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ANGLERS'

# ACTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLERS ACTION GROUP (SYDNEY NORTHSIDE) INC

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## President Message

**T**he zoning plan for the Byron Bay Marine Park has been announced and there will be a 3 month consultation process which closes on 29th November 2004. The plan as it currently stands has 27.5% sanctuary zones, which represents the largest percentage of sanctuary zones of all marine parks created so far. However, other restrictions such as no anchoring zones will prohibit fishing and certain styles of fishing in specific areas. Whatever the outcome may be it appears that the process for this and other marine parks willow in confusion as far as recreational anglers are concerned. The prime area of confusion is the use of scientific data in the creation of "no-take zones" or is it just a political decision based on an anti-fishing ideology?

From a recreational angler perspective there is a distinct anti-fishing agenda evident in the marine park process in NSW. This is not restricted to NSW, as the GBRMP in Queensland and the current debate over Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia testifies. Even Senator Ian Macdonald has stated, in referring to the GBRMP: "But we as a government understand that there are problems, there is a patent unfairness about the access to the recreational fishery in this area".

If there is a "patent unfairness" in the outcome of the marine park process, then this has been allowed to happen by the various authorities and agencies involved. The next issue of the Anglers' Action will look at some of these in more detail, but there are other issues related to marine parks such as some of the operations of NSW Fisheries, funding, representation and peak bodies.

As an example, the Marine Parks Authority is funded from 3 agencies, the Premier's Department, National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Fisheries (now Department of Primary Industries). With Governmental budget cutbacks, any increase in fishing license fees will reduce the necessity for Fisheries to reduce their funding for the MPA, so it can be viewed that the license fee, and any increase of the license fee, is assisting the same authority responsible for the blatant anti-fishing restrictions occurring in the marine parks process. In

other words, why should recreational anglers pay increasing fees for the privilege to fish when there are ever increasing access restrictions that are based on agendas of dubious merit, and for a Fisheries Department that does not support the recreational angler in the processes involved, if not directly then at least by correcting some of the dubious and false assertions made?

And what of increased bag limit restrictions, aren't marine parks supposed to protect populations and isn't there a spiel by their advocates of population dynamics and spill-over effects? Or have these been used to justify the benefits of marine parks to placate the stakeholders most affected? Why are not socio-economic studies being done prior to the declaration of marine parks and subsequent follow-up studies after their declaration?

These are some of the related issues of marine parks that will be covered in a special issue of Anglers' Action, "Marine Parks and Grey Nurse Sharks" (emailed to you in a couple of days.)

## **Recreational anglers in NSW must have an independent peak body**

AAG has previously written to the Minister questioning the need for a peak body for recreational anglers in NSW and whether the Minister and NSW Fisheries would recognize and support such a body. The Minister's reply is posted on our web site, but the answer appears to be negative as the status quo, meaning ACoRF, is preferred, as the Minister states:

"ACoRF is a statutory body established under the provisions of the NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994. The Council provides quality advice to me on matters relating to recreational fishing, including maintaining and improving the quality of recreational angling. Its role is to advise the NSW Government how recreational fishers view important fisheries management issues. While I am pleased to receive

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the views of other interested parties on these issues ACoRF is the peak body for this purpose ... and is not a lobby group.”

Although ACoRF serves the purpose for what is was legislated, that being an advisory body to the Minister, AAG believes there is a need for an independent peak body outside of Fishereis that represents recreational anglers at the State level in NSW. This is best exemplified in the marine park process, just read Gary Crombie’s letter in the next issue, “Marine Parks and Grey Nurse Sharks” (in your mailbox in approx. a weeks time) regarding the process at Lord Howe Island and look at what’s currently happening in Byron Bay – where were NSW Fisheries and ACoRF in these processes? As there appears to be little or no support from either of these bodies, it is up to the recreational anglers to argue their own case. Local representation is essential, but so is a unified voice representing the anglers of the State and of a process with which they are familiar. The question of representation, funding and structure are issues that need to be resolved, but there is definitely a need for anglers to be unified at both state and national levels.

