

Submission
No 862

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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ISSUES PAPER – NSW INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of the Queanbeyan Anglers Club which is affiliated with the Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) of NSW. The MAS is a voluntary organisation primarily concerned with the development and maintenance of freshwater fisheries in the south-eastern sector of NSW. The MAS is a primary stakeholder with the NSW Department of Primary Industry and Investment (Fisheries).

The MAS has been in existence for over 70 years, participating with NSW Fisheries in the stocking of fresh water lakes and rivers with trout and native fish, maintenance of habitat, contribution to policy and legislation affecting fishing in NSW. The MAS is a foundation member of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers and has over 600 members.

The Queanbeyan branch of the MAS (Queanbeyan Anglers) consists of a diverse range of members with broad interests in salt and freshwater angling across all of NSW. The Queanbeyan Anglers welcome this inquiry and submit this issues paper against the terms of reference for the betterment of the NSW fishery.

Terms of reference

- (a) *the current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks,*

The Queanbeyan Anglers strongly suggest there is a need for improved independent scientific based research to support the decision making processes in relation to the development of fisheries policy.

Over the past decade the number of locations our club has been permitted to stock brown trout has significantly

declined because it is deemed that brown trout may have a negative impact on native frog and fish species. This has resulted in the loss of some world class brown trout fisheries in our immediate area, including Googong dam and the Queanbeyan River and its tributaries. It is particularly frustrating for our members that brown trout cannot be stocked into Googong dam as this once world class fishery has become over populated with redfin and gambusia. These fish unquestionably cause greater damage to native fish populations than any salmonoid.

Our members would like to see evidence of the extent to which brown trout negatively impact upon native species when compared to other factors influencing the aquatic environment and whether this evidence justifies the termination of what was a century of stocking of brown trout. The credibility of such data should meet the requirements for publication in an academic journal or its equivalent.

The Queanbeyan Anglers also express concern over the processes followed preceding the introduction of the Batemans Marine Park. Although the introduction of the Marine Park was claimed to have been a consultative process, our members do not feel that the views of the recreational fishing community were adequately considered or that our needs were appropriately catered for. Once again, the need for a marine park appeared to be based more on popular opinion than on sound science.

As anglers, the pursuit of fish leads us into some of NSW's most beautiful areas of natural wilderness. Fishermen have always had a close affiliation with these areas and have long been guardians of the resource. I would suggest that our members would not oppose any conservation measures required to protect our native environment if the need can be demonstrated by sound independent scientific based evidence.

(b) *the effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities,*

The Monaro Acclimatisation Society is a foundation member of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers (CFA) and supports the CFA as the peak body for freshwater recreational anglers in NSW. As a member of the CFA, the Queanbeyan Anglers would like to see the CFA have a greater voice with government and a more significant role in shaping fisheries policy in NSW.

The Queanbeyan Anglers is generally happy with the current model where the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) advises the Minister on matters relating to recreational fishing in NSW. One improvement we would like to see to this model relates to the way that ACoRF is established. It is understood that the Minister currently appoints the ACoRF members. It is suggested that organisations with a genuine interest in the betterment of NSW fisheries such as the CFA and MAS should be given the opportunity to nominate members from within their organisations to represent on ACoRF in a number of the positions.

(c) *the value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales,*

It has been claimed that statistically fishing is the most popular sport in Australia. Throughout parts of NSW communities like Adaminaby, Cooma and Nimmitabel rely heavily on the investment that comes from recreational anglers. The snowy mountains trout fishery has been valued at \$100 million per annum to the local community. The quality of the fisheries resource in these areas is a credit to the volunteers within organisations such as the Monaro Acclimatisation Society who have worked with the NSW Government to maintain the resource and stock our waterways with trout.

It was devastating news to our members to learn of the NSW Government's 2008 decision to close the Gaden

trout hatchery at Jindabyne. It was a great relief to anglers across the state when this decision was reversed. The closure of Gaden would have effectively meant the end of the snowy mountain trout fishery and the \$100 million of investment it generated in the region. The decision to close Gaden appeared to be a short sighted one that considered only short-term financial saving and failed to take into consideration the broader income fisheries generate across the state.

The Queanbeyan Anglers would like to see more research undertaken to accurately determine the financial benefit that angling generates across NSW and consideration given to the potential financial benefit an enhanced fishery could bring to NSW.

There is an old saying in fishing that 10% of the anglers catch 90% of the fish. Whether this is true or not is questionable but there is no doubt that if the quality of the NSW fishery was further enhanced through increased investment in fish stocking and habitat rehabilitation participation in fishing would grow. If the 90% of the fisherman that are said to currently lack success had greater access to well stocked fisheries participation and investment in the sport would undoubtedly increase.

(d) the gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens, and

The Queanbeyan Anglers is essentially concerned with the stocking of trout and native fish in our freshwater rivers and impoundments. However, many of our members regularly fish in salt water and recognise the positive impact of Recreational Fishing Havens following their introduction.

The anecdotal evidence of our members suggests that the quality of fishing has dramatically improved in areas where commercial fishing is no longer allowed. The Recreational Fishing Havens established on the Bega, Pambula, Yowaka and Nullica Rivers have significantly improved fishing in these areas as has been the case on Burrill, Tabourie and Meroo Lakes. The Queanbeyan Anglers strongly supports Recreational Fishing Havens.

One area of concern relates to the way in which restriction to access is applied in some waterways. The Batemans Marine Park resulted in the closure of Coila Creek to anglers west of the highway bridge. This river is now a classified sanctuary zone. Not far below the bridge a portion of the main Coila Lake is open to commercial fishing. This appears to be an absurd situation where recreational anglers are unable to target a small number of fish in the river yet commercial fisherman can net large quantities of fish slightly lower in the same system. The same situations also occurs at Whittakers Creek which is closed to angling despite Brou Lake being open to netting within the same system and Dignams Creek which is closed to angling despite Wallaga Lake being open to netting. Our members would like to see Coila Creek, Whittakers Creek and Dignams Creek become an artificial lure and fly catch and release fishery. The current situation at these locations is an example of a number of puzzling fisheries policies that could be avoided through improved scientific research and greater consultation with the angling community.

(e) ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

As previously mentioned, anglers have always had a close affiliation with the environment in which we pursue our sport and the Queanbeyan Anglers strongly support ecologically sustainable ways to improve the recreational fishery. The Queanbeyan Anglers strongly support bag and size limits and are advocates for sustainable fishing.

One area in which we would like to see further investigations is the establishment of artificial lure and fly catch and release fisheries. Currently there appears to be a policy of locking anglers out of areas that are considered to have vulnerable or precious fish stocks. While it is recognised that there is a definite need for this in some areas such as the annual trout spawning runs, we would like to see a review of many other areas that are currently sanctuary zones.

Conclusion

The Queanbeyan Anglers appreciate the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Inquiry into Recreational Angling. We would also welcome the opportunity to provide further input to this process if possible. We are grateful the NSW Government recognises the importance of a sustainable recreational fishery in the state and we encourage you to continue the good work of enhancing the fishery for the betterment of anglers.



David Hemphill
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Queanbeyan Anglers Club