

Submission
No 11

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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Submission to Legislative Council Enquiry into Recreational Fishing Havens (RFH).

As a commercial fisherman with over 40 years experience in the estuary general fishery mainly concentrating effort in Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lakes and former Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mannering Park Fisherman's Cooperative, I would like to draw the committees attention to a number of problems facing the commercial sector and commercially fished estuary fish stocks.

With the establishment of marine parks and RFH the commercial sector is squeezed into a very limited area and the structural readjustment "buy outs" did not remove anywhere near the effort needed to maintain a balanced, sustainable commercial fishery and rewarding recreational fishing experience. The 'buy outs' took out a lot of latent fishing effort and left the serious commercial fisherman working just as long and hard but in much more restricted areas. In reality a lot more 'buy outs' need to occur.

This pressure is witnessed on the two remaining major commercially fished estuaries in Region 4 namely Wallis and Tuggerah Lakes. In the unlikely prospect of any immediate further structural readjustment or any in the foreseeable future, I would like to suggest a viable alternative which would alleviate pressure on commercially fished estuaries and enhance funding to local recreational fishing organisations.

I would ask for a change in RFH's legislation to allow commercial fishermen to 'buy', for the want of a better term, nights in RFH to target non recreational species in very specific areas under strict controls. I am mainly talking about the targeting of sea [bully] mullet.

In this submission consideration could also be given to:-

a) the a number of nights to be allocated per year, and at what price a night would cost the fisher.'

b) the time of year/season the nights would be available

c) the money contributed by the commercial fishermen buying this right to access the RFH go directly to local recreational fishing bodies to enhance their ongoing programmes.

d) non recreational fish targeted with limits on ' gill' net size mesh. The method being gill netting splash and retrieve. This would eliminate by catch.

e) restricted areas of operation after consultation with the NSW local compliance officers and recreational bodies.

f) if, "activating a night", local compliance officers are informed when fisher is entering and leaving RFH, and, if need be an "observer" nominated by the recreational body could accompany the fisher.

Summing up, the current system is a poor use of the resource. In April /May sea mullet leaving Lake Macquarie are be caught for a return of 50cents to \$2.00 when, during the year, those same fish could bring a return of \$3.00 to \$5.00. This would bring more fresh fish to the hungry market whilst not impacting on the recreational fishing industry's stock but providing it with an independent source of income to continue to enhance the fishery.

I realise this lateral thinking may seem a controversial move, however, on reflection the benefits gained by both the recreational and commercial fisher are enormous, being both sustainable and long lasting. A secondary, but not insignificant benefit, would be to alleviate some of the pressure on fish stocks in highly pressured fished estuaries.

My aim is to eliminate fishermen travelling up and down region 4, which has exploded with the introduction of RFH and Marine Parks. This has added pressure on fish stocks as well as fostering resentment and disharmony within the fishing community both recreational and commercial sectors.

I ask that due consideration be given to this submission. I am willing to make myself available to discuss the ideas put forward here. In the end, sustainability of fish resources is the optimum outcome for future generations.

In Lake Macquarie an increase in shark presence is perceived to have occurred since the creation of RFH. Targeting sea mullet and reducing the shark's food source would be a way of alleviating this perception. Commercial fishers in other RFH locations, e.g. Smith Lake and parts of the Manning River, would certainly agree with this idea.

Thank you for taking time to read this submission, I eagerly look forward to your response.