The State Government may not wish an independent body to represent recreational anglers, and neither are they willing to fund one. But this is not the case at the Federal level with the Federal Government now recognizing the need for a peak body for recreational anglers. Both the Federal Coalition Parties and the Labour Party announced pre-election promises for funding commitments for RecFish Australia (which were cut back in 1996), and both stating the necessity for angler support and representation. The commitment by the Coalition parties is to be of the order of \$400,000 over 4 years for the funding of RecFish Australia. With the talk of increase in fishing fees for the recreational angler, one has to wonder why some of our license fee money can’t be used to fund a peak body at the State level? As an aside, it is noted in the Minister’s response giving the composition of the advisory body ACoRF he omits an environmental representative. AAG has always had concerns with this, especially this year following a segment on the ABC’s “7.30 Report” plus some other web pages, all of which have shown a strong anti-recreational fishing bias from this group.

## **Bass Stocking and Fishing Management Strategy**

AAG have received reports that NSW Fisheries have been rejecting applications for funding for stocking of bass into NSW rivers under the Dollar for Dollar scheme. Having been informed that Fisheries are now not stocking rivers where there is open access to salt water, we shot an email off the Cameron Westaway for confirmation and further details. The following is his reply to Phil Ingram:

“Dear Phil,

Fish stocking as an activity has been subject to an Environmental Impact Statement (assessment) and the development of a Fisheries Management Strategy to address risks identified in the EIS. The FMS was put out to public comment and is currently with government in final stages of approval under the Environment and Planning Act. Although it is not yet law for this year’s stocking program we are considering stocking applications in the light of the FMS.

One change that we have instituted under the FMS is that we won’t stock open river systems with bass unless there is a demonstrated need to do so. We have been visiting several clubs that have had their dollar for dollar applications knocked back this year as they have applied to stock open systems where our catch data and surveys are showing reasonable populations. We have also assured them that we are committed to their fisheries and if there are recruitment issues due to drought or other factors we will reconsider.

We are committed to responsible stocking of both native fish and salmonids, and last year we stocked a record 8.5 million fish and I would anticipate that we will go close to that number again this stocking season. Our stocking programs will continue with protocols to ensure that risks from stocking that have identified under the FMS process are addressed.

Regards

Cameron Westaway

Senior Fisheries Manager Inland”

