

**Submission
No 973**

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
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Position: General Manager
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The Director
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Submission to the NSW Parliament Recreational Fishing Inquiry

Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the NSW Parliament Inquiry into Recreational Fishing 2010.

Southern Rivers CMA supports local people to undertake innovative, adaptive and sustainable activities to secure healthy and productive landscapes. Southern Rivers CMA is particularly engaged in the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of our aquatic biodiversity and habitats including fisheries resources. The jurisdiction of the Southern Rivers CMA includes significant aquatic areas including:

- 40% of the NSW coastline and includes the waters offshore to 3 nautical miles, from Stanwell Park in the north to the Victorian border.
- 2,972 km² of ocean of which 33% within Marine Protected Areas (MPA's)
- 55% (102) of NSW's estuaries - 5 embayments, 1 drowned river valley, 24 barrier rivers and lakes (generally open) and 72 creeks and lagoons (intermittently open entrances)
- 25% of the total estuarine area in NSW and 15% of the total estuary catchment area.

Southern Rivers CMA recognises that recreational fishing is important culturally, economically and socially to communities in the Southern Rivers region. Future population growth predictions, especially for the coast, indicate that demand for seafood and quality recreational fishing opportunities will continue to grow. With aquatic ecosystems under pressure from a range of factors including climate change, maintenance of healthy, productive ecosystems will be a significant challenge into the future.

Protection of aquatic environments coupled with effective fisheries management will assist in meeting these challenges. However, for management strategies to be successful more information on recreational fisheries is required.

Southern Rivers CMA supports the sustainable recreational use of fisheries resources within the context of an ecosystem based management approach. Protecting healthy functional aquatic ecosystems is the most efficient and cost effective way to support sustainable recreational fishing.

A. Current suite of existing regulatory, policy and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in NSW.

The introduction of the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee has had overwhelming benefits for recreational fishing and fisheries habitat in NSW. Revenue from the fees has enabled the establishment of Recreational Fishing Havens, improvement of facilities, habitat restoration, key research and communication and education. With revenue of approximately \$13.4 million in 08/09, the resources are significant. The Recreational Fishing Trust has invested in numerous projects in the Southern Rivers CMA region to improve fisheries habitat, water quality and fish passage. Southern Rivers CMA has been a willing partner in these projects which have contributed to improved natural resource management in the region.

Recreational fisheries in NSW are managed by fishing gear restrictions, minimum and maximum size limits, possession limits and spatial and temporal closures. Southern Rivers CMA is not able to comment on gear restrictions, size or possession limits as effective fisheries management tools other than to encourage appropriate investment in education and enforcement.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) benefit recreational fishing

Southern Rivers CMA supports the current Australian and NSW Government policy context in relation to a Network of Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

While most MPAs which contribute to the NRSMPA have been established more specifically for biodiversity conservation there is a growing body of evidence that supports the notion that MPAs, in conjunction with fisheries management, deliver benefits for recreational fisheries.

In NSW there are a range Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that provide various levels of protection for marine ecosystems. These include:

- Multiple use Marine Parks;
- Intertidal Protected Areas;
- Aquatic Reserves;
- Recreational Fishing Havens; and
- Grey Nurse Shark Critical Habitats.

All of these MPAs contribute to the protection and management of biodiversity. MPAs have long been used in fisheries management to maintain fish stocks, protect nursery sites and important habitat. In NSW, MPAs that restrict or eliminate specific gear types, protect fisheries habitat and nursery grounds all directly benefit recreational fishing, as well as contributing to biodiversity conservation.

Even marine sanctuary zones, where all fishing is prohibited directly benefit recreational fishing. In Australia, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is showing an extraordinary range of benefits from the network of protected marine sanctuary zones ('no take' zones) introduced there five years ago, according to a comprehensive new study published in the Proceedings of the US National Academy of Sciences¹. The review of available evidence shows major, rapid benefits of marine sanctuary zones for targeted fish and sharks with benefits for fisheries and well as biodiversity conservation.

¹ McCook *et al.*, 2010



The review documents strong evidence that marine sanctuary zones benefit fish stocks within the zones but also contribute to overall fish populations across the ecosystem, especially through the disproportionately higher reproductive output per unit area from the more plentiful larger fishes. Larval export from marine sanctuary areas is important both for connectivity between the marine sanctuaries and sustaining both conservation and fishery values of the larger fished area.

The authors of the review have declared that "overall, the results demonstrate that the large-scale network of marine reserves on the GBR is proving to be an excellent investment - in social, economic and environmental terms"² The review and supporting documentation is available online at www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0909335107

While this research is focused on a large tropical system in Northern Australia, there is considerable scientific research relating to the benefits of MPAs in temperate Australia and across the world. A long list of supporting scientific literature is available at <http://www.mpa.nsw.gov.au/pdf/MPA-literature-listing.pdf>

The Marine Parks Authority in NSW has a Strategic Research Plan which identifies research actions to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of marine park zoning and related management arrangements. Each Marine Park in NSW has an individual research workplan which is consistent with the overall strategic framework for evaluation and monitoring. Communicating the results of this research to the community, in particular recreational fishers, will help to improve education and understanding of the benefits of MPAs.

