seafood Council is on a mission to protect female mud crab numbers in the Territory

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Source:  
NT News, page 47 Monday 1 August 2016  
<http://ntnews.newspaperdirect.com/>

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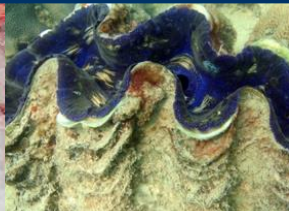
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The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year.

Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. The limits for amateur crab catchers are 10 crabs per person or 30 per boat.

PHOTO: JATHA KIMBERLY  
more  
I was getting served or I were sitting down at it," she said. "They stuck out on anything one had a view." Cooper said the weekend on Saturday was "a weekend of 3000 tickets weekend," she said. "It we've exceeded that Sunday alone."

EWS 05  
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# Top End mud crab fishermen 'budgeting for bankruptcy' over proposed fishing suspension

ABC Rural | By Carl Curtain

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Updated 16 Aug 2016, 2:23pm



PHOTO: Mud crab fishermen Banh Kim Leang, Neil Bradley and Haing Ing with wholesaler Chal Eam. (Carl Curtain)

### Northern Territory mud crab fishermen say a proposal to implement a 16-month suspension on catching female crabs would send them bankrupt.

A meeting was held yesterday to discuss the proposal by the NT Seafood Council which is hoped

RELATED STORY: One of worst seasons ever for Roper mud crabbers

RELATED STORY: Rising above: Darwin's iconic mangroves fight sea level threat

MAP: Borroloola 0854



At the Territory Taste Festival at Darwin Convention Centre. Photo: JETTA KEMPTON

## Crabbers fans wanting more

Crabbers fans wanting more... they were getting served or when they were sitting down at the tables," she said. "They never raised out on anything and every one had a view."

# Nipping mud crab industry has claws

THE NT Seafood Council believes a short-term move to protect female mud crabs now to speed the recovery of the fishery when recruitment is bolstered by normal wet seasons. "High dependence on rainfall and low stock numbers following three unprecedented poor wet seasons has left NT Seafood Council supporting taking action now that could improve the future of the mud crab fishery," said NT Seafood Council CEO Kate Winchester. "A 'no take' of crabs from the C... taria for all fo... effective... m... to..."

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Source: ABC Country Hour 15 August 2016  
<http://www.abc.net.au/>







# Gulf of Carpentaria mud crabbers say a ban on catching females would send them broke

NT Country Hour By Daniel Fitzgerald

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Posted 6 Sep 2016, 10:28am



Mud crabber Tien Van Duong

PHOTO: Tien Van Duong shakes crabs out of his pot in the Gulf of Carpentaria. (ABC Rural: Daniel Fitzgerald)

### Some mud crabbers in the Gulf of Carpentaria are proposing a total ban over the wet season rather than a 16-month ban on catching females.

The Mud Crab Fishery Management Advisory Committee is considering a proposal to ban catching

RELATED STORY: Top End mud crab fishermen 'budgeting for bankruptcy' over proposed fishing suspension

RELATED STORY: Calls for temporary ban on catching female mud crabs

RELATED STORY: Top End mud crab fishermen 'budgeting for

## Top End mud crab fishermen 'budgeting for bankruptcy' over proposed fishing suspension

ABC Rural: By Carl Curran

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Updated 18 Aug 2016, 2:23pm



NEWS 05

# Light heats up

### 'sensationalised' claims

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MARIA BILLIAS  
The Territory's marine and fisheries industry could be on the brink of collapse if the Government fails to negotiate a better deal for the industry. The NT Seafood Council has urged the Government to take action now to protect the future of the mud crab fishery.

AFANT President Warren Sloan said this week called on the Government to take action to protect the future of the mud crab fishery.

Mr De With said mud crabbers would also "play their part" if a total ban on catching females was implemented. "The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. The limits for amateur crab catchers are 10 crabs per person or 30 per boat."

Mr De With said mud crabbers would also "play their part" if a total ban on catching females was implemented. "The Territory's mud crab commercial fishery is worth around \$10 million a year. Commercial fishing is already banned in Darwin Harbour and in most creeks adjoining Shoal Bay. The limits for amateur crab catchers are 10 crabs per person or 30 per boat."

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## 06 NEWS

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There are currently 25 commercial mud crab operators in the Gulf.

Source: ABC Country Hour 6 September 2016  
http://www.abc.net.au/



# NORTHERN TERRITORY Seafood Council



# Project Underway

- Online surveys
- Workshop
- Face to face interviews
- Interviews over the phone



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