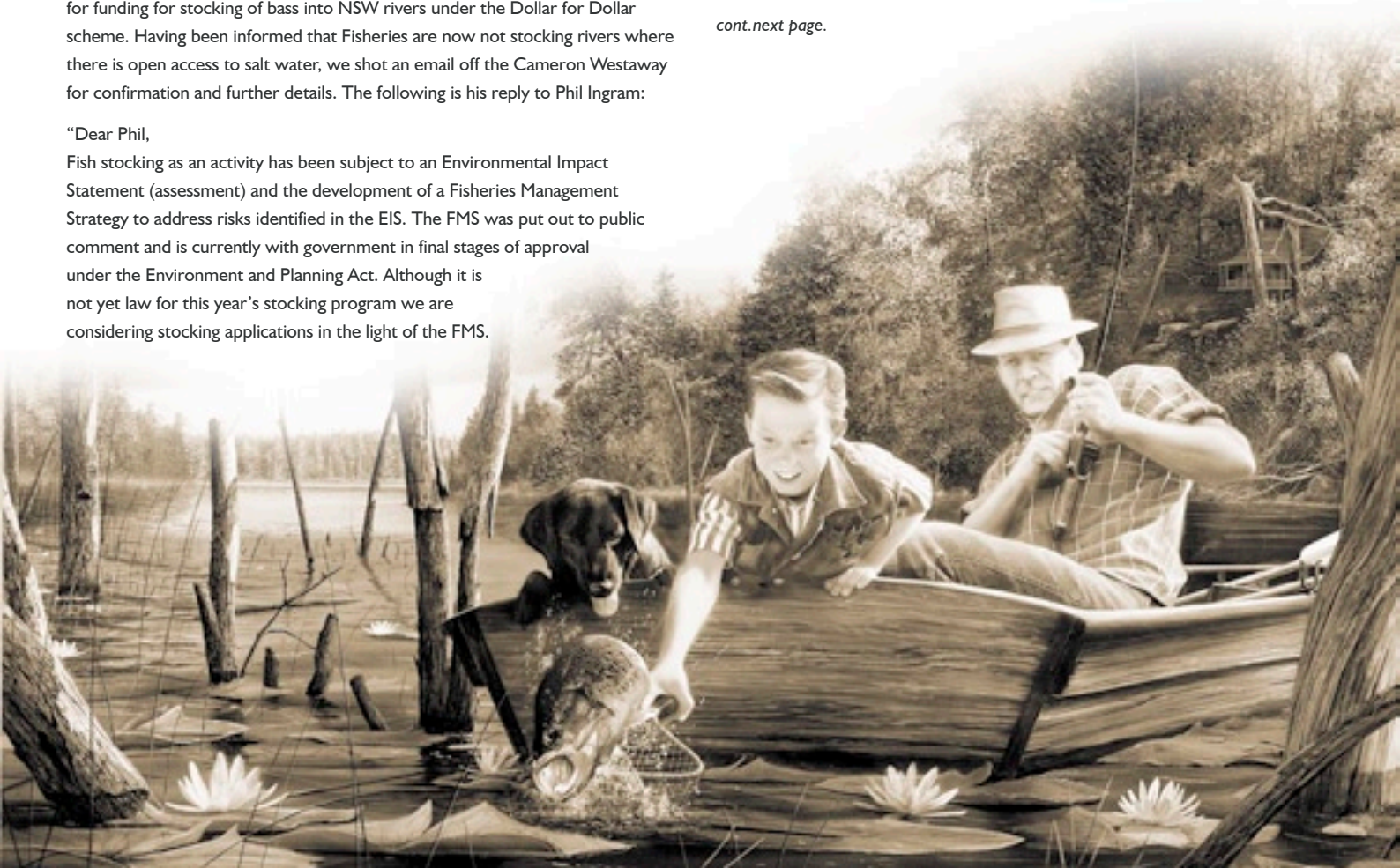
## **Recreational Fishing Rights**

The last issue of Anglers’ Action carried an email from Lindsay Harbord describing the process and trends for a “Share Managed Fishery” in Western Australia. It appears that the WA Government includes the recreational sector and the public generally as well as the commercial sector as stake-holders in a “socially optimal resource allocation” when a share managed fishery was being discussed. This is not the case in NSW where the trend for the allocation of the resource appears to be shifting towards the commercial sector, also with more bag limit restrictions for recreational fishers and rumours that Fisheries want the overall general recreational bag limit reduced from 20 to 10 fish in total.

Preliminary figures from the economic survey of the striped marlin fishery referred to by the Minister have been mentioned in the editorial of the September edition of Modern Fishing put the recreational value at \$118m compared with a \$12m commercial value. It will be interesting to note of any management impacts this and other studies have on resource allocation.

Also noted are the socio-economic studies on recreational angling being done on two coastal towns, but wouldn’t it be more beneficial for the recreational angler for socio-economic studies into recreational angling be done say two years prior to declaration of marine parks in the communities that would be most affected?

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The Minister also states that according to the Fisheries Management Act (1994) the public has a common law right to fish in the sea and rivers and estuaries. This may be so, then why aren't Fisheries supporting the recreational angler with the erosion of these rights with the blatant anti-fishing agendas displayed in the processes for many marine parks? This is now recognized as a discriminatory and unfair process by the Federal Government and Senator Macdonald.

Access to fishing areas is one thing, but the point was missed by the Minister. The concept of Property Rights and a Share Managed Fishery is about equity of allocation of the resource, and this aspect was not mentioned in the Minister's reply. We as recreational anglers might have common law rights to go fishing, but how much of the resource belongs to the commercial sector, the recreational sector, the indigenous population and the public at large?

There are several issues that need to be answered, particularly now that the management of the commercial fisheries is moving to a category I Share Managed Fishery, and there is a proposal for the seafood industry taking greater control for fisheries management through a professional management company. How will the common law rights of other stakeholders be preserved? What are the components that make up a socially optimal resource allocation? Who will decide, and monitor, resource allocation between user groups?

## **Recreational Fishing Trusts. A possible increase in fishing fees?**

AAG understands that a review is to be announced into Recreational Fishing Trusts with four proposals. The first recommends an increase in the fishing fee in line with inflation. The second is to increase the administration component above the guaranteed 10% for an improved licensing scheme. The third is to withdraw the three day license, and the fourth is to withdraw the Tweed concession.

