

Submission  
No 815

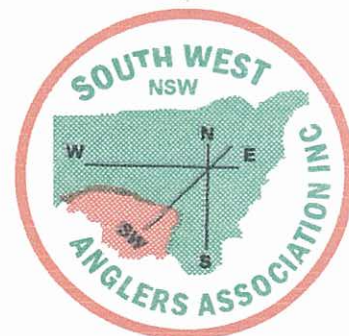
## INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

**Organisation:** South West Anglers Association of NSW  
**Name:** Mr Terry Maloney  
**Position:** Secretary  
**Date received:** 17/03/2010

---

# SOUTH WEST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Incorporating Angling Clubs of the Riverina District of New South Wales



South West Anglers Association Inc.

9 March 2010

The Director  
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

The South West Anglers Association welcomes the opportunity to make comment to this committee on issues relating to recreational fishing in NSW.

The South West Anglers Association Inc. (SWAA) is an Association of recreational angling clubs in the south west and Riverina region of NSW

The SWAA currently has 23 clubs affiliated and represents the interests of some 2,500 individual members.

Those member clubs have specific knowledge and interest in the mid reaches of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers.

SWAA has a good working relationship with the various agencies responsible for recreational fishing and in particular the office at Albury and the Fisheries Centre at Narrandera.

Members of the SWAA have both in the past and present had members serve on various committees such as the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) and the Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC)

The Association has canvassed its membership on their concerns and comments in relation to recreational fishing and believe that this submission is a fair and accurate summary of those comments.

For the submission we have endeavoured to group issues under headings and make comment on those topics.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Terry Maloney', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Terry Maloney Secretary. South West Anglers Association Inc.

**South West Anglers Association Inc.**  
**Submission to Select Committee on Recreational Fishing.**

**1. Committees and Reviews.**

- We have concerns over the constant delays to appointments to the committees such as ACoRF and RFFTEC./RFSTEC. While the terms of sitting members are clearly known, the calling of “expressions of interest” and the appointments by the Minister are constantly delayed. Some positions are held in caretaker mode for periods of several months and this does not reflect the representative values we expect on these committees.
- The composition of these committees should perhaps be taken from a wider cross section of the fishing community with consideration to upper time limits on the terms served. While this comment is in no way meant to take from those that have, or currently are serving on the committees, it is felt that too long becomes too familiar and the rotation of new faces could only deliver fresh ideas.
- There are also concerns over the fact that some representatives serve on both ACoRF and RFFTEC/ RFSTEC and given that the Expenditure committees are sub-committees of ACoRF, should some people then review and approve their own decisions.
- It is also felt that the Chair of ACoRF and the Recreational Fishing Trusts should NOT be the same person and there should also be consideration of an upper time limit on those appointments.
- The public consultation and review of Recreational Fishing regulations should be strictly conducted on a five year cycle. This should not from this point going forward be a difficult issue given that the past reviews have brought most regulations into line. In the past reviews have taken considerable time to put to the public comment stage and then an eternity to implement the recommendations.

**2. Freshwater Protected Areas**

The proposals for freshwater protected areas that have been floated in recent times should not proceed as current management practices have seen exceptional population increases in native species in this region.

The increase in Trout Cod populations are an example of how shared management and cooperation between science and recreational angling can achieve results without the need to lock up areas.

Totally protected areas would require significantly more compliance activity than is the normal in open water because the “honest” angler is still a very good deterrent to illegal activities.

Greater funding and commitment to rehabilitation of the riverine environment together with public input and assistance would be more productive than “lock it up”. management.

Increases in funding to the fish ways programs to allow free passage for native fish migration, together with a resumption of the resnagging works and perhaps some reconsideration of the Department policy on not stocking streams will achieve more than protected areas.

Protected areas will also have the impact of causing greater angling pressure on the adjoining areas by forcing anglers/campers to focus their attention on areas outside the nominated regions.

### **3. Angler Access**

Angler access is one of the most concerning issues facing recreational angling in the western region.

The formation of the National Parks will, despite promises to the contrary, restrict dispersed camping and overnight access to the rivers. The culture of random camping along the rivers is important to the people that use these areas.

The continued changes to the management of TSRs and the closures of "paper roads" further restricts access to the rivers and the landowners are understandably more reluctant to grant access due to the fear of litigation.

All the improvements to fish stocks, habitat and environmental conditions are all meaningless to recreational angling if anglers cannot access the waters.

### **4. Stocking and Survey**

More attention must be given to the angler catch data as Departmental surveys from many years back do not reflect the numbers of fish now in certain waters due to stock enhancement and habitat improvement.

