

RECREATIONAL FISHING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE GASCOYNE

MINISTER'S INITIAL RESPONSES TO FINAL REPORT OF THE GASCOYNE RECREATIONAL FISHING WORKING GROUP (FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PAPER No. 154)

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

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 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 Gascoyne 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 Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

This document focuses on managing the recreational catch, which attracted the greatest amount of comment in submissions. My response to the other working group recommendations is provided as Appendix 1.

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 the 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

After careful consideration I have decided to release my initial response to the recommendations of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group's final report (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154) for public comment. Because my response differs somewhat from the draft discussion paper (Fisheries Management Paper No. 124) 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

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 G1 Bag and Size Limits - Category 1 Fish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 9 and 12 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 1 fish.

Category 1 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of seven			
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. (NOTE: * denotes proposed change to current management)			
<i>Species</i>	<i>Species bag limit</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Barracuda	4		
Barramundi	1*	550mm	
Billfish (sailfish, swordfish, marlin)	1*		
Blue lined emperor (black snapper)	6*	320mm*	
Bone fish	2*		
Cobia	2*		
Cods - other	4*		Max. size 1.2m
Cods - Rankin, estuary	2*		Max. size 1.2m
Coral trout	1*	450mm	
Coronation cod	1*		
Coronation trout	1*		
Dhufish	2*	500mm	
Groper & Tuskfish	2*	400mm	
Job fish	4*		
Kingfish, yellowtail	2*		
Mackerel, shark and school	6*	500mm	
Mackerel, spanish, and wahoo	2*	900/750mm	
Mahi mahi	4		
Mangrove jack	4*		
Mulloway	2*	450mm	
Mulloway, northern	2*	450mm	
NW snapper (<i>lethrinus</i> spp)	6*	280mm	
Parrot fish	2*		
Pearl Perch	2*		
Pink snapper	6*	410mm	
Pink snapper (west gulf Shark Bay)	2	500mm	One fish over 70cm
Queenfish	6*		
Red Emperor	2*	410mm	
Samson fish/Amberjack	2*		
Sea Perch	6*		
Sharks	2*		
Spangled Emperor	4*	410mm	
Tailor	6*	250mm	
Trevally - golden, giant	2*		
Tuna – sth, nth bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye,	2*		
Tunas (other)	4*		

Strategy G2 Bag and Size Limits - Category 2 Fish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 9 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 2 fish.

Category 2 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 10		
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.		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Bream - north-west, black & yellow fin	250mm	
Fingermark bream		
Flathead	300mm	
Flounder	250mm	
Goat fish		
Leatherjacket	250mm	
Threadfin salmon		
Trevally – skipjack	200mm	
other		

Strategy G3 Bag and Size Limits - Category 3 Fish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 9 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

The following table represents my response in relation to Category 3 fish.

Category 3 fish – total mixed bag limit of 30		
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 include all fish not listed in other categories except baitfish of the sardine and anchovy families (clupeidae and engraulididae), redfin perch, goldfish, carp and tilapia.		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Size limit</i>	<i>Other controls</i>
Dart		
Gardies		
Gurnard		
Longtoms		
Milk fish		
Mullet		
Tarwhine	230mm	
Whiting		
*All fish not in other categories except baitfish		

Strategy G4 Bag limits - Crustaceans

This strategy refers to Recommendation 9 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154)

(NOTE: * denotes proposed change to current management)

Crustaceans		
Species	Bag limit	Other controls
Prawns, king & school	9 litres	
Rock lobster	8 (not more than 4 tropical rock lobster)	Boat limit of 16 (not more than 8 tropical rock lobster).
Crabs - blue swimmer (manna)	20*	Boat limit of 40*
mud	5 (possession limit)	Boat limit of 10
other	10	Boat limit of 20*

Strategy G5 Bag Limits - Shellfish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 9 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

Shellfish and sea urchins		
Species	Bag limit	Other controls
Shellfish and sea urchins taken for consumption or bait	Mixed bag limit of 50	
All other coral and live rock		++Protected

NOTES: 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 as part of this review.

