This options paper was used for consultation between 6 and 24 February 2025. The paper is presented for information only. Based on the feedback received, the options presented herein may be amended or removed before new biofouling management requirements for non-commercial vessels are introduced.

# Biofouling management options for non-commercial vessels

## Background

Non-commercial vessels arriving in Australian territorial seas must submit a non-commercial vessel pre-arrival report (PAR) which includes questions relating to the biofouling management practices on the vessel. Currently, biosecurity officers assess the level of biosecurity risk associated with non-commercial vessel biofouling on arrival and may take necessary actions to address these risks.

The department’s biofouling policy is that vessels that proactively manage biofouling are eligible for lower intervention, provided certain conditions can be met. The department is developing options for non-commercial vessels to demonstrate they have proactively managed biofouling. Prior to implementing any changes to biofouling management for non-commercial vessels the department will develop and publish a list of approved options. In future, non-commercial vessels that can demonstrate they meet at least one of the approved options will be eligible for a faster inspection process for biofouling. Options that are under consideration are presented in this document.

It will not be mandatory to implement one of the options to be granted entry to Australia. However, if proactive management of biofouling cannot be demonstrated, the department may ask additional questions, inspect a vessel’s hull and niche areas, assess the biosecurity risk of a vessel’s biofouling and take actions to manage unacceptable biosecurity risks.

We are seeking your feedback on how likely you would be to use one or more of these options if you were entering Australian waters. Your feedback will inform which options the department develops for further consultation. You can also suggest other options for consideration in the survey.

## Biofouling Management Options

### Option 1 - Biofouling Management Plan

Having a biofouling management plan (BFMP) is a proposed option for non-commercial vessels to demonstrate that they meet Australia’s biofouling policy.

A BFMP is a document which describes the approach taken to effectively minimise the level of biofouling on a vessel. A BFMP is tailored to a specific vessel and includes information and processes relating to the operating profile, antifouling coatings, inspections, cleaning, maintenance, relevant operational practices, and record keeping in an associated biofouling record book (BFRB). The BFRB contains records of the activities carried out in accordance with the BFMP, which is used by the vessel operator to keep track of biofouling management activities.

During an inspection, a biosecurity officer would assess whether the BFMP meets minimum requirement to be considered effective in managing biosecurity risk associated with biofouling. The vessel’s records would be assessed to verify that a vessel has proactively managed their biofouling in accordance with their BFMP.

### Option 2 - Clean all biofouling prior to arrival

Cleaning all biofouling from the vessel within 30 days prior to arriving in Australian waters is a proposed option for non-commercial vessels to demonstrate that they meet Australia’s biofouling policy.

The physical removal of biofouling from the hull and niche areas of a vessel is an effective method of reducing biosecurity risks associated with biofouling. To effectively manage biosecurity risk, biofouling must be removed from the hull and niche areas of a vessel (e.g. prop, internal seawater systems, depth sounders, speed logs, anodes). The cleaning would need to meet minimum standards to be considered as proactive biofouling management and to manage the biosecurity risks associated with biofouling on the vessel. Evidence that a vessel has been completely cleaned would need to be retained onboard the vessel and provided to the department on request for verification by a biosecurity officer.

### Option 3 - Haul out after arrival

Removing a vessel from the water within 48 hours of arrival in Australia is a proposed option for non-commercial vessels to demonstrate that they meet Australia’s biofouling policy.

Removing a vessel from the water for cleaning or dry storage may be an effective method of reducing biosecurity risk associated with biofouling. Appropriate evidence that a haul out has been arranged would need to be available for verification by the department on arrival. Records of scheduled haul out including timeframes and location would be used by the department to verify that the haul out activity will be conducted as identified in the pre-arrival reporting. The vessel would remain under biosecurity control until either biofouling has been removed from the vessel and disposed of appropriately or the vessel has been out of water for sufficient time for all biofouling to be non-viable. A biosecurity officer would verify the appropriate actions have been completed before releasing the vessel from biosecurity control.

### Option 4 - Pre-approved alternative biofouling management practices

Implementing an alternative method of biofouling management, which has been assessed and approved by the department is a proposed option for non-commercial vessels to demonstrate that they meet Australia’s biofouling policy.

This option would allow vessel operators to apply to the department to utilise an alternative biofouling management practice which they believe manages biosecurity risk acceptably but is not covered by another existing option. Alternative management practices would be assessed and approved by the department for a single voyage and set out the requirements for that voyage within the approval documentation. An application would need to be made in advance of arrival in Australia using an approved form, which will be available on the department’s website. The department would establish a minimum time period prior to arrival for a submission to be made.

On receipt of a request, the department would assess the proposed alternative management practices to determine whether they manage biosecurity risk to an acceptable level and, if approved, specify the relevant evidence to demonstrate the proposed activities have been carried out. During an inspection, a biosecurity officer would use the evidence to verify that the activity has been implemented as agreed.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia’s agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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