

**Submission  
No 277**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** South West Anglers Association Inc

**Name:** Mr Terry Maloney

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# SOUTH WEST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION INC.

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The South West Anglers Association Inc. (SWAA) is an Association of Recreational Angling Clubs in the South West and Riverina regions of NSW. It represents the interests of approximately 2,500 individual recreational fishers.

SWAA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into the Management of Public Land in New South Wales.

As a group of recreational angling clubs our main interest in the Public Land is the access it provides to our rivers and streams, enabling us to enjoy our recreational pastime.

However as our member clubs are resident in the communities of the Riverina and South West region of NSW we are also concerned not only about the social impacts but also the economic impacts that land management may have on those communities.

## Social

Fishing is a healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreational activity that is not gender, age or health biased.

It can be undertaken by all members of the community either alone or in a club, group or competitive nature. Fishing is a pastime that can be shared by family groups and in our Association we often see 3 and sometimes 4 generations of families enjoying the pastime together.

Smaller rural communities have in recent times suffered population loss and that has resulted in the demise of many sporting and recreational groups such as football clubs, fishing is one of the few pastimes that can still be enjoyed without the requirement of finding the numbers to field a "full team"

We believe that retaining passive recreational activities such as fishing in the regional and rural communities will assist greatly in preserving what is left of life in the country areas. It is becoming more and more difficult to attract professional and skilled people to regional areas, young people are leaving to seek more stable jobs, education opportunities are ever decreasing and threatened communities are seeing greater levels of stress and mental health concerns.

These rural and regional communities in many cases only have limited access to our rivers and the majority of that access is by way of public land.

Often the only substitute to the beach or coastal recreational area is the local Travelling Stock Reserve, State Forest area or in more recent times the National Park.

It is therefore vital that any decisions' regarding the management of our Public Lands takes serious consideration of the free and unrestricted recreational use of these lands by the community.

The culture of the inland recreational fishery is one of dispersed camping and is predominately boat based.

The creation of the Red Gum National Parks in the South West region has had a negative impact on the activities of recreational fishers with a significant reduction in the areas available for dispersed camping and boat launching.

The restrictive management controls on such activities as camping, campfires and even the taking of the family dog have limited opportunities for the traditional activities of the

recreational fishing public.

Regular users are continually complaining about locked gates and closed roads that have been closed for no apparent reason. Many of these local citizens have knowledge of these areas that spans 30 to 40 years and cannot understand the management practices that are being based on poor understanding of the local conditions.

- **Attached are 2 letters that are but a sample of the comments received by this Association.**



**All too common sight for many recreational fishers.  
Clear sunny day, dry roads and a locked gate.**

### **Economic**

Recreational fishing is vital to the economic survival of many communities.

NSW has in excess of 1 million recreational fishers contributing around \$13 million in licence fees alone.

Based on a survey conducted by Ernst and Young (July 2011) and funded by MDBA, Fisheries NSW, and Pirsa Fisheries SA, approximately 430,000 recreational fishers live in the Murray Darling Basin. The study revealed that recreational anglers spend approximately \$1.3 billion when fishing in the Murray Darling Basin each year.

The study also found that recreational fishing contributes approximately \$403 million to gross domestic product and employs around 10,950 people.

Given that some 60% of the Murray Darling Basin is in New South Wales, this is some indication of the value of recreational fishing to the communities that we represent.

Based on the above figures, it is not only to the recreational angler but also to their communities that access to waterways is not only retained but increased.

The predictions of increased tourism in the Red Gum Parks have failed to materialise in the

Riverina region and this has again had economic impacts on communities that have lost industry such as timber harvesting.

### **Environment**

As many of our members have a long association with many of the Public land reserves in this region it is very disturbing to hear of declining environmental management practices. The growing trend to restrict the public use and the "lock it up and leave it" style of management is having adverse impacts on the environmental health of our public lands.

While we appreciate the need for National Parks and fully support the natural preservation of areas such as Kosciuszko and the Blue Mountains we believe that the western region parks require active management.

The invasive feral pests and noxious weeds that are consuming our park lands are of real concern.

The growth in area of Park Land has increased at an unsustainable rate in recent years and yet the numbers of management personnel has not increased at a comparable rate.

By way of example, in 1967 there were 77 Parks in NSW and now we have in excess of 800. This unfortunately has been driven by extreme environmentalists without any regard for the need for increased management.

Governments simply do not have, or fail to provide adequate funding for the sustainable management of the western parks. The forest floor fuel loads are increasing at an alarming rate and dangers of extreme fire events are becoming very real. It is a real concern that communities such as Barmah will become the next "Kinglake" and extreme burns will destroy the Red Gums to a level never before witnessed.

It is therefore the opinion of this Association that these areas should be managed in a more cost effective manner and returned to a localised shared use management strategy.

This may involve again sharing the management with groups such as the timber industry, graziers and indeed the very communities that have lived and conserved these areas for decades.

The concept of protection using the "one size fits all" approach to the Parks Management is flawed and the National Parks management practices that apply to the Blue Mountains National Park simply do not work in the Red Gum Park areas. The change from multi-use State Forest into National Parks in the Riverina has been a monumental failure and has adversely impacted on both the environment and the communities.

### **Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs)**

The travelling stock reserve network in NSW has been an extremely important part in the access to our rivers for recreational purposes. It has also been invaluable as a recreation ground for many smaller communities when other established areas are not available.