Official surveys are too dependant on electro-fishing and surveys of movement through fish ways. While this data is valuable to science and management the real data in regard to recreational angling is that which represents the actual return to the anglers in relation to the hours of effort.

The results of former surveys have on many occasions conflicted with local angler opinion and yet these results are still used to develop policy.

- Review the Department policy of only stocking impoundments and research and identify areas that have depleted stocks due to drought or other reasons, or in need of an increase of a specific species to balance populations and then enhance those areas with public stockings.
- Increase the allocation from the Trust for the "dollar for dollar" program but with greater emphasis on creating a balanced native fish population rather than the want of the local club. Native fish populations have clearly increased in areas that have benefited from this stocking activity.

### **5. Compliance officers**

This issue arises every time and the same theme is evident. There are simply not enough inspectors in the State to police the fishery in the manner that the public expects or deserves.

A considerable amount of money is committed to the restocking, both by the *Department and clubs*, and a lot of research and effort went into developing the closed seasons, size and bag limits and various other regulations that anglers abide by.

However this is all to no avail when an irresponsible minority continue to use illegal methods to take undersized or protected fish with little or no fear of being apprehended.

If, as we are continually told, there are enough officers to patrol the state, they must be allowed out of the office to do what we expect of them and not be chained to a desk with endless paperwork. If we cannot have more officers, then we must have more clerical assistance for those that we do have.

- Compliance is a responsibility of the state and this matter needs to be addressed.

## **5. Gaden Trout Hatchery.**

The licence money was never meant to be spent on infrastructure that is the responsibility of Government.

The recreational sector in Victoria recently commissioned a survey into the economic benefits of Recreational Fishing to the state and found that the 721,000 fishers contributed some 2.3 billion dollars to that economy.

If this were to be translated to the 1 million plus fishers in NSW it would suggest a contribution of in excess of 3 billion dollars to the NSW economy.

A considerable amount of this money is generated in the Snowy Lakes region and the Trout Fishery that it supports, it is therefore unfair that the angling public bear the cost of supporting the broader tourism community by financing the operation of this hatchery.

## **6. Environment, Habitat and Water Quality.**

There is a need for greater cooperation between our various agencies that control our rivers and water supplies.

The timing and application of so called Environmental flows are more tuned to watering floodplains than assisting the aquatic life of the rivers. This has been demonstrated on many occasions with some having disastrous results on the fish stocks. The fish kills in the Wakool system in early 2009 resulted in massive kills of large Murray Cod that were potentially brood stock. Surely this could have been avoided with more cooperation between those responsible for the water releases and those with the interests of the fish stocks.

The proposed dumping of industrial effluent into the Murray River by a paper manufacturer at Albury also brings into question the value of the river health as opposed to the needs of big business. While those supporting the proposal say that the amount of salt is minimal, it will have impact on the quality of the water in the river in this region, and will impact on the health of the river going forward.

- Actions such as these damaging water releases, dumping of effluent and damaging river bank works such as the "Kunanadgee" development at Corowa must not be allowed to destroy the aquatic flora and fauna.

Again, cooperation between the various agencies is vital.

## **7. Trout Cod**

An urgent review of the total protection status of Trout Cod is needed as the public is losing respect for the totally protected status.

There is also a danger, given the aggressive nature of the Trout Cod, that they will become dominant in some areas at the expense of other native species.

The numbers of this species in some areas are exceptional and a limited and restricted fishery would be sustainable.

- We urge that serious consideration be given to the management of Trout Cod with a view to a restricted fishery as under present controls anglers are just angered by the continued presence of a species that they see as untouchable.
- Serious consideration be given to removing the Trout Cod protected area between Mulwala and the Tocumwal road bridge and returning this area to normal fishing regulations.

## **8. Silver Perch**

This species has also achieved remarkable increase in numbers and consideration should be given to removing the total protection that applies to rivers.

To bring the regulations into line with the stocked impoundments would return respect to the silver perch as an angling target species.

## **9. Red Fin**

While we do concede that this species is an introduced and predatorial species, it is however a highly desired target species by many anglers.

It is an easy target for the elderly and junior anglers and also has exceptional table qualities.

The reality is that this species will never be removed from the Australian landscape and as such needs to be managed in a responsible manner that can both restrict its spread into previously uninhabited waters and also encouraged as a desirable target species in its present range.

We do not see the wisdom in spending huge amounts of money on researching ways of eradicating a species that has been here for many years and will despite all efforts remain.