

# **RECREATIONAL FISHING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE WEST COAST**

## **MINISTER'S INITIAL RESPONSES TO FINAL REPORT OF THE WEST COAST RECREATIONAL FISHING WORKING GROUP (FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PAPER No. 153)**

**The Honorable Kim Chance, MLC,  
Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**

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OCTOBER 2001

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

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In the last ten years, participation in recreational fishing in WA has more than doubled. In 1987 an estimated 287,000 people fished each year. This year, in 2001, over 600 000 people will go fishing.

People are also fishing more regularly and effort has increased from three million angler days to around 10 million angler days. It is important that we manage for this increasing fishing effort and for the future challenges that lie ahead.

To ensure recreational fishing in WA has a bright future, a series of regional management strategies are being developed which have the following objectives:

1. Review the appropriateness of current controls, given the significant growth in recreational fishing.
2. Ensure that effective management is in place for the recreational fishing sector that contributes to the sustainability of WA's fish stocks.
3. Position recreational fishing so it can be incorporated into an integrated management framework in which resource sharing issues can be addressed.

The regional reviews for the Gascoyne and West Coast are now complete and I would like to thank all members of the working groups for their effort in what has been a complex and challenging task.

I have met with the Chairmen of both working groups and discussed their findings in detail. I have also carefully considered the public feedback provided on both draft strategies. In particular, I noted the wide range of community views expressed in the 2010 submissions received on both discussion papers. I also noted the strong support for the vast majority of recommendations in both reports.

After careful consideration of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group's recommendations, I have decided to release my initial responses to the recommendations for a period of public comment. It is important that my initial responses are read in conjunction with the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).

This package focuses on managing the recreational catch, which attracted the greatest amount of comment in submissions. My response to the other working group recommendations is attached as an appendix (Appendix 1).

While abalone management arrangements were not part of the West Coast Regional Review, I am also providing people with an opportunity to comment on the proposed management changes to the recreational abalone fishery. These changes have been provided as Appendix 2 of this document.

With regard to those recommendations on resource sharing, a number of major initiatives have been undertaken, including a recent \$8 million buy-out of commercial fishing licenses. A process to develop a new integrated management framework is also well underway.

The Government is committed to developing a new management approach for our fisheries that incorporates economic, social and environmental considerations. Within this broad context of 'ecologically sustainable development', or ESD, the issue of how fish resources can be best shared between competing users requires consideration.

Resource sharing issues are complex and the Integrated Fisheries Management Review Committee is currently examining alternative management frameworks and principles for allocating fish stocks to ensure maximum benefit to community. Until these processes are complete, each sector will continue to be managed responsibly within current catch ranges.

**Kim Chance MLC**  
**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES**

## 2. MAKING A SUBMISSION

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After careful consideration I have decided to release my initial response to the recommendations of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group's final report (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153) for public comment. Because my response differs somewhat from the draft discussion paper (Fisheries Management Paper No. 139) circulated for public comment, I am providing a final opportunity for interested parties to raise any new information or issues for my consideration by 7 December 2001.

***Please note I have reviewed the existing public submissions. Further submissions should contain new or additional information that has not already been provided.***

When making a submission, please reference the number of each strategy you wish to comment on. Clearly describe the subject you wish to address and suggest alternative ways to resolve the issues identified in the strategy. For example, as there are many different views on what the bag limit for a particular species or group of fish should be, a response therefore of "I think the bag limit should be X" is insufficient. Clear reasons must be included in your response so your views can be properly considered.

Submissions are welcome until 7 December 2001 and should be addressed to the Minister for Fisheries and sent to the following address:

Recreational Fishing Regional Review  
Locked Bag 39  
Cloisters Square Post Office  
PERTH WA 6850

If you require additional information, please contact Nathan Harrison from the Department of Fisheries on 9482 7368.

### **3. STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING VULNERABLE FISH AND MANAGING THE RECREATIONAL CATCH**

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#### **3.1 Bag and size limits**

A consistent approach using a three-tiered bag limit framework will be introduced for all regions, based on an assessment of risk of overexploitation of each species or stocks within that region (Category 1 fish require a high level of protection, Category 2 fish require moderate protection and Category 3 fish require lower levels of protection).