This Association has also had talks with the "Grey Nomad" population who use these areas extensively for short term and overnight camping. This group spend considerable amounts of money in rural communities and contribute to the economy of these towns.

We have also established that some 60% of this group go fishing on a regular basis.

During the recent review of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA) one of the concerns that raised considerable debate was the future management of the TSRs.

Predictably the environmental lobby were vocal in suggesting that the TSRs that were no longer needed for stock movement should be placed under National Parks control.

This would again create the "one size fits all" form of management and given that these reserves are generally small in area and widely dispersed, management would be non-existent apart from the locked gate.

This simply cannot be allowed to happen given the close proximity to farm land, the value of the reserves to local communities and the reliance of these areas for river and stream access for fishers, boaters, travellers and just the kids that like to go for a swim in the summer months.

#### **Public Roads.**

While not directly related to recreational fishing, the management of our public road side verges is also an issue raised by many members.

The protection of the vegetation by councils has reached a level that is creating various problems for both local residents and motorists.

Previously travelling stock and grazing by local landholders kept vegetation at an acceptable level, however with little travelling stock and bans on activities such as collection of firewood we now see many roads becoming corridors of dense vegetation with trees obscuring visibility at many intersections.

The visibility issue aside, with the regrowth of the trees in close proximity to the road proper, the danger of collision is becoming more frequent.

Further to this problem is the creation of corridors of noxious weeds and havens for feral pests such as foxes and rabbits to threaten farm land.

It is acceptable for landowners to be prosecuted for failing to control these weeds and pests when they are allowed to flourish just through the fence because of some misguided protectionist belief.

Further to that problem is the fire risk associated with vegetation being allowed to build close to roads where in many country areas there are heavy volumes of heavy vehicle traffic during the summer fire danger period.

The roads in rural areas were once regarded as firebreaks and were points where the volunteer fire crews could expect to halt summer grass fires. However under present management these areas become more of a hazard than the managed farmland.

**Terry Maloney**

Secretary South West Anglers Association Inc.

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ATTACHMENT 1.

I am writing to express my disappointment and frustration at the lockout of previously accessible river land.

Several months back my family and I set off on a day's fishing and picnicking on the river, only to spend the next 3-4 hrs. driving from gate to gate all to no avail.

All the while assuring my children there must be somewhere to go, eventually we returned home exhausted and angry.

I fail to see how the environment is to benefit or what good it is to not be allowed near the place we love so much. To explain this to children, who wish to enjoy these pastimes as we did is almost impossible, basically because no one really knows why.

I find it appalling that people make these decisions without even knowing the area, how well it is looked after and its popularity.

To lock up the river and let it become one huge fire hazard is crazy I would like to see the uproar should us forest loving environmentally friendly country people make a decision concerning arts or opera in Sydney or Canberra.

Our voice would be heard then.

I am not on my own voicing disappointment as many of my mates and their families have had the same trouble accessing the mighty Murray. Something needs to be done to stop this and other appalling decisions concerning our backyard.

An answer please.

Signed John Thomson. Berrigan NSW

## ATTACHMENT 2.

I am writing concerning the locking of the gates in the now proclaimed National Parks.

I have lived near the Murray River around Boomanoomana all my life. Since I can remember we have been able access the river around One Tree beach at all times wether the river is high or low. When I started going to the river we used to go to Ruwolts beach, or then One tree beach then Boomanoomana State Forest, now it is Boomanoomana National park. In all these years there has always been stock in the bends, which seemed to keep the bush at a safe level. Whilst there were campers and stock on the river we did not have a great deal of trouble with fires, the odd camp fire got away but the predominant fire were lightning strikes. I forgot to mention that I have been involved with the Mt.Gwynne Rural Fire Brigade for nearly 36years. My concern is that with a lock out of people and stock the powers that be will end up saying there is too much of a fire hazard for people to enjoy themselves on the river precincts. I can see the banning of motor bikes because of the fire danger, then with no stock the fuel load will be too great for us to control if there is a fire.

In the early 70's we camped on one of the high clay banks in this area. This was a time when our area had above 90 inches in a three year period, the river flowed at the same height as it had in 2010 or higher for nearly all this time , we could still get to the river to fish.

This summer we tried to access the river on many occasions, but were halted on every occasion with either tape across the cattle grid or an old farm gate there until we finally got there to find a locking gate structure that was locked.

We have quite a few relatives and friends that frequent the river over the Christmas and Easter holiday's periods. Most of these people were informed by the media and NP websites the river was closed. This would have reeked havoc on the local communities that rely on these holiday makers for their holiday income.

I also do a lot of fishing in this area for recreation, when we do fish we take note of all species caught as well as the proximity they are caught in and what they are eating .We have done this for over 12 years. A few years ago we were approached by the Arthur Ryler institute of Victoria who in conjunction with MDBC, Cooperative research centre for freshwater ecology and two other Victorian agencies wanted the knowledge of this area in the river; they have found this information invaluable in their studies of this breeding area. Since the national park was proclaimed, we have not been able to glean any information of the local fish populations in what was a full river.

We do worry about the minority of people that want to see these areas locked up, so as they think to preserve them for the next generation, in theory it sounds good but it will be to the detriment of the River Red Gum forests. If the fuel loads get any bigger down on the river the next lightning strike may bring it home to these people as it may scorch the very people that want it locked up. These people will not be down here with me and our fire brigade helping to save our assets or the local flora and fauna. This matter has to be addressed before the next summer season comes.

Yours sincerely Colin Withers  
A concerned neighbour of the National Parks