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Northern Zone rock lobster research under way

New research will begin this week in the Northern Zone Rock Lobster fishery to investigate the implications of commercial fishing during winter months.

The fishery has been managed since 2003 through a total allowable commercial catch and the season runs from 1 November to 31 May the following year.

The project will investigate both regional abundance of rock lobster and the composition of the catch during winter months, to inform future management considerations for the fishery.

PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy Director Sean Sloan said the Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association had raised the need for research into innovative ways to look at the future management of the resource.

"Among the issues raised was the fact that the majority of the catch currently comes from inshore grounds in the eastern region of the fishery, which only represents a small fraction of the total fishery area, which covers more than 200,000 square km," he said.

The research project is funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. It will be run by researchers from the South Australian Research and Development Institute in collaboration with the PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture division and the South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association.

"In this industry-led project we will be looking at a number of spatial and temporal management options," Mr Sloan said.

"This industry led project will include investigations into regional differences in the estimates of biomass across the fishery to inform future management of the fishery.

"The outcomes from this project will provide the industry, scientists and fishery managers with robust scientific data to make informed decisions about alternative management options to improve economic performance in the Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery, while maintaining sustainable stocks."