Recommendations:

Southern Rivers CMA:

- *Supports the Recreational Fishing Fee and the investment of this revenue in recreational fishing improvement initiatives, especially habitat restoration.*
- *Supports a NSW System of Representative Marine Protected Areas.*
- *Supports the use of MPAs as an efficient and effective way of simultaneously achieving fishery and biodiversity conservation objectives.*
- *Encourages the use of the precautionary principle when making difficult fisheries allocation and management issues decisions.*

B. The effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees

As the property rights around fisheries resources are complex, governments play a key role in managing access and controlling their use. Governments are obliged to ensure broad community views and values are incorporated into regulations, policy development and management strategies.

While public consultation is the common method used to gain broad community input into fisheries decision making processes, broadening the membership of the advisory committees would act to improve the quality of advice and improve broader public confidence in the objectivity of these committees to deal with resource allocation, investment of licence revenues and conservation issues.

² http://www.coralcoe.org.au/news_stories/reserves.html

Recommendations:

- *Southern Rivers CMA supports the inclusion of additional community members to relevant advisory committees and trusts with specific expertise in fisheries biology, ecology, economics and social sciences.*

D The gaps in existing recreational fishing programs.

A current gap in recreational fishing programs is the absence of agreed priorities and approaches for undertaking stocking to sustain recreational fishing areas where natural population replenishment has been impaired. Southern Rivers CMA suggests that the (attached) Native Fish Recovery Strategy for the Snowy River represents a good example of a cooperative approach which has enabled the recovery of an economically important native fishery.

Southern Rivers CMA has prioritised all rivers and estuaries in its region, with social and economic considerations (such as recreational and commercial fishing) being an important part of the assessment criteria. It is recognised that the significant environmental pressures on recreational fisheries are most effectively treated in a strategic and coordinated manner, with all players making a contribution. Southern Rivers CMA have also attempted, with varying levels of success, to engage recreational angling groups with broader catchment management issues and programs.

Recommendations:

- *A streamlined process and resources be made available to develop stocking programs that sustain or recover native recreational Fisheries.*
- *Consideration be given to providing mechanisms which facilitate engagement of recreational anglers with NRM organisations (e.g. by requiring assessment/linkage of projects under Rec. Fishing Trust with regional/sub-regional NRM priorities).*
- *Consideration be given to develop strategic list of projects/sites per region that recreational anglers and NRM organisations can work towards collectively, so that projects of an adequate scale can be delivered which will ensure recreational angling is protected and improved.*

E. ESD issues related to improving recreational fisheries

More information is required

Robust, credible and accurate data is essential for policy makers and managers to successfully manage fisheries resources and their habitats. For fisheries, this data includes assessment of fish stocks and habitats, fishing activities and attitudes of fishers. Currently there is no comprehensive species level value or catch data available for the recreational sector.

In NSW, assessment of catch and effort of recreational anglers have been targeted to a specific fishery using on-site surveys in specific location for a certain reason e.g. before and after the introduction of a Recreational Fishing Haven. There has been no State-wide survey of recreational fishing since the National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey.

Given that best estimates indicate that recreational fishers are the major harvesters (more than 70% of total harvest) of species such as bream, mulloway, dusky and blue spotted flathead, it is essential that recreational harvests are incorporated into the resource assessments of such species.³

³ Grey 2009



Initiatives such as Recfishing Research are supported by Southern Rivers CMA. The Recfishing Research 2009/10 Business Plan helps to prioritise investment in recreational fishing research. However, if the objects of the Fisheries Management Act 2004 are to be met in relation to ESD then managers need improved information not only about recreational fishing but also about the impact of recreational fishing on aquatic ecosystem health.

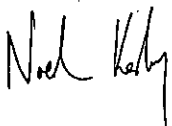
Given the rise of conservation fishing in Australia and the importance of actively engaging recreational fishing with areas requiring active conservation management, Southern Rivers CMA supports trials of catch and release fisheries to be undertaken with the objective of testing whether catch and release fisheries are successful in gaining greater conservation outcomes through engagement of recreational fishers.

Recommendation:

- *Southern Rivers CMA supports an increased investment in research and data collection in relation to recreational fisheries.*
- *Research priorities should include:*
 - *Accurate assessment of the magnitude and composition of recreational catch;*
 - *Inclusion of recreational catch data into species assessments;*
 - *Incorporation of environmental assessments into recreational fishing regulatory, policy and decision making processes;*
 - *Catch and release fishing;*
 - *Improved understanding of the impacts of fish stocking;*
 - *Improved understanding of the socio-economic drivers of recreational fishing;*
 - *and*
 - *Improved understanding of the benefits of MPAs as fisheries management tools.*
- *Southern Rivers CMA supports the use of Recreational Fishing Trust funds to enable an increase in research and data collection.*

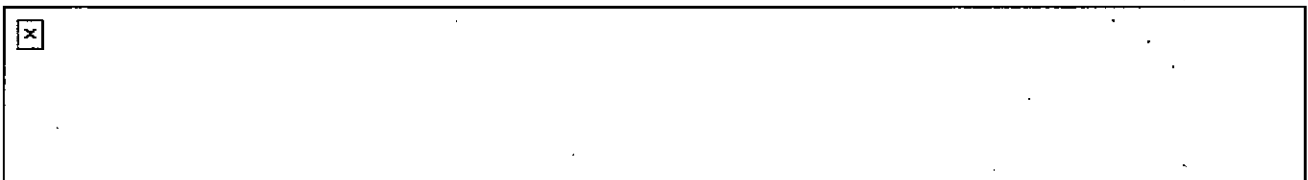
We look forward to receiving information about the progress of the Recreational Fishing Inquiry. Should you require further information regarding this submission, please contact Kirsti Sampson on

Yours sincerely



Noel Kesby
General Manager

Att References



References

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