

Submission
No 1022

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Gone Fish'n
Name: Mr John Williams
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COMMERCIAL NETTING BAN IN THE CLARENCE RIVER JUNE, JULY & AUGUST ANNUALLY.

NSW DPI Fisheries has applied a bag limit restriction for Australian Bass and Estuary Perch in all rivers and estuaries in NSW. During June, July & August each year, recreational anglers bag limit for Australian Bass and Estuary Perch is zero. This is to limit the disruption of the breeding migration of these fish to the saltier waters of the lower river and estuary. Bass need to migrate to water with a high salt content for their breeding cycle to maximise the potency of the male milt to fertilise the spawn.

During this period however, there is no restriction applied to commercial netting operations. In fact the commercial netters are permitted to shoot diver nets at sundown and retrieve them at sunrise. The Australian Bass and Estuary Perch are not targeted by commercial netters as they are a non-commercial species, they are however slaughtered in their thousands as by-catch having been drowned in the nets left in the river overnight.

When the nets are retrieved at sunrise, the dead Australian Bass and Estuary Perch are disembowelled and simply discarded overboard by the honest netters; or are collected, filleted and skun by the "less honest" netters and sold off on the black market. (Refer clipping from Daily Examiner attached.)

This slaughter was greatly increased last year in the aftermath of the May flood in the Clarence. Due to the flooded Nymboida, Mann and Clarence rivers, fish that would normally be unable to migrate moved down the river systems to breed and were slaughtered in their thousands. There is research data available to substantiate the loss of many of the fish tagged with sonic transmitters in an ongoing programme.

Action needs to be taken in conjunction with DPI Fisheries with the view to having a net ban introduced to the Clarence Fishery from the ocean mouth at Yamba to the upstream limit of tidal waters at Copmanhurst for the three months that restrictions are in place for recreational anglers.

Contact details for John Williams:

Gone Fish'n