

Submission
No 918

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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19 March 2010

The Secretary
Legislative Council Select Committee
Inquiry into Recreational Fishing
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Secretary,

Re Submission to Inquiry into Recreational Fishing

Our Society is of the view that Recreational Fishing is an important component of the attraction of NSW to Tourists and Residents and it is therefore important that fishing remains on a sustainable basis. As with any industry that has its basis in the natural environment it has a footprint which must remain within certain parameters to be viable and able to recover from environmental fluctuations. In recent years there have been many strides made in efforts to maintain fishing stocks at adequate levels such as the encouragement of catch and release programs and Marine Parks with protected areas. Nevertheless as with all programs there is room for improvement.

Worldwide there have been declining yields in fisheries, some with disastrous consequences for local fisheries and economies. These have been well documented in Australia and we do not need to elaborate on them here. The common factor is often that improvements in technique and equipment have led to overfishing of marine resources which coupled with a lack of knowledge of the size and nature of the resource ultimately results in a total population crash.

In NSW efforts by the Nature Conservation Council and Fishing Clubs sharing the common goals of trying to protect fish habitat and nursery areas whilst introducing size and bag limits with catch and release programs to provide sustainable fishing into the future have led to some improvements. There is however still room for much needed improvements. We trust that this inquiry will lead to those improvements and would ask the Committee to consider the following points.

1. Marine Parks

The science behind Marine Parks has been thoroughly researched and documented worldwide e.g. "Marine Protected Areas Tools for Sustaining Ocean Ecosystems" US National Resources Council, publisher National Academy Press, Washington D.C.

These areas provide insurance against stock collapses, protect against by-catch of juveniles and non target species. By contrast objections to Marine Parks are rarely based on science and are not prevalent in scientific literature. They are often based on short term financial interests and objections to lawful control in the common interest. Our

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Society believes it is time for the Government and the fishing industry to put its weight behind Marine Parks and the Marine Parks Authority in NSW both politically and in educating the community about the long term benefits of these areas. We encourage the Government to establish a Comprehensive Adequate and Representative (CAR) system of marine parks in NSW.

We believe there is a need for a multiuse marine park in the Sydney area especially with current changes to the Eastern Australian Current bringing higher water temperatures and an influx of tropical fish to the area.

There is also a need to declare no-take aquatic reserves at Fish Rock/Green Island and other Grey Nurse Shark aggregation sites to protect this endangered species.


2. Feral Species

Every effort should be made to eliminate feral species, such as the Carp and Gambusia, in inland waterways. These now widespread feral species have a very adverse effect on indigenous fish populations. They will possibly have a population boom following the flooding in the Darling River system.

3. Import of Exotic Fish

There have been an increasing number of attempts to import exotic fish by the Aquarium industry for the pet trade. These have included large ferocious South East Asian species which are capable of attacking humans. The consequences of this type of import being tipped into local streams by uncaring owners could be very serious for native fish and anglers. So far this has not happened, but the authorities should remain aware of these threats and introduce or tighten legislation to help avoid this possibility.

Yours faithfully



Dr R. M. Mason

President Hornsby Conservation Society