

Submission
No 933

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: South Coast Fishing Club Association (SCFCA)
Name: Mr Hayden Capobianco
Date received: 22/03/2010

Hayden Capobianco.

To; The Director
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Macquarie St Sydney NSW 2000

Inquiry into Recreational Fishing

I write this submission on behalf of the South Coast Fishing Club Ass, (SCFCA) and its 30 member clubs whose membership base consist of well over 1000 recreational anglers and spans the region from Scarborough in the north to Tathra in south .

The committee of the SCFCA at its February meeting asked if I could complete a submission, on behalf of its member clubs as my background in Recreational Fishing is quite extensive.

My background; I am presently employed in fishing retail industry and have daily contact with recreational anglers. The nature of my work requires that I be knowledgeable in the rules and regulations that govern recreational fishing.

The fishing tackle and bait shops are the first contact point for recreational anglers and the general public (danglers) with regards to fisheries rules and regulations as well as in most cases the first port of call for a recreational fishing licence.

The current suite of existing regulatory, policy and decision making process in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in NSW.

The current bureaucracy of regulating bodies that recreational fishers in NSW have to deal with is mind boggling.

On the South Coast there are three NSW departments that govern fishers; NSW I & I (Fisheries), Marine Park Authority, National Parks and Wildlife . As well as the Federal National Parks (Booderee National Park).

These departments create a mine field of rules and regulations for NSW fishers and visiting anglers. Recreational fishing is the only recreational sport that has its rules and regulations governed and controlled by the state.

I & I NSW ~ Fisheries.

The fisheries department since being absorb by the Department of Primary Industries now Industry & Investment has of recent times become an abode for career bureaucrats more intent at sitting behind a desk, thinking of ways to make issues out of irrelevant non-existent problems.

The department has gone backwards!

Rules Governing Recreational Fishers

The major issue with Fisheries is the complexity & open-ended rules; "The grey area so to speak."

Where it comes down to how the officer on the day wishes to interpret the rules they need to be black and white. Several of the rules seem contrived and totally uncalled for.

One such rule which is unwarranted and frankly ridiculous that was introduced this year, The maximum number of fishing lines permitted to be carried, see below:

From the 2010 Saltwater Recreational Fishing Guide. Pg.52 *Line Fishing*

You are not permitted to:

~ Carry excess fishing lines in, on or adjacent to the waters. Spare lines should not be rigged and should be properly stowed.

There are rules in place that limit physically the amount of allowable lines that a fisher can use. Pg. 47, 2010 Guide.

So the above rule effectively makes any person who carries spares rigged lines in their boat for convenience depending on the conditions that prevail now law breakers. Most recreational fishers will usually take a couple of rods and have already rigged hand lines stowed in their boat. These may go unused for several trips.

The most common fishers that usually carry spare rigged lines are the elderly retired fisho's. At times it can be difficult to rig lines while at sea even for younger anglers let alone the old salts and by having lines rigged is a convenience.

Many of the recreational anglers I speak to are also perplexed at what exactly the statement, properly stowed means? In the above rule, (that grey area.)

Proposed Changes Banning Electric Reels

Taken from the minutes of Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing Outcomes Meeting 47 – Tuesday 25 August 200 -Pg. 4; Item 10

10. Electric reels

I&I NSW is becoming increasingly concerned about the current escalating investment and use of electric reels for fishing in NSW and potential impacts on deep sea fisheries resources. The majority of council members considered the use of electric reels was not a, traditional, acceptable form of recreational fishing and therefore, the use of powered/electric reels should be restricted.

Motion: The council supports the banning of electric reels, subject to a permit system for acceptable use (e.g. To assist disabled fishers). The council recommends that the ban be implemented during the next review of bag and size limits and that the Minister consider issuing an investment warning in the near future to advise the recreational fishing sector of this position.

The blindness of NSW Fisheries and A.C.o.R.F on this matter is unfathomable, The original deep sea line fishery for the professional sector was just that a line fishery.

Professional fishers now use winches to haul deep sea lines and nets, by NSW fisheries logic if they wish to declare electric reels a restricted item. Then electric winches used by commercial fishers should be banned also.

Question to NSW Fisheries.

Will they then ban the use of electric winches in the commercial sector? As they cannot by their own logic be classed as a traditional acceptable method to haul fish?

I will quote the current premier of NSW these rules do not meet "The common sense rule"

Lack of Liaison & Involvement by NSW Fisheries with the community

NSW Fisheries and its lack of fair and comprehensive community involvement. The Illawarra and South Coast of NSW always draws the short straw and misses out on a fair amount of Stakeholder participation

There have in the past several important developments and major impacts to recreational fishing where the Illawarra in particular were left out. The major one that comes to mind was the creation of Recreational Fishing Havens.

When these were first envisaged and touted the Illawarra was not invited to have an input through community forums.

Recently NSW Fisheries held stakeholder meetings at several venues with regards to Estuarine Stocking Program. There were no meetings in the Illawarra, South Coast

On the following page are some extracts from emails to Craig Blount who ran the program. The reply was well after the dates for the other meetings.