If additional management controls are deemed necessary for species currently in a lower category, the species should be generally 'promoted' into a higher risk category.

Where revised minimum size limits are proposed, changes will be negotiated with the commercial fishing industry prior to my final determination.

## Strategy W1                      Bag Limit and Size Limits - Category 1 Fish

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 6a in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 1 fish. My response differs from the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Working Group in that it is my view that there should be a consistent total mixed bag limit of seven fish for both the West Coast and Gascoyne Regions. I am also of the view that a slot limit for mullocky should not apply, nor should some proposed changes to minimum legal sizes due to a lack of biological research, or management outcomes.

<b>Category 1 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of seven</b>			
Category 1 fish are considered to have the highest risk of overexploitation. Many fish in this category have low catch rates and levels of abundance, while others may be highly valued for their fishing and eating qualities. Many Category 1 fish are slow growing and mature at four years plus. For these reasons, Category 1 fish require a high degree of protection. <b>(NOTE: * denotes proposed change to current management)</b>			
<i>Species</i>	<i>Species bag limit</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Billfish (sailfish, swordfish, marlins)	1*		
Blue groper	1	400mm	
Cobbler	4*	430mm	
Cobia	2*		
Cods (Serranidae family) inc. breaksea and harlequin	2*		Max. size 1.2m
Coral trout	2*	450mm	
Dhufish	2*	500mm	
Baldchin groper / tuskfish	2*	450mm*	Closed season Abrolhos *
Mackerel – spanish,	2*	900mm	
Mackerel – wahoo	2*	750mm	
Mackerel – shark	2*	500mm	
Mahi mahi	2*		
Mulloway	2*	500mm*	
Nannygai / red snapper	4*	230mm	
North-West snapper	4*	280mm	
Pink snapper	4*	450mm*	Closed season – metro area*
Queen snapper	2*	410mm	
Red emperor	2*	410mm	
Salmon, Australian	4	300mm	
Samson fish/Amberjack	2*	600mm	
Shark	2*		Max. size 2m*
Spangled emperor	4*	410mm	
Trevally, golden/giant	2*		
Tuna – southern bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye	2*		
Yellowtail kingfish	2*	500mm*	

## Strategy W2 Bag and Size Limits - Category 2 Fish

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 6b in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 2 fish. My view is that yellowfin whiting should be placed in this category, due to their value as an angling species, their tendency to aggregate in near-shore areas, and recent incidents including excessive take in the Peel/Harvey Estuary and Swan River by individuals.

<b>Category 2 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 16</b>			
Category 2 fish have a moderate risk of overexploitation. Many fish in this category have moderate catch rates and levels of abundance. Category 2 fish are mostly found in inshore and estuarine areas, are highly sought after by recreational fishers and mature at three to four years. (NOTE: *denotes proposed change to current management )			
<i>Species</i>	<i>Species bag limit</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Bream – black	4*	250mm	Only 2 fish over 40cm*
Bonito	8		
Flathead/flounder (combined)	8*	300/250mm	Only 4 fish over 35cm*
Goatfish	8*		
King george whiting	8*	280mm*	
Leatherjacket	8*	250mm	
Mackerel – school	4	500mm	
Mangrove jack	4*		
Skippy / trevally	8*	200mm	Only 2 fish over 50cm*
Snook	8*	300mm*	
Tailor	8	300mm*	
Yellowfin whiting	16*		

## Strategy W3 Bag and Size Limits - Category 3 Fish

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 6c in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 3 fish. In my view, a mixed bag of 40 fish with no individual species limits should apply, due to an assessment of lower risk.

<b>Category 3 fish – total mixed bag Limit 40</b>		
Category 3 fish have a lower risk of overexploitation. Fish in this category generally have higher catch rates and levels of abundance and are mainly found inshore. These fish have a widespread distribution and mature at two-plus years. Category 3 fish includes all fish not in other categories except baitfish of the sardine and anchovy families (clupeidae and engraulididae), redfin perch, goldfish, carp and tilapia. Popular Category 3 fish include: blue mackerel, garfish, herring, mullet, whiting, pike and tarwhine. (NOTE: *denotes proposed change to current management)		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Blue mackerel		
Garfish		
Herring		
Mullet – sea		
Mullet – yelloweye		
Pike *	300mm*	
Tarwhine (silver bream)*	230mm	
Whiting – sand, school,		

#### Strategy W4 Bag Limits - Crustaceans

This strategy refers to Recommendation 6d in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).