With respect to the first proposal, the idea is to increase the fee every few years and not every year so the true value of the funds obtained will be maintained. If one accepts the fact that the fishing license is in to stay, then this seems like a reasonable proposal, particularly if the license fee does what it is meant to do, and that is benefit recreational fishing. But is it? The following are some points to consider for the "against" case:

- In a letter to AAG the Minister, on integrating Fisheries into the Department of Primary Industries, has stated "The new department contains world-class scientific, regulatory, policy, land management, program, extension and education skills. An integrated department will improve our overall performance and service delivery by reducing fragmentation and duplication of support functions across multiple agencies". If increased efficiencies are the result of the amalgamation then why the necessity to increase fees?
- The Minister has stated that the "trusts are not separate accounts of NSW Fisheries they do not require separate financial statements or an audit in their own right". In other words there is no intention by neither NSW Fisheries nor the Minister to ensure the trusts are financially auditable reports that detail funds raised and from what sources and clearly account for the funds spent. This was a key recommendation of the Auditor-General's Report to Parliament 2002 Volume Six for the year ended 30th June 2002.
- The trusts fund approximately 16 Fisheries Officers, including the flying squad and equipment based at Brooklyn. There have been suggestions that the role of

all Officers should be enforcement rather than informational and enforcement. This was one the key findings and recommendations of the Palmer Report in illegal fishing for commercial gain. However, increased enforcement would benefit the commercial sector more than the recreational sector, as stated in the Palmer Report that increased enforcement aims at maintaining "the ability of the legitimate fishing industry to properly plan and manage its business affairs and maintain confidence and profitability in the industry". This is seen as trust fund money benefiting the commercial sector more than the recreational sector.

- Increased enforcement roles of Fisheries Officers means an increase in the use of Fishcare Volunteers for the informational roles previously undertaken by Fisheries Officers. Again, trust fund money being used to support a program of increased enforcement that benefits the commercial sector.

- The apparent lack of support given by NSW Fisheries to recreational fishers in the process of establishing marine park areas along the NSW coast. It is argued that why should trust fund money go to an organization which purports to represent recreational anglers but does not support them in the MPA process. Many recreational anglers question as to why we are paying fees when there

is increased access restrictions with what appears to be little or no support from the people to whom the fees go.

- The influence NSW Fisheries have on the decision making process in the recommendation of projects for funding by the respective trust fund. It seems ludicrous that funding of \$70,000 be given to assessing the economic importance of recreational angling on 2 coastal towns, yet a research proposal of \$18,000 to test Fisheries grey nurse shark population estimates – a proposal that can have significant impact into the management decisions of the grey nurse shark, gets knocked on the head. Although this was a recommendation from ACoRF, what influence or pressure did staff from NSW Fisheries have on the decision?

The commercial fishing industry is to be share managed fisheries, with a guaranteed allocation of the resource. No consideration was given to the property rights of the recreational sector, with the Minister's comments being that the NSW Government recognizes the rights of recreational fishers, but no mention is made of resource allocation.

The Minister has stated: "The Fisheries Management Act 1994 states that, at

common law, the public has a right to fish in the sea and in the tidal reaches of all rivers and estuaries. The Government recently gave exclusive access to 30 areas along the coast as areas protected from commercial fishing under a new statutory provision". Yet the recreational angler is facing ever increasing bag limit restrictions, with Fisheries pushing to have any fish not listed with a bag limit or already existing bag limits over 10 to be reduced to 10. The equity seems to be biased towards the commercial industry.

The second proposal is to offer an improved licensing scheme with renewal reminders, greater outlets and other improvements. But apparently all these will cost more money, blowing out the 10% guarantee administration charges for the license. One selling point of the introduction of the all-waters license was that guarantee the administration charges would be less than 10%. Surely it is up to Fisheries to streamline procedures to ensure their guarantee is at least worth the paper it's written on. No matter the benefits, the breaking of this guarantee is setting an undesirable precedent. Secondly, do Fisheries know the reason many tackle shops now no longer wish to be license agents? Maybe knowing the answer to this could resolve the situation to a win-win-win situation rather than upping administration charges.

