

## INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

**Organisation:** Game Council NSW  
**Name:** Mr Brian Boyle  
**Position:** Chief Executive Officer  
**Date received:** 17/02/2010

---

The Director,  
Legislative Council Select Committee  
on Recreational Fishing,  
Parliament House  
Sydney, 2000



[fishinginquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:fishinginquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

17 February 2010

**Game Council NSW submission to Legislative Council Select Committee  
on Recreational Fishing - *Proposal to allow bowfishing for Carp***

The Game Council NSW was established in 2002 under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* as a statutory authority, subject to the control and direction of the Minister for Primary Industries. Its aim is to provide for the effective management of introduced species of game animals, as well as promoting responsible and orderly hunting of those game animals on public and private land and of certain pest animals on public land.

The Act specifies a range of functions for the Game Council centred on administering the NSW Game Hunting Licensing System, representing the interests of game hunters, making recommendations and providing advice to the Minister on game and feral animal control, liaising with other stakeholders in managing game and feral animals, promoting and funding research into game and feral animal control issues and engaging in such other activities relating to the objects of the Act as are prescribed by the regulations.

Since its establishment in 2002, the Game Council has made significant progress in developing systems to manage hunting and hunter licensing, hunter education and game management. The Council is now the leading agency in these areas in Australia.

Game Council discussed bowfishing for carp at its meeting in December 2009 and directed Game Council CEO to seek support for amendments to NSW Fisheries regulations to allow bowfishing for carp. Bowfishing for carp has the potential to be a significant contributor to the number of carp removed from inland waters.

On behalf of Game Council NSW I respectfully make the following submission for consideration by the Legislative Council Select Committee on Recreational Fishing.

Yours Sincerely

Brian Boyle  
Chief Executive Officer  
Game Council of NSW

## **Proposal to allow bowfishing for carp in NSW**

---

### **Background**

While carp are not a popular game fish or target species for the majority of NSW anglers, there is much interest in bowfishing for carp from NSW bowhunters. As part of regular duties in consultation with stakeholders, the Game Council of NSW has been approached by Game Hunting Licence holders enquiring as to the possibility of legalising bowfishing for carp in NSW.

### **Current situation in NSW and elsewhere in Australia**

Currently the use of bow and arrow to take fish in inland waters in NSW is prohibited under the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2002*. The only legal form of bowfishing in NSW is saltwater and fits loosely under the spear fishing regulations. It is illegal to bowfish/spearfish in freshwater or enclosed waters in all States except South Australia where a bow and arrow may only be used in daylight hours for the taking of carp in the waters of the Murray River, other than the main stream and this activity may only be undertaken when at least 50 metres from all other person not involved in the fishing activity.

### **USA experience with bowfishing**

Bowfishing is a popular sport in most States of the USA

- Some States allow night shooting
- Big game bowfishing allowed in some States includes Alligators, Sharks and Alligator Gar
- Regular competitions over the summer months targeting rough or pest fish.
- Large amounts of carp can be taken in a single day
  - 2003 State Championship shoot on the Castle Rock Flowage (Texas). More than 29,000 pounds of rough fish were taken during the 10 hour shoot.
  - May 17th 2009 (Colorado) 20 teams took carp weighing more than 2,300 lbs. over the course of the day.

### **What is bowfishing?**

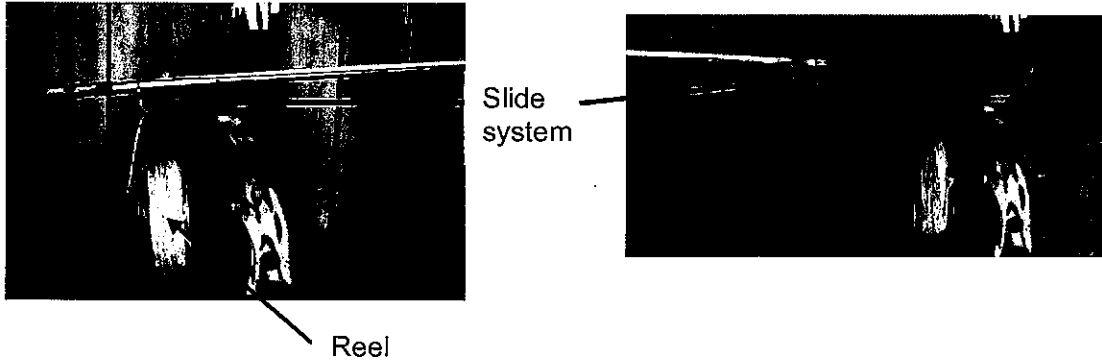
Bowfishing is fishing or hunting of fish using a bow and arrow.

- It may be shore based or boat based.
- The fish must be seen to be shot
- Bowfishing uses a special arrow attached via a line to a reel on a bow
- Average distance of shot is less than 10 metres and often less than 5 metres.



## Bowfishing – methodology and equipment

Bows are usually very simple. Most do not have any sights and aiming is by line-of-sight judgment down the arrow.



*Reels:* hand-wrap reels are the simplest reels; they consist of a circular spool that line is wrapped onto by hand and then secured in a line holding slot. When the arrow is shot the line comes free from the line holder and feeds off the spool.