(NOTE: \*denotes proposed change to current management)

<b>Crustaceans</b>		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Bag limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Prawns, king & school	9 litres	*Different boat limits apply to Fishing Tour Operators – see Strategy W8 (boat limits)
Rock lobster	8, boat limit of 16	
Crab, blue swimmer (manna)	20*, boat limit of 40*	

#### Strategy W5 Bag Limits - Cephalopods

This strategy refers to Recommendation 6e in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).

<b>Cephalopods</b>		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Bag limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Squid, octopus, cuttlefish	Combined bag limit 15 per fisher, boat limit 30	

#### Strategy W6 Bag Limits - Shellfish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 6f in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).

(NOTE: \*denotes proposed change to current management)

<b>Shellfish</b>		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Bag limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Cockles ( <i>Cardiidae</i> family)	2 litres	*Protected
Razorfish ( <i>Pinna bicolor</i> )	*20	
Scallops ( <i>Pectinidae</i> family)	*20	
Pipis ( <i>Donacidae</i> family)	2 litres	
Sea urchins ( <i>Echinoderms</i> )	2 litres	
Mussels	9 litres	
<b>All other shellfish and live coral</b>		

NOTE: Abalone is a licensed recreational fishery and managed separately.

I have announced a temporary ban on the take of live coral and rocks encrusted with living organisms while the Department of Fisheries investigates long-term management options. The collection of specimen shells will be included in this review.

#### Strategy W7 Landing of Whole Fish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 7 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153) and is consistent with the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group recommendations.

On a state-wide basis, filleting or dismembering of fish at sea should not be permitted, so as to allow enforcement of bag and size limits. Fish can be gilled and gutted but must be landed in a whole form. If a fishing trip involves an overnight stay on an island, fish landed on an island may be filleted and then transported back to the mainland. The only exemption to this is fish taken in the Abrolhos Islands Fish Habitat Protection Area. Fish taken in this area can only be filleted on the Abrolhos Islands if they are to be consumed on the Abrolhos Islands. Any fish transported back to the mainland from the Abrolhos Islands

must be landed whole (gilled and gutted). Mackerel may be filleted at sea provide the skin is left on.

### **Strategy W8            Recreational Boat Limit**

*This refers to Recommendation 9 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

My view is that boat limits for new species should not be introduced at this stage.

I would prefer to consider the need for boat limits after the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group's proposals have been implemented and charter boat operators have considered the matter further.

### **Strategy W9            Possession Limits for the West Coast Region**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 10 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153) and will apply state-wide.*

- 20kg of fillet or parts of fish, or
- 10kg of fillet plus one day's bag limit of whole fish, or
- Two days bag limit of whole fish

### **Strategy W10           Accumulation of Fish at Sea**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 8 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

In the interests of equity and conservation of key fish species, no accumulation of fish should be permitted above the recommended possession limit of whole fish. On this basis Regulation 20(2) of the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*, which currently allows people to accumulate specific species of fish while living on board a boat, will be repealed.

### **Strategy W11           Closures to Fishing**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 11 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

- 11 (a) The take and landing of baldchin groper at the Abrolhos Islands will be prohibited within the Fish Habitat Protection Area during the peak spawning period from November to January inclusive.
- 11 (b) The proposal to prohibit the take and landing of pink snapper from 15 September to 30 November between Cape Bouvard and the Ocean Reef Marina should be developed through negotiation with the commercial fishing industry. In the interim, the existing closure to fishing for pink snapper in Cockburn Sound will continue to apply on the basis that the take and landing of pink snapper will be prohibited in Cockburn Sound from September 15 to 31 October.

### **Strategy W12           Set and Haul Net Fishing**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 12 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

My view differs from the working group in that I do not support recreational netting being allowed on Wednesday nights only. Instead I support the continuation of netting of recreational netting in Leschenault Estuary outside existing closures for mullet only.

