

Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA)

RESPONSE TO THE

Proposed Changes to Recreational Fishing West Coast FMP 228



FOREWORD

The Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA) compliment the Minister on his effective stance and pro-active planning on working towards sustainability and good fishing practices within the West Coast Bioregion.

The AAAWA works very closely as the governing body for the 28 Angling Clubs from Esperance to areas of the Pilbara that are members of the association; we ensure that a fishing code of conduct is maintained throughout our community.

We feel very proud that we have assisted in providing guidance to all its associated members, and have proactively encouraged fishing for the future programs.

We certainly have assisted the Fisheries Research team by providing access to all of our competitions and clubs, encouraging the clubs to provide the information that at times can be seen as being detrimental to the recreational fisherperson, but understand that the research is the only way forward, ensuring that the future of the communities resource is correctly managed

The AAAWA has assured its members that you have our future in your hands and with our support will endeavor to make it a sustainable industry.

Finally Minister, the AAAWA thank all members for their input into this submission, the passion that was shown was profound and dedicated, with a great deal of commonsense.

Pat Shinnick



President of the Australian Anglers Association WA Branch

Summary of Australian Anglers Associations Position on Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the individual mixed daily bag limit for Category 1 “high risk” Fish be reduced from 7 to 4 fish in the West Coast Bioregion (between north of Kalbarri and east of Augusta)

Supported.

Subject to the splitting of the category, limit of four 4 applying to the Vulnerable Species with the overall category 1 limit remaining at seven 7, this means that recreational fishers can catch four 4 of the vulnerable fish and three 3 of the remaining category 1 species, or a total mixed bag of 7 of the category 1 species, without the vulnerable species.

Comments

*Category 1 contains a vast list of species of fish and there is little or no scientific evidence that many of the species are under threat. Reducing the category 1 bag limit collectively reduces the angling experience and also discourages anglers from experimenting or engaging in different angling styles such as trolling for pelagic fish. This recommendation **may** encourage high grading or disposal of small fish or less desirable species as fish such as Samson fish, Queen Snapper, Sharks etc. are returned dead in favour of retaining a vulnerable iconic fish once the 4 fish bag limit has been attained. Barotraumas will undoubtedly also see the wasteful mortality of a huge volume of fish released in good faith also.*

Recommendation 2

That the daily bag limit for pink snapper is reduced from 4 to 2 in the West Coast Bioregion (between north of Kalbarri and east of Augusta).

Supported.

Recommendation 3

That the size limit for pink snapper be increased from 41cm to 50cm from an area south of Kalbarri to east of Augusta

Supported

Comments

Supported for the entire West Coast bioregion including the Kalbarri region. Having different size limits of 41 and 50 cm in adjacent parts of the West Coast Region will cause confusion / is not supported.

Recommendation 4

That a boat limit of two daily bag limits for Category 1 “high risk” Fish be introduced (i.e. 8 Category 1 “high risk” Fish) for the West Coast Bioregion. Charter boats will be allowed to have a bag limit of 2 Category 1 “high risk” Fish per customer in the West Coast Bioregion.

Supported 4a; *Subject to allowing for each extra person over two 2 on board to have two 2 category 1 specie.*

Supported 4b *Subject to the charter and commercial boats being restricted to the same closures as the recreational fisherpersons.*

Comments

*Every recreational angler should be entitled to a personal bag limit and find a boat limit of 2 bag limits excessively restrictive, wasteful and dangerously encouraging indiscriminate fishing practices, The vast majority of recreational vessels that target these species (specifically, trailer boats) would have a maximum safe carrying capacity of 3 passengers or less already so the usefulness of **any** boat limit needs to be questioned. In a world with ever-increasing environmental issues, multiple passengers should be encouraged and this recommendation only serves to encourage the use of more vessels on the water, more combustion of fuel and greater congestion at boat ramps. With a boat limit of 2 bag limits regardless of the number of passengers, the sole priority of the vessel will then be to target larger fish and the issues mentioned in our response to “Recommendation 1”, such as high grading and discarding **will** become a very wasteful reality. This recommendation also discriminates against financially restricted anglers who share the costs collectively to operate a single boat amongst several anglers*

B) Charter boats will be allowed to have a bag limit of 2 Category 1 “high risk” Fish per customer in the West Coast Bioregion’.

I agree with this recommendation. Charter boats are typically very large commercial vessels and have fish catching efficiency and ability far exceeding the majority of recreational vessels and should be managed as such.

