

## Fishers call for no-take zone access

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COMMERCIAL fishermen want access to Great Barrier Reef no-take zones in the likelihood a cyclone prevents them from angling in nonrestricted areas.

The fishers' calls follow new research that shows strong evidence no-take zones have led to rapid increases of fish species inside reserves, in both Reef and non-Reef habitats.

Queensland Seafood Industry Association CEO Winston Harris said the association was working with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the State Government and James Cook University to examine the effects cyclone Hamish had on the commercial fishing industry and implications for the future.

Some commercial operators reported a reduced catch after Hamish swept along the coast in March last year.

Mr Harris said one method suggested of mitigating future impacts of cyclones would be by having fishers temporarily able to access no-take zones.

"The industry's developing a framework, if this happens again which it will, inevitably where the management can readily adjust its output controls so industry can adapt to future events like cyclone Hamish," he said.

"If that means looking at opening up areas that are currently closed, if it means fishing in other areas, then we'd like to have a robust discussion about that." The GBRMPA is not expected to make any changes, if any, to its zoning plans until 2013.

And researchers from the ARC Centre for Excellence for Coral Reef Studies said findings from a new study of the success of no-take zones on the Great Barrier Reef demonstrated the effectiveness of large-scale networks of marine reserves.

Lead author Dr Laurence McCook said with 32 per cent of the Reef in no-take zones and fish densities about two times greater in these areas, fish populations across the ecosystem had increased considerably.

"The network of marine reserves on the GBR has brought major, sustained ecological benefits, including enhanced populations of target fish and sharks," Dr McCook said.

"Overall, the results demonstrate that the large-scale network of marine reserves on the GBR is proving to be an excellent investment in social, economic and environmental terms."