- 12 (a) Set nets will be prohibited for recreational fishers in the west coast except for attended set nets in the Peel/Harvey and Leschenault estuaries and the Hardy Inlet.
- 12 (b) Attended recreational netting outside existing closures be allowed on the Leschenault Estuary.

**\*Please note that I invite submissions on the appropriateness of introducing further restrictions to netting within the Leschenault Estuary system.**

- 12 (c) Throw and haul nets will continue to be permitted in ocean waters throughout the region (except for any waters currently closed to netting). Haul nets will have a mesh size of 75mm with a maximum length of 60m and a maximum drop of 25 meshes.

### **Strategy W13 Prawn Drag Nets**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 13 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

My view differs from the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group in that I support a prohibition on the use of hand trawl nets (drag nets) in the Leschenault Estuary.

- 13 (a) Prohibition on the use of hand trawl nets between the traffic bridges on the Peel/Harvey Estuary.
- 13 (b) Prohibition on the use of hand trawl nets in the Leschenault Estuary.
- 13 (c) Hand trawl nets (drag nets) will be prohibited for recreational fishers in the waters adjoining nature reserves on the Swan River.

### **Strategy W14 Changes to Legal Fishing Gear**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 14 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).*

- 14(a) Unattended set lines will be prohibited. Attendance will be defined as “recreational fishers must be within 10 metres of any line which is being fished”. The legal permitted fishing methods will be drafted as regulations within the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*.
- 14(b) One attended bait trap per person (saltwater only) will be allowed, i.e. bait traps will not be allowed in rivers. Bait traps should be clearly marked to identify ownership. The legal dimensions of a bait trap will be defined.

### **Strategy W15 Fishing Competitions**

*This strategy refers to Recommendation 15 in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153). This recommendation will apply state-wide.*

- 15 (a) All fishing competitions with more than 100 participants will need to formally register in advance with the Department of Fisheries. No fee will be charged for registration.
- 15 (b) Competition organisers will need to keep an accurate record of participation, catch and effort and forward catch returns to the Department of Fisheries for inclusion in the recreational fisheries database.
- 15 (c) The Department of Fisheries will develop a formal code of conduct for fishing competitions in consultation with fishing clubs and organising bodies. Competitions should be conducted in line with recreational fishing ethics. The code of practice will be created under the *Fisheries Resources Management Act 1994* as specified in the *Animal Welfare Bill*.

## Appendix 1 Ministerial response to recommendations

Please note the full recommendations of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group are contained in their final report (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153).

Working Group Recommendation	Ministers Response
Recommendation 1 – Key Principles for Management	The guiding principles of management for the West Coast Region should be adopted across all regions.
Recommendation 2 to 5 - Biology, Catch and Fisheries Performance	Recommendations 2 to 5 should form the basis of priorities for research. The level of research during the term of the plan will be subject to state-wide priorities and availability of funds
Recommendations 6 to 15	These recommendations are covered in the strategies I have outlined in the beginning of the document.
Recommendation 16 – Position Statement on Recreational Fishing by Indigenous People	Management issues involving traditional, cultural and subsistence fishing are being addressed by the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy. The position statement generated by the working group has been referred to the group developing the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy for their consideration.
Recommendation 17 - Code for Recreational Fishing at Rottnest Island	Given the special status of Rottnest Island, a code of practice for recreational fishers should be developed in consultation with the Rottnest Island Authority and recreational groups.
Recommendation 18 – Restocking as a Stock Enhancement Strategy	I support the sustainable management of wild stocks as the primary focus for recreational fisheries management. There is a need for a formal policy on restocking and stock enhancement.
Recommendation 19 – Resource Sharing	I have noted all recommendations on resource sharing and the level of support by recreational fishers. I believe these recommendations accurately represent the views of recreational fishers and should be considered in a resource sharing process. Resource sharing issues will need to be resolved through either the Integrated Fisheries Management framework under development, or the marine reserves planning process.
Recommendation 20 – Low Impact Wilderness Fishing Experiences	To protect the remote, wilderness nature of the beach fishing experiences immediately north of Kalbarri, a code of practice for recreational fishers should development in consultation with stakeholder groups.
Recommendation 21 – Protection of Sensitive Habitat Areas and Fish Stocks Around New Marina Developments	The creation of reserve or no-take areas will need to be considered as part of the marine reserves planning process. I support recommendations 21(b) and (d).