****It is noted that the wording of this recommendation infers that the Minister has made the decision to reduce the Category 1 bag limit to 4 already, without considering public submissions,*

Recommendation 5

That a seasonal restriction that prohibits the take of the five vulnerable fish species (dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper, breaksea cod and red snapper) applies from 15 October – 25 December and then from 1 February - 31 March in the West Coast Bioregion each year. This reduces the amount of fish caught over any year and offers some spawning protection. It also enables the opportunity to catch these five species during much of the summer holiday season.

Not Supported this needs to be across the board in that recreational and commercial are restricted in the same manner

Comment 1 AAAWA Supports all Demersal fish, not just Vulnerable Iconic, need to be part of the closure, majority of clubs recommend this.

Comment 2 Support the introduction of a one 1 vulnerable iconic and four 4 category 1 during the proposed closed times, making this an annual reduction period.

Comment 3 AAAWA accept that seasonal closures are a useful and necessary tool for protecting these fish species but believe this recommendation to reek of politics without truly addressing the issue of sustainability. Seasonal closures should incorporate two important points, namely restricting access when the fish are most vulnerable (in this case, the peak spawning periods) and reducing access when angling activity is at its peak. Opening the season from the 25th of December until the 1st of February will allow access to the fish when they are at, for the most part, the peak of their spawning activity to the greatest levels of fishing activity, thereby effectively removing the majority of the benefits of closing the fishery for the October to December period. Particularly for Dhufish, January is a period of aggregation for spawning and when they are most vulnerable and are easily targeted. Any seasonal restriction should have maximum efficiency and its sole consideration should be the protection of the fish, not the protection of people's ability to fish over a holiday period that in essence is a cheap political point scoring opportunity.

Comment 4 Also inferences that the Charter and professional industry will not have the same closures; this needs more clarification from the Minister.

Comment 5 AAAWA does not agree that the proposed general closed season should apply to shore based fishers. Dhufish can be caught from the shore in the vicinity of the S-Bend, pink snapper are taken from a variety of shore based locations in the West coast bioregion, and blue groper are sometimes caught from rocks in the south west.

Such catches are insignificant, mostly incidental and are no threat to the sustainability of the vulnerable species of fish, but are a significant achievement and bonus for shore based fishermen.

Any perceived compliance issues could be covered by allowing a shore based combined daily limit of 1 or 2 of these specific highest risk category 1 Demersal fish.

Pink snapper spawning closures in Cockburn Sound could still exclude land based catches because the reasons and benefits are obvious.

Comment 6 AAAWA Recommends another option to allow fishing on weekends and public holidays only during the total period, with the introduction of **Comment 2**

Recommendation 6A

The take of Category 1 “high risk” Fish by spear fishing on compressed air (SCUBA and surface supply) be prohibited in the West Coast Bioregion.

Not Supported

The take of fish by divers are selective and require skills that are far superior to other forms of catch.

Recommendation 6B

The use of power assisted fishing reels (e.g. electric fishing reels etc) by recreational fishers be prohibited in the West Coast Bioregion (exemptions for disabled fishers etc can be provided).

Supported

Recommendation 7

Initiate discussion with fishing clubs to discourage public fishing competitions in the West Coast Bioregion from targeting high risk species such as Dhufish, Pink Snapper and Baldchin groper in prize categories.

Supported

Comment; The AAAWA has been proactive in this field and has insisted Clubs to be specie based in all their competitions, and have self imposed size limits on a number of species.

Recommendation 8

That the finfish possession limit at the Abrolhos Islands and within the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Area be reduced to 10kg of fillets or 1 days bag limit of whole fish per person – this possession limit can be transported back to the mainland.

Supported

Recommendation 9

That the existing voluntary Recreational Angler Logbook program be enhanced to provide additional catch and effort information for vulnerable species in the West Coast Bioregion.

Supported, AAAWA have always supported and recommended that all clubs participate in Fisheries Research.

Recommendation 10

That a Recreational Fishing Trust Fund be established with business rules to enable the recreational sector to have meaningful input into determining expenditure priorities

Supported

Recommendation 11

That further research be undertaken to investigate the appropriateness of introducing large scale fish reserves or closed areas to provide protection for large numbers of fish or over an area, which is particularly important to spawning.

Closed areas not supported at this time, additional research fully supported.

Comment 1

AAAWA would not support the creation of any large scale closed areas at this time as this will simply place increased pressure on stocks outside of these reserves seriously contributing to the localized depletion inferred in Recommendation 7. Funds would be more efficiently spent buying out effort from the West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery in the short term and more accurate monitoring of catches to assess the true health of the fishery from year to year.

Comment 2.