*Bowfishing arrows* are considerably heavier and stronger than arrows used in other types of archery and are most commonly constructed of five-sixteenth inch fiberglass. Bowfishing arrows generally lack fletching, as it can cause the arrow to flare to one side or another underwater and fletching is not required at the relatively short ranges associated with bowfishing. Line is attached to the arrow by the use of a slide system. Fish arrows weigh between 1000 and 1500 grains (65- 97 grams). Common hunting arrows weigh between 450 and 600 grains (29-39 grams). The higher weight gives the fish arrows increased mass for shooting into water.

*Fish heads;* These differ from normal arrow heads or broadheads in that they are barbed. Some have retracted barbs that release on hitting a fish.



Closed



Open

## **Education**

The Game Council could develop an education and training component for bowfishing carp as part of its Hunter Education Handbook and Restricted Game Hunting Licence (R-Licence) program. Game Council conducts a number of hunter education workshops and produces a quarterly "HUNT NSW" information and education magazine which has a four page Hunting Guide enclosed.

Education on bowfishing could be incorporated in the magazine and guide. The magazine is mailed out to every licence holder (11,364 licence holders as of 13 January 2010), over 1,000 other stakeholders and is available in pdf form on the Game Council website.

## **Accreditation for bowfishing category on R-Licence**

Training and accreditation for the R-Licence is provided by Game Council and also by over 650 assessor and trainers who are members of the 150 Hunting Organisations approved by the Game Council.

## **Compliance**

Game Council has 9 Inspectors appointed under that *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* who enforce the Act around the State.

The Game Council has an on-line licensing data base system that can be remotely accessed 24-7. The licensing database is fully accessible by Game Council staff and has restricted access for the NSW Police. Limited access could be provided to NSW Fisheries to verify if a bowfisher had a current R-Licence with appropriate categories.

## **Bowfishing contributing to NSW Draft Control Plan for carp**

There are several areas in the NSW Draft Control Plan for the noxious fish carp where bowfishing could be incorporated to assist in locally reducing carp numbers.

- **Table 2** – Community carp fishing competitions/musters/fish-outs (angling):
  - Opportunity to include bowfishing as another form of community-based control –although as noted in the Draft Plan, this activity appears to be “ineffective in reducing population numbers or removing residual carp from waterways (and there is little scientific evidence for long-term impact on carp populations)”.
  - However hunting could certainly contribute – especially “by promoting community stewardship and providing a forum for awareness-raising on a variety of issues including the impacts of various pests”.
- **Section 5.3**
  - Improving the effectiveness of carp control by using another method of carp removal.
- **Section 5.5**
  - Priority 1: Physical removal of new outbreaks
  - Priority 2: Physical removal in carp breeding or recruitment hotspots
  - Physical removal from high conservation areas
  - ‘ad-hoc or opportunistic control attempts are difficult to justify... given their expense’ – opportunity to involve *volunteer* conservation hunters

- Use bowfishing as part of an integrated control program in key areas such as carp reproduction 'hotspots' or environmentally significant areas where habitat rehabilitation can also be carried out.
  - Table 3: Control work using 'Physical removal', which traditionally involves angling or netting, *could also include bowfishing*.
  - 'Where there is substantial local concern about carp – local community groups may wish to organise carp fishouts/musters' *and potentially include bow hunting*. As noted, "It is important for participants to understand the limited scope for long-term reduction of carp numbers through such efforts alone".
  - 'Where councils or individuals wish to undertake carp control in privately owned or managed water bodies' – *bow hunters may be able to provide practical help where I&I cannot*.
  - Studies conducted by I&I have located carp breeding and recruitment 'hotspots', which include important wetlands like Macquarie Marshes, Namoi wetlands, Gwydir wetlands and Barmah-Millewa Forest – *bowfishing could be implemented in these areas*.
- **Section 6 Community Involvement.**
    - Members of the hunting community actively removing carp
    - Carp-based bowfishing competitions
  - **Appendix table (B)** Risks and benefits of control work by location/circumstance:
    - Carp breeding/recruitment hotspots – physical removal techniques are costly and labour-intensive → Opportunity to involve *volunteer* conservation hunters at a limited number of target sites.

#### **Kill returns for carp**

R-licence hunters currently have to provide Harvest Returns for public land hunts. The Licensing database could be developed so that Bowfishers submitted kill returns for specific waters if this data was decided to be of use to NSW Fisheries. The system could then be developed to provide automatic period reports for NSW Fisheries.

#### **Risk**

**Safety;** Bowfishing is a very short range form of hunting with most shots being less than 5 metres. Due to the high weight of the fish arrows even if shot in the air they will only travel a very short distance (<50 metres) and will not pose any ricochet problems. Shots are into water and generally pointing downwards. Through the Game Council training and accreditation can be provided before people are permitted to bowfish.

#### ***Risk to other fisheries;***

The risk to other fisheries is considered to be low for the following reasons;

- Carp easily identified by their "Submarining" actions on the surface and their sucking actions with a bright yellow to orange mouth.
- Most other species of game fish do not spend much time on or near the surface in areas where they can be spotted and shot at by bowfishers.
- The potential risk to trout fisheries could be removed by banning bowfishing in spawning seasons and total bans on bowfishing in 'Blue Ribbon' trout waters

## **Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002**

### **71 Spear guns**

Insert clause;

- (4) It is not an offence under this clause for a recreational fisher with a NSW Restricted Game Hunting Licence (with Bow category) to use a bow and arrow for the purpose of taking carp in prescribed waters.