Email From:
Sent: Thursday, 3 December 2009 8:02 AM
To: Craig Blount (Brookvale)
Subject: Estuarine fish stocking program

Hi Craig,

Our fishing club received your letter regarding the estuarine stocking stakeholder meeting and would love to attend but noticed that the invitation inadvertently left out the time and dates for the Illawarra / Shoalhaven area meeting.

Could you please advise details of this meeting?

Regards
Hayden Capobianco
Secretary, Ocean Beach Hotel Fishing Club

Email From: Craig Blount
To: Hayden Capobianco

Sent: Monday, January 04, 2010 8:49 AM
Subject: RE: Estuarine fish stocking program

.Thanks for your email Hayden. Unfortunately there was no fish stocking talk scheduled for the Illawarra/Shoalhaven at this stage of the project. We are in mid-stage of development of the project. There will be an opportunity for you to review the EIS for the project in the coming months and there may be further talks scheduled. All fishing clubs will be advised of the arrangements.
Regards, Craig

Dr Craig Blount
Senior Environmental Scientist

Compliance Officers

The biggest complaint I hear from recreational anglers is the lack of compliance officers and the failure to police high traffic spots where known bag and size limit offences take place.

The pure reason for this is lack of field officers, The Illawarra has two sometimes three officers that have to cover a minimum of ten boat ramps and well over 100km of coastline.

The answer to this is simple more compliance officers or bring the middle management out from behind their desk and in to the field.

A.C.o.R.F the body that supposedly represents recreational fishers

It's to put it plainly purely inadequate. Of the 1 million recreational anglers in NSW less than 99% would even know of their existence. Those that do know of the body if they need to contact them have no direct contact points whatsoever!

The only way to contact them is through NSW fisheries. Where you hope they receive it?

There are no email addresses or other contact points for individual representatives.

This shows again a lack of openness available to the recreational fraternity.

Of the current committee members in A.C.o.R.F, Neil Ryan has publicly stated on the internet his frustration at Fisheries and A.C.o.R.F itself and that in his own words.

"Meetings are set at 4 per year. Not nearly enough given the pressures on Rec Fishing. "

www.sportsfish.com.au/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=35193

Also the department itself has not answered or made available answers to the public relevant questions at times posed by A.C.o.R.F

This question below as far as can be ascertained has not been answered by the department

Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing
Outcomes - Meeting 40, 14 December 2006

1. a) Grey Nurse Shark presentation
1. b) Discussion of Grey Nurse issues

The Council discussed revoking Bass Point as a Grey Nurse Shark Critical Habitat site in light of the findings of the "Scientific Summary and Options for the Protection of Grey Nurse Sharks in Critical Habitat Sites in NSW Waters". This report recommends that Bass Point be deleted from the list of critical habitat sites for Grey Nurse Sharks.

Motion:

The Council recommends that Bass Point be de-listed as a Grey Nurse Shark Critical Habitat area.

"ACoRF has written to the Minister on the Bass Point de-listing. I am advised that the Minister is formulating his reply via the Department and that that reply is forthcoming."

As stated in this forum post by Neil Ryan

www.sportsfish.com.au/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=35193

So clearly this advisory committee is only lauded when a green stamp is needed but totally dismissed when it ask serious and pertinent questions in regard to recreational fishers.

Marine Parks and the Marine Park Authority

The Marine Park Authority should be taken from National Parks & Wildlife and be incorporated in to NSW Fisheries.

NSW Fisheries are best equipped and more skilled at knowing what the marine environment needs and best management structures than a department that manages the land based environment and has in the opinion of many done a woefully inadequate almost incompetent job.

The zoning in Marine Parks needs to be overhauled and investigated. Sanctuary Zones are in themselves discriminatory to recreational fishers and go against the original charter of marine parks.

There has been no scientific evidence that they work and they are virtually the same as habitat protection zones except that recreational fishers can not be in there with a fishing line rigged.

Sanctuary Zones do not protect the environment from pollution its biggest and most dire threat.

If recreational anglers not fishing are found to have a fishing line rigged while traveling through a sanctuary zone. Can be charged with "Intent to harm fish" and if found guilty a criminal conviction can be recorded.

Again where is the "Common Sense" when rules are drafted?

Recommendations

Wholesale changes must be made to NSW Fisheries the first being it should be;

That it becomes a standalone department again. With its own specific and increased budget.

Sweeping changes need to be made to its staffing structure. Other than the science based positions in research and development. The field staff and enforcement officers should if possible be made up of people that have had previous involvement in the recreational or commercial industry.

The Marine Park Authority should come under Fisheries umbrella.

NSW Fisheries when implementing rules or agendas regarding Rec Fishers should be more open and transparent with its stakeholders, recreational fishers not just using A.C.o.R.F. as its quasi rubber stamp.

Thank you,

Hayden Capobianco

On behalf of the SCFC Ass. Inc and Illawarra and South Coast Fishers