Further research, which should cover the biology and location of spawning areas for species such as Dhufish - which we believe EVERYONE should fully support as essential.

Comment 3.

The part which is that IF some areas are found which are very important for spawning success, AAWA supports that CONSIDERATION be given to closed areas to protect these spawning fish.

Such areas might not need to be closed permanently (example Cockburn Sound Pink Snapper spawning areas,) but if the proper fisheries research showed that there were real benefits for the fish stock and breeding success by closing some areas then recreational fishermen should SUPPORT such closures which were properly explained and justified in time, place and duration.

Improved breeding success would give improved fishing and/or could reduce the need for other restrictions on fishing.

This current situation and need for drastic measures has come about through lack of research and lack of information. Proper research should be high on the list of things to do.

Further Comments

Compulsory carrying of release weight, as recommended by all fisherpersons who have used the item successfully.

AAAWA believes that the benefit of using the release weight has been demonstrated.

Therefore AAWA recommends that any boat which is required to carry and EPIRB and has fishing gear on board, should also be required to carry a device capable of being used as a release weight.

We also believe that all commercial boats with Wetfish entitlements in the West Coast bioregion should be able to access at all times while fishing a line rigged with a release weight in order to reduce post-release mortalities as recognized as a problem by WAFIC.

Extra resources are required for compliance, education and research and more.

There have been inadequate resources for recreational fishing compliance for many years.

There is lack of current up to date and comprehensive fisheries research information on many issues of great importance to recreational anglers, for example the lack which has led to this critical situation with Demersal fish.

Many recreational fishermen are not aware of things they need to know about the rules and the state of WA's fisheries. The changes to recreational fishing rules will require considerable extra education.

REFERENCES

Recommended Changes to recreational Fishing of Vulnerable Iconic Fish (Ministerial Position Paper)

Creel survey data, 2005/2006 (Neil Sumner)

FMP-228

Western Angler forum

Bluewater Tackle

Recfishwest

Marmion Angling & Aquatic Club

Divers of West Coast Bioregion

Mandurah Offshore Fishing and Sailing Club

Ocean Reef Sea Sports Club

Lancelin Angling and Aquatic Club

Surf Casters & Angling Club

Quinn's Rock Angling Club

Offshore Angling Club Boating Branch

Offshore Angling Club Beach Branch

Melville Amateur Angling Club

Hillary's Yacht Club

Fremantle Amateur Angling Club

Making a Submission

To ensure your submission is as effective as possible, please:

- Make it clear and concise.
- List your points according to the topic sections and page numbers in this paper.
- Describe briefly each topic or issue you wish to discuss.
- State whether you agree or disagree with any or all of the information within each topic, or just what is of specific interest to you. Clearly state your reasons, particularly if you disagree, and give sources of information where possible.
- Suggest alternatives to address any issues that you disagree with.

Please note that your submission can refer to the recommendations listed in Ministerial Position Paper (Recommendations 1-11), and your submission can also include references to additional proposals detailed in the Fisheries Management Paper 228, which can be found online at **www.fish.wa.gov.au**

Your written comments must be submitted by 5pm, Wednesday, 30 April 2008, and should be addressed as follows:

Minister for Fisheries
C/- Department of Fisheries
3rd Floor, The Atrium
168 St George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Alternatively you can enter your submission online by visiting the Department of Fisheries' website address at **www.fish.wa.gov.au**

Glossary

Demersal – fish which live on the ocean floor generally in deeper water (refer to image below).

Scalefish – all fish species with the exception of sharks and rays.

Vulnerable iconic fish – demersal species which are particularly vulnerable to excess fishing pressure due to their biology. These fish are typically long-lived, slow-growing, mature at four-years plus, form semi-resident populations or are of low abundance e.g. dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper, breaksea cod and red snapper.

West Coast Bioregion – the area of Western Australia situated between the Zuytdorp Cliffs, north of Kalbarri and Black Point, east of Augusta.

Category 1 “high risk” Fish – All fish species in the West Coast Bioregion that are at the highest risk to overexploitation. A list of all Category 1 fish is contained in the West Coast Recreational Fishing Guide which can be obtained from the Department of Fisheries website at **www.fish.wa.gov.au**

Pelagic – fish that generally live near the surface of the ocean or in shallow water. These fish typically migrate long distances during their life cycle e.g. Spanish mackerel, mahi mahi, Australia salmon and herring (refer to image below).

Demersal and Pelagic fish species

Demersal scalefish are found mostly near the ocean floor or in deeper offshore waters.

Pelagic fish generally live near the ocean surface or in shallow waters including inshore waters along the coast, jetties and groynes.