Strategy G6 Bag limits - Cephalopods

This strategy refers to Recommendation 6e in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fisheries Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154) and should apply to the Gascoyne Region.

Cephalopods		
Species	Bag limit	Other controls
Squid, octopus, cuttlefish	Combined bag limit 15 per fisher, boat limit 30	

Strategy G7 Landing of Whole Fish

This strategy refers to Recommendation 16 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154). This proposal will be applied state-wide.

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.

Mackerel may be filleted at sea provide the skin is left on to permit identification.

Strategy G8 Possession Limits for the Gascoyne Region

This strategy refers to Recommendation 10 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154) and will be applied 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 G9 Accumulation of Fish at Sea

This strategy was included in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153) and should be applied state-wide.

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 allows people to accumulate specific species of fish while living on board a boat, will be repealed.

Strategy G10 Closures to Fishing

This strategy refers to Recommendation 13 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

The eastern gulf of Shark Bay should remain closed to fishing for snapper until research indicates the target spawning stock of 100 tonnes is reached. When reopened, management will need to be based on sustainability requirements.

Strategy G11 Set and Haul Net Fishing

This strategy refers to Recommendation 15 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

My view is that set, haul and throw nets should be permitted in the region as a means of targeting mullet and baitfish. However, netting should not be allowed in the following areas because of their potential impact on fish nursery areas:

- within 500m of the mouth of any creek/river.
- within the waters of the proposed Miaboolia Beach Fish Habitat Protection Area.

Strategy G12 Changes to Legal Fishing Gear

This strategy refers to Recommendation 14 in the Final Report of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

My view is that unattended set lines should be prohibited. Attendance should be defined as, "recreational fishers must be within 10 metres of any line which is being fished".

The legal permitted fishing methods would be drafted as regulations within the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*.

Appendix 1 – Ministerial response to recommendations

Please note the full recommendations of the Gascoyne Recreational Fishing Working Group are contained in their final report (Fisheries Management Paper No. 154).

Working Group Recommendation	Minister's Response
Recommendation 1 – Key Principles for Management	The guiding principles of management identified in the Final Report of the West Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group (Fisheries Management Paper No. 153) should be adopted across all regions.
Recommendation 2 - Term of the Strategy	Regional recreational fishing management strategies should be developed as 10 year plans, with an interim review every 5 years.
Recommendations 3 to 8 - 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 statewide priorities and the availability of funds
Recommendations 9 to 16	These recommendations are covered in the strategies I have outlined in the beginning of the document.
Recommendation 17 to 19 - Resource Sharing	<p>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.</p> <p>Due to their importance as recreational fishing platforms, I approve a prohibition on commercial fishing of 100m around all jetties in the State.</p>
Recommendation 20 - Aboriginal Fishing	Management issues involving traditional, cultural and subsistence fishing are being addressed by the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy.
Recommendation 21 – Low Impact Wilderness Fishing Experiences	This concept should be further developed in consultation with stakeholder groups.
Recommendation 22 – (a) Artificial Reefs - (b) Stock Enhancement	22(a) approved. 22(b) I note that a trial restocking of snapper in the Shark Bay is already underway.
Recommendation 23– Identify Important Fish Habitat Areas for Protection	The creation of reserve or no-take areas will need to be considered as part of the marine reserves planning process and State budget priorities.

Recommendation 24 – Bycatch Action Plans for the Commercial Fisheries in the Gascoyne Region.	I note that plans are already under development.
Recommendation 25 - Regional Communications Strategy for the Gascoyne Region	The development of a regional communications strategy will need to be considered in the context of current budget approvals.
Recommendation 26 - Additional Compliance and Education Resources	Proposals on providing additional patrol capacity for the Gascoyne Region will need to be considered in the context of current budget approvals. Efficiency gains from the Government reform agenda may assist with regional servicing for recreational fisheries management.
Recommendation 27 – Department of Fisheries to Ensure Representation of Recreational Fishing Interests on all Planning Process/Committees.	I note this proposal.
Recommendation 28 – Review the Role of Regional RFACs	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.
Recommendation 29 – Funding for Recreational Fisheries Management	Funding for the future management of recreational fisheries 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 future finfish management.