

# **Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA)**

**RESPONSE TO THE**

## **Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves Management Plan**



## FOREWORD

The Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA) compliment the Department of Environment and Conservation on your effective stance and pro-active planning on working towards a sustainable, safe and effective means of providing access and egress to our favorite areas of fishing.

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, of the 643,000 recreational fishers in Western Australia, we are but a mere five percent, but believe in the actual use market, we would be close to fifty percent of the actual users, or fishers; we ensure that a fishing code of conduct is maintained throughout our community.

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 and enjoyable industry.

And now we hopefully will be able to assist the Department of Environment and Conservation with some of our comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Management Plan for Shark Bay Terrestrial Reserves and Proposed Reserves Additions.

We have clubs that do utilize the facilities that are provided along the coast and have been pioneers in developing a lot of the areas that are fished by recreational anglers. We are also a representative group on the WA caravan and camping group. AAA.WA promotes and supports responsible recreational use of the entire environment. AAA.WA also supports a risk based approach to management of activities to balance environmental needs with reasonable access by the owners who are the public of Western Australia, with particular emphasis on responsible access and use for recreational fishing.

These comments have included input from some clubs and individuals who have many years' experience with access to, camping and fishing in the Steep Point/False Entrance areas.

**Finally, 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.**

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## Summary of Australian Anglers Associations Position on Recommendations

### General comments on the plan.

The coastline from Steep Point south provides some unique land based fishing opportunities for anglers from all over Australia.

The draft plan is very comprehensive and includes many of the topics of interest to recreational fishermen in the area.

In general, but with some specific exceptions as covered later, AAA.WA supports the intention of these plans to manage these areas for sustainable use and for future generations. However, we find that certain details of exactly what will be done within some of the generally agreed intentions as set out in the draft plan, are possibly hidden.

### Fishing Safety.

Fishing safety is always an important consideration for recreational fishermen, however this is always the responsibility of the individual fisherman and fishing party considering their abilities, experience, judgment, equipment and the weather and swell conditions at the time.

Over many years innovative and resourceful recreational anglers have come up with fishing equipment and methods which have allowed many difficult areas to be fished safely and effectively in the right weather conditions, and we at the AAA.WA are proud that most of the innovative ideas were from club members, who have honed their skills and offered their valued experience to club anglers and others via clinics that are run from time to time by the AAA.WA.

Rock fishing has its inherent risks, however rock fishing can be carried out safely by people who are aware of these risks, so no other body should make decisions about restricting access based mainly or solely on any perceived "safe fishing" criteria, or the lack of ability to provide extras such as rock anchor points, which may be desirable but are not essential.

### Camping.

The sections on camping do not give full details of the proposed number of camp sites, the overall and individual size(s) of these which determines how many people, tents, vehicles, trailers etc can use them, the separation of sites for generator use, noise, disturbance and property security, the possibility for some camp sites closer to other specific fishing spots, any time or occupancy limits, facilities to be provided specifically for fishermen, a major group of users, and similar important questions of detail which will determine the success of the implementation.

Advice from users is that the current management by the Ranger Paul and his wife Pam has been of a very high standard with their commonsense approach to acceptable visitor activities. The booking system is working well to manage the site allocation and number of campers in these areas.

### Involvement with implementation planning.

Strong representation and involvement from the recreational fishing sector on the management committee that is charged with actually implementing the detail of the changes to the Shark Bay area is vital to resolve these questions of detail which are not in the Draft Management Plan, or have not been foreseen. It is essential that such a committee hears from and takes notice of this sector of the community that is presently and will continue to be a major user of this area.

## Managing visitor use

AAA.WA supports rationalizing and managing vehicle access tracks; however such rationalization must maintain reasonable access to areas which have been used by recreational fishermen for many years to fish in many locations.

Although “walk-in” access is suitable for tourists, nature appreciation and some other sorts of recreation, these uses are usually of much shorter duration or by people who are suitably equipped for such extended walking activities. Recreational fishing requires reasonable vehicle access to such areas to enable essential communications, safety and fishing equipment, shade, food and water, etc to be accessible during the many hours of fishing.

In particular, AAA.WA cannot support the closure of the area between False Entrance and the Blowholes, which would remove access to several excellent fishing and swimming locations including Crayfish Bay. AAA.WA’s view is that a 4WD track should be provided to maintain the access to these highly valued recreational fishing locations, and that some camping sites should be provided.

In addition AAA.WA is greatly concerned that it is proposed to construct a 2WD access road to False Entrance. In the past this area has been protected by the requirement for 4WD vehicles, so anglers and others who are aware and prepared for the prevailing conditions are therefore suitably equipped. To open this area up for general 2WD access would allow an uncontrolled number of inexperienced visitors to venture into what can be very dangerous circumstances, and a long way from help.

AAA.WA recommends that DEC provide only 4WD access to False Entrance and the area from Steep Point south along the coast, including Crayfish Bay and adjacent locations.

## General comments on terrestrial planning.

The Invitation to Comment page of this draft plan is very prescriptive on the conditions under which the content of the plan will be reviewed. Of particular concern are the sections “plan will not be amended if a submission:” “makes statements.... were considered during the plan preparation” or “....strategies of the plan are still considered the best option.” Such statements do not give confidence that good, reasoned and rational comments will be considered on their merits.

Although there has been some prior opportunity to comment, considerable extra detail is now included for the first time in this draft, but the above indicates that changes may be difficult. Also the plan can be amended by DEC or the Government without further consultation or any further opportunity to comment on those new changes. This is a significant flaw in DEC’s terrestrial planning process. AAA.WA is aware this is in accordance with the CALM Act.

Identical concerns that have arisen in the past in relation to marine park planning, which subsequently have seen the creation of a representative stakeholder reference group which includes a recreational representative.

It would seem logical that a stakeholder reference group should be established for the terrestrial park planning process, along similar lines to the marine planning group, in order to avoid some of the problems experienced in the past and which are still present.

AAA.WA would be pleased to provide further information on this submission. Please feel free to contact the office on (08) 9404 7383, or email [aaawa@iinet.net.au](mailto:aaawa@iinet.net.au).

## ***REFERENCES***

Western Angler fishing forum  
Recfishwest  
Ocean Reef Sea Sports Club  
Lancelin Angling and Aquatic Club  
Surf Casting and Angling Club  
Offshore Angling Club Beach Branch  
Melville Amateur Angling Club  
Fremantle Amateur Angling Club  
Delegates of the AAA.WA (Monthly Meetings).