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*There has been concern shown by Lord Howe businesses on the impact that new marine park zoning will have on their bottom-line.*



The three day licensing scheme is inherently expensive for all concerned, the angler in the price he/she pays, and both the license seller and also for NSW Fisheries for the paper work involved. However, the 3 day license does offer some means for the casual angler to go fishing, so if it is removed these people will probably not fish at all unless the three day license be replaced with another scheme. One that has been suggested but apparently not considered by NSW Fisheries is the buddy license, where for an additional fee for a license holder, that license will entitle the holder to have a buddy fish with him, where this "buddy", such as a spouse or visiting friend or relative, would be covered by the "buddy license".

If NSW Fisheries require increased funding to maintain the dollar value of some of their programs, then why not reduce the funding from Fisheries that go towards the Marine Parks Authority so funding in these other areas can be maintained at a level with inflation? After all, it is the MPA that's creating increased access restrictions for recreational anglers. Secondly, if an increase in fees is to occur, then why can't these extra funds go towards the funding of a peak body at the State level for the recreational anglers of NSW? After all, the Federal Government recognizes the need for a recreational peak body at the national level and is willing to fund it!

## Anglers' Action News Fillets

- It seems both Federal parties are now starting to take notice of recreational fishers. First were the pre-election pledges of both parties for funding of RecFish Australia of the order of \$100,000 per year over 4 years. The Liberal Party's pledge is to be part of a \$15m recreational fishing development fund promised by Senator Ian Macdonald. As a backlash to the extensive not-take zones in the GBRMP, a pre-election promise by John Howard was a review of GBRMPA operations, with Senator Macdonald saying "But we do as a Government understand that there are problems, there is a patent unfairness about the access to the recreational fishery in this area".

- The independent research project into the population of the grey nurse shark, a proposal whose funding was rejected by ACoRF, is being funded by the Freedivers Association of NSW. The field surveys of selected 'non-recognised sites' between Crowdy Head and Moreton Island over a 2 week period. Preliminary results obtained by AAG has 100 sharks were sighted with juveniles being in the majority. It will be interesting to see if the results are recognized by Fisheries scientists when they become available and are published.

- A big push by conservation groups to have a 1.5km area surrounding Montague Island off Narooma declared a marine national park and no-fishing zone, purportedly to save the grey nurse shark, met with considerable local opposition. The proposal did gain support from an unexpected quarter, namely Ocean Watch, the environmental arm of the commercial fishing industry. The highly publicized push had a strong anti-fishing bias and included information that was either old data or totally incorrect. The Minister has stated that he will not be considering any proposal to change the status of Montague Island.

- It has been reported that the noxious weed *Salvinia molesta* in the Hawkesbury River has been eradicated. The two causal agents for the original outbreak were reduced water flows exacerbated by the current drought conditions, and the high nutrient levels resulting from the 30 sewage treatment plants and the agricultural run-off into the Hawkesbury. Full credit goes to the newly formed Catchment Authority, the local councils, and other Government agencies involved in the eradication program, but attention must now go to a whole of Government approach into the management of the Hawkesbury catchments rather than a reactive response after a situation arises. With about 40 Government departments, authorities, councils and agencies currently having a stake in the management of the catchment, the first aim should be to have one controlling agency or authority that would be responsible for its management.

- Recreational fishers have some thinking to do over the Christmas period. The announcement of a review of the size and bag limits for recreational fisher for the salt water is imminent, and the discussion paper is likely to be available before Christmas. It is anticipated that the second review/discussion paper into the new management arrangement for the protection of the grey nurse shark will be released around the Christmas/New Year period.

- There is to be a working party in NSW into Australian salmon with the possibility of relaxing the 100kg bycatch limit for commercial fishers by all methods other than hand and drift lines north of Barrenjoey. This modification of the Fisheries Management Act (1994) was imposed by former Minister Eddie Obeid and became effective from 31 August 2001. The current push for the relaxation of the salmon by-catch was instigated by the ProAm committee of commercial and recreational fishers in the Port Stephens area. They argue that the salmon will be used as bait trap rather than luderick that is now being used. Other arguments are the predation effects that the larger salmon numbers have on smaller target species such as whiting and bream. However, one just needs to look at Sydney Harbour in winter/spring to see the effects increased salmon numbers have had on recreational fishing with new styles of fishing such as saltwater fly and fishing from canoes and kayaks. Charter businesses rely heavily on salmon over these months. There is also the question of how will the catch be monitored if the collection of salmon for bait is permitted?