<p>Recommendation 22 – West Coast Region Community Education Plan</p>	<p>The recommendations on community education form the basis of a sound education strategy that must be considered in the context of state-wide priorities and availability of funds.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23 – Additional Patrol Capacity</p>	<p>Proposals on providing additional patrol capacity for the West Coast Region will need to be considered in the context of current budget approvals. Efficiency gains from Government reform agenda may assist with regional servicing for recreational fisheries management.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24 – VFLO Program</p>	<p>I support the VFLO program. Funding for the program to achieve specific goals needs to be considered in the context of state-wide priorities and the availability of funds.</p>
<p>Recommendation 25 – Recreational Fishing Management Officer</p>	<p>I support in principle, but it will need to be considered in the context of current budget approvals.</p>
<p>Recommendation 26 – Regional Recreational Fisheries Council</p>	<p>To ensure adequate and effective community consultation in the development of recreational fisheries management arrangements, the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee will proceed with a review on the adequacy of current consultative structures and report back on its findings. Major stakeholders including Recfishwest will be consulted as part of the review.</p>
<p>Recommendation 27 – Funding for Recreational Fisheries Management</p>	<p>Funding for the future management of recreational fisheries management needs to be considered in the context of the State Government budget process. The Government’s policy is that no saltwater angling licence will be introduced in this term. The Integrated Fisheries Management Review Committee will be reporting in part on funding issues associated with finfish management.</p>

## **Appendix 2      Proposed management changes to the recreational abalone Fishery**

Management arrangements for the recreational abalone fishery have been developed through a separate consultation process that has involved licensed recreational abalone fishers and other stakeholders. To provide all interested recreational fishers with an opportunity to comment, I am releasing the proposed recreational abalone management arrangements for comment with my initial responses to the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group. The following changes are proposed for the recreational abalone fishery:

### **Proposal 1 – Fishery boundary**

To assist in managing illegal abalone fishing and containing management compliance cost, three management zones will be created for the recreational abalone fishery. These are:

**Zone 1:** Busselton Jetty - Greenough River Mouth

**Zone 2:** Greenough River Mouth - NT Border

**Zone 3:** Busselton Jetty - SA Border

### **Proposal 2 – Season**

Fishing in Zone 1 will reflect the current management arrangements for the Perth metropolitan fishery. Fishing in Zones 2 and 3 is proposed to allow for a six-month fishery. This will allow for greater protection of abalone stocks.

**Zone 1:** Six consecutive Sundays, starting the first Sunday in November

**Zone 2:** First Sunday in November until 30 April

**Zone 3:** First Sunday in November until 30 April

### **Proposal 3 – Fishing times**

Fishing times in Zone 1 will reflect the current time fishing is allowed in the Perth metropolitan fishery. Fishing in Zones 2 and 3 will be allowed all day.

**Zone 1:** 7 am - 8:30 am

**Zone 2:** All day

**Zone 3:** All day

### **Proposal 4 – Fishing days**

Currently fishing is only allowed on Sundays in the Perth metropolitan fishery, which is proposed to apply to Zone 1. Fishing will be allowed on all days during the proposed season in Zones 2 and 3.

**Zone 1:** Sundays only

**Zone 2:** Every day during season

**Zone 3:** Every day during season

### **Proposal 5 – Bag limit greenlip and brownlip**

The current bag and possession limit for greenlip and brownlip is 10, which yields a shucked weight of around 1.5kg. It is proposed that the bag limit be reduced to five, to bring the shucked weight of a bag limit

of greenlip or brownlip in line with the shucked weight of 20 Roe's abalone.

**Proposal 6 – Possession limit greenlip and brownlip**

Currently a combine possession limit of 10 applies to greenlip and brownlip abalone. It is proposed that the possession limit remains at 10 and is not reduced to the proposed daily bag limit of five.

**Proposals 7 – Possession limit at place of residence**

As significant commercial quantities of abalone can be accumulated at a place of residence, it is proposed that a possession limit of four times the proposed daily bag limit (80 Roe's and 20 greenlip/brownlip) apply in the place of residence.