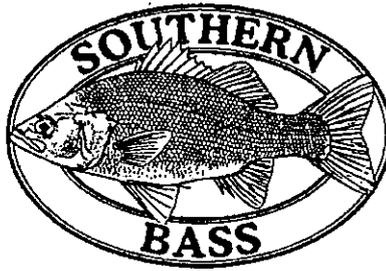


Submission
No 770

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Southern Bass Fishing Club
Name: Mr Peter Harding
Position: Secretary
Date received: 15/03/2010

The Legislative Council Select Committee
On Recreational Fishing
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000



12 March 2010

Dear Committee Members

Recreational Fishing Survey

This submission is presented on behalf of Southern Bass Inc with the authority of the club's executive committee.

Southern Bass is a recreational fishing club, drawing its members mainly from the Wollongong and Nowra areas. The club's primary focus is on the conservation and promotion of bass and estuary perch as recreational fishing species and allowing them to thrive in their former habitats. Members also fish for a wide range of other species in a variety of locations. The club has played a pivotal role in the establishment of a fishway at Tallowa dam and continues to be involved in research of fish movements on the Shoalhaven River. Club competitions are run on a 'catch and release' basis.

Our submission focuses on the following areas:

1. The buyout of commercial fishermen from selected areas:
2. The need for more Fisheries Officers.
3. The impact of Marine Reserves.
4. Bag and size limits.
5. Stocking programmes.
6. Habitat restoration.
7. Public access.

The buyout of commercial fishermen

Southern Bass would like to see the buyout of commercial fishermen from Lake Illawarra, Shoalhaven River and the Hawkesbury River/Pittwater system. The buyout is to cover all forms of commercial fishing with the exception of oyster farming.

The netting of the waterways by professional fishers is a serious cause of the destruction of fish habitat, in particular the sea grass beds which are essential for the protection of juvenile fish, crustacea etc. The sea grass, which is ripped out, forms dense mats on the surface of the water and banks of the waterways where it eventually rots with an unpleasant odour. Despite devices supposed to limit by-catch, there is still far too much destruction of juvenile species. This by-catch also forms an 'artificial' food source for pelicans and cormorants etc whose increased numbers threaten the more mature fish.

We are of the opinion that recreational fishing would be of a higher value to the overall economy than the professional fishing sector. This is based on the potential increase from tourism, accommodation, the sale of boats, fuel and fishing tackle etc. We believe that the establishment of St Georges Basin as a recreational fishing haven is a prime example of such a closure to professional fishermen and Fisheries should have statistics to support our claim.

We acknowledge that the public needs to have fresh, local fish available at an affordable price. We believe that this can be achieved by the introduction of more fish farms in appropriate areas.

More Fisheries Officers

We understand that there are only two Fisheries Officers (other than educational officers) based in the region from Wollongong to Batemans Bay. This region has numerous estuaries and lakes and it is impossible for only two persons to police the area adequately. Recently two men from the Milton and Lake Tabourie were apprehended for presenting 1000 kilogrammes of undersized fish to the Sydney Fish Markets. Whilst the apprehension was commendable, the fish were dead and should never have been targetted in the first place. More Fisheries Officers, please.

Marine Reserves

The general feeling within the club is that there is far too much restriction placed on recreational fishers with the establishment of Marine Reserves.

We believe there should be more closures in areas where fish aggregate for spawning. It seems to be an unsustainable practice to target a species when it is about to procreate.

Bag and size limits

We believe that the current limits are reasonable. If an improvement is to be made it could be via the introduction of 'slot limits' (similar to mulloway) for a wider range of fish. Flathead are one species that would benefit and we note that a slot limit already applies in Queensland.

Stocking programmes

There is clear evidence that the reintroduction of Murray Cod to the lower Murray River has had a beneficial impact in reducing the numbers of carp in the river. Simply, the cod eat the small carp. We believe that this process should be implemented in other river systems with the re-stocking of the original species, particularly when they are a predatory fish, to assist control the noxious species. This could be Bass in Lake Yarrunga (Tallowa Dam) to control carp or Golden Perch in western dams such as Ben Chifley to control Redfin Perch. Residual large carp could be targetted by electro fishing when they aggregate to spawn.

Habitat restoration

We note that Fisheries has already introduced some 'Habitat Forums'. We agree with the general principles and wish to see a higher level of habitat restoration both in fresh and salt water environments.

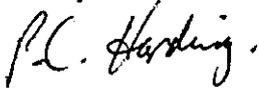
Public access

We notice that the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers is lobbying the Govt to gain access to water storage areas. This issue of access has been a bone of contention for a long time, particularly in areas close to the Sydney Metropolitan region. Water storages in rural areas are a major source of tourist income and, if properly controlled, would be a valuable resource in the Sydney/Wollongong areas. There is clear evidence that a privileged few target the fish in Warragamba Dam and there is little reason to prohibit access to all.

There also seems to be a push by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to make access increasingly difficult to many areas. Many previous access roads have been locked to vehicles and, if you are not young and fit, you can no longer access these areas. We would like to see a much higher level of consultation between NPWS and Fisheries before any further lockouts are contemplated. We have a disabled member in our club and it is impossible for him to access many such areas.

We trust that the survey will be used for the benefit of recreational anglers in both fresh and salt water.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P.C. Harding".

Peter Harding
Secretary Southern Bass Fishing Club Inc

For the Executive Committee, Southern Bass Inc.