- The proposed management fee increase from \$1500 to \$5000 for commercial fishers and the share managed fisheries apparently has been scrapped. This management fee was meant to be in place of the 6% community contribution which would have been worth \$5.4m from the first point of sale value of the NSW seafood industry of just over \$90m. This management fee was intended to fund a new independent observer program that was intended to monitor by-catch species and quantity to provide independent data to Fisheries.

- Part of the plan to move the commercial fishers to a shared managed fishery was a new model for the management for the seafood industry. The draft plan for this model has been released by NSW Fisheries, and they are seeking submissions on the draft plan. The crux of the plan is the establishment of a "professional fisheries management company: that would run management

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advisory committees, collect catch data, commission research, run training programs and report on industry performance. Fisheries would continue to “fulfill its responsibilities to ensure sustainable use and equitable sharing of the resource”. The paper was prepared by the NSW Seafood Industry Advisory Forum working group in conjunction with the DPI.

- On a recent radio program the Minister stated that the preliminary results of the Trust funded research into the effects of Recreational Fishing Havens at Lake Macquarie have been announced. Both Lake Macquarie and Botany Bay were declared recreational only areas in 2001 when the all-waters license was introduced, and this research program conducted over a 12 month period aimed at testing for improvements in recreational fishing following the declaration of recreational fishing havens. It appears that the percentage of successful boat-based fishing trips have increased from about 50% to 80%, and those for shore based trips from 30% to 60% since the introduction of the recreational fishing haven.

- Out of session negotiations were completed into the NSW Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS). Currently NSW Fisheries has jurisdiction for fish trawling north of Barrenjoey out to about 80nm. South of Barrenjoey they manage out to 3nm, with the Commonwealth managing beyond 3nm. NSW Fisheries were seeking views on changes to the OCS south of Barrenjoey, with the main discussion point being “Should fish trawling south of Barrenjoey Point and within 3nm be ceded to the Commonwealth?” AAG’s view is that as the Commonwealth does not have a good record of fisheries management, and if NSW Fisheries want to bring management south of Barrenjoey in line with that north of Barrenjoey, then the obvious solution is for NSW Fisheries to manage fish trawling out to 80nm south of Barrenjoey and not to cede control over to the Commonwealth. Unfortunately this was not one of the options.

- NSW’s peak body for freshwater fishers, the Council of Freshwater Anglers, has set

up a Bass Committee with the aim of examining ways of management controls that would enhance and protect the wild bass fishery in rivers. The first meeting in July decided to support: a zero bag limit on Australian bass and estuary perch when they aggregate to spawn in July to August; a slot size limit for Australian bass and estuary perch of 25cm-35cm in rivers and streams (but no change in impoundments); a bag limit of two Australian bass and estuary perch in possession with no change in impoundments; and the banning of set netting in rivers above the bass cut-off spawning points. These recommendations are supported by many bass anglers to alleviate “growth overfishing” where the number of larger females are thought to be in decline. Opponents, particularly of the zero bag limit, point to the need to quantify the effects of commercial splash netting prior to the imposition of any restrictions in spawning aggregation periods.

- The proposed oyster pearl project planned for Port Stephens has been rejected by Craig Knowles, the NSW Planning Minister after receiving hundreds of objections from local residents. The proposal was to establish 3 leases at Wanda Head, Mambo Creek and at Pinimar. In a similar situation a controversial fish farm planned for Moreton Bay off Brisbane has been rejected by the Queensland Government. Both Port Stephens and Moreton Bay are seen as important recreational and economic resources for the respective communities.

- The announcement by the NSW Minister for Roads Mr Carl Scully on 23 Sept. 2004 into a new range of fines and demerit points include unsafe bull bars and associated protrusions, including rod holders. These come into effect on 1st

February 2005. From the schedule of fines the driver of a vehicle with illegal protrusions would be fined \$125.00 with a loss of 3 demerit points.

