Fisheries scientists will spend the next three years eavesdropping on jewfish around the Top End coast, as part of a new study to determine their movements and better manage the fishery into the future.

This novel research project will see acoustic devices attached to jewfish and listening devices set on the seafloor in areas where jewfish come together in large numbers.

Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said the project will cost a total of $1.2 million over three years and is supported by $268 000 funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation on behalf of the Australian Government.

“Fishing is an important part of our great Territory lifestyle. This is a really exciting project, and one I'm sure will be followed with great interest,” he said.

“The listening devices set on the ocean floor will be recovered after a number of months, with the recorded information downloaded onto computer, giving an insight into the movement of individual jewfish.

“An underwater video will also be towed in areas where jewfish aggregate to determine the habitat and environmental conditions necessary for jewfish to breed.

“Jewfish fitted with acoustic devices will be clearly tagged, and any angler that catches one is asked to contact the Fisheries Group to hand in the fish and receive a $50 reward so the acoustic device can be reused.”

Mr Vatskalis said the project will involve a collaborative effort involving the Northern Territory's Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development's Fisheries Group, University of Tasmania's Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, and the Australian Institute of Marine Science.

Both the commercial and recreational sides of the industry are also in agreement, with the NT Seafood Council and the Amateur Fishing Association of the NT (AFANT) supporting the project.

Principal Investigator Tracy Hay from the Fisheries Group will head the three year project.

“The awarding of this significant investment is more recognition of the excellent work being done by the Fisheries Group,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“Not only will this project increase our knowledge and allow for better management of the fishery in the future, it will provide jobs for Territorians and inject funds into the economy.”