- In an attempt to arrest declining stocks of King George whiting, the South Australian Government have slashed the bag limits of recreational fishers down from 20 to 12 and boat limits from 60 to 36 to come into effect on 1st October. Fisheries managers, professional fishers and recreational angling groups have been concerned at dwindling catches over the past few years, with professional catches declining from 664 tonnes in 1993 to 456 tonnes in 2001. But recreational angling groups including SARFAC say impositions are directed at the recreational sector, and are now calling for netting bans in the Gulf of St. Vincent, an idea supported by the Australian Democrats in South Australia.

- In Queensland, three nine-day spawning season closures for coral reef fin fish are now in place in October, November and December each year. These closures are timed to coincide with the new moon. Reduced numbers of species

such as coral trout are thought to be the result of previous overfishing resulting from poor management, but the socio-economic effects of these closures are yet to be felt. These closures, combined with the large no-take zones of the GBRMP zoning plan, have resulted in a saying that’s gaining momentum among many NSW anglers, “leave your tackle behind when crossing the border into Queensland”.

## How sustainable is baitfish harvesting?

It appears that reports of the super trawler Veronica II heading for the waters off southern Australia to target the small pelagic fishery was media hype spurred on by some newspaper reports and Greens politicians. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) announced it has frozen boat nominations for new fishing permits in an area stretching from the Great Australian Bight to the southern waters of NSW, and Senator Macdonald has stated that, in case the Veronica’s owners do make an application to fish these waters,

he has instructed his Department to examine the current regulations for possible loop holes that will enable it to gain a permit, and to close them.

But the Veronica debate has certainly brought the question of the sustainability of baitfish stocks to the notice of the politicians and the public. Minister of DPI Ian MacDonald was quick to write to his Federal namesake, and also to ban the Veronica from fishing NSW waters. But what is DPI doing to protect our baitfish stocks from over harvesting? AAG has expressed these concerns several times, and especially the ‘log-book system’ used by the Commonwealth tuna-fishers. How verifiable is this system? At least some moneys from the Share Managed Fishery was meant to have gone to the funding of independent observers, but AAG has learned that this management fee has now been abandoned, so we are now faced with a log book system of reporting catch rates that is entirely unverifiable!

The recreational catch for blue mackerel and yellowtail scad are fairly well estimated in FRDC Project 99/158 with the estimated annual harvest of blue mackerel taken by NSW recreational anglers is 427,062 fish, with 35,417 coming from offshore, 472,673 from coastal waters and 49,468 fish from estuaries. And from FRDC Project 95/151 the catches by NSW commercial fishers for 1984/84 was 200 tonnes of blue mackerel and 50 tonnes of yellowtail scad, in 1989/90 the harvest was 75 tonnes of both species, and in 1995/96 it was 300 tonnes of both species. However, the harvest rates from commercial long-liners given in Ian MacDonald’s reply to an AAG letter seem a bit low, especially if one has seen long-liners at work catching the bait.



*The great white shark is a protected species. If one joins you in the cockpit of your boat, all care must be taken to safely return it to the water. Use a soft meshed net and avoid unnecessary handling, so as not to stress the fish.*



AAG is not alone in expressing concerns of the sustainability of baitfish stocks. Despite the Minister's assurances into the management strategy of the ocean hauling fishery, other groups including ACoRF, the Minister's own advisory body on recreational fishing, have similar concerns, as do many other fishers and charter operators, with the most notable amongst fishing circles being Trial Bay at South West Rocks where conflict between Commonwealth and local fishers has not been resolved. Will the Minister listen to the advice from his own advisory body, and the concerns of the many angling groups? These figures were supplied by Minister Ian MacDonald in his response to one of our letters:

"In regard to your request for details relating the annual harvest of yellowtail scad and blue mackerel I can advise that, based on currently available data for the 2003/2004 fiscal year, 187 tonnes of yellowtail scad and 170 tonnes of blue mackerel have been reported to have been taken. This includes 60 tonnes of yellowtail scad and 12 tonnes of blue mackerel taken for use as live bait in tuna fishing reported since specific log sheets commenced in August 2003. The situation is being closely monitored by NSW Fisheries. Please note that this data is incomplete and figures will change as further catch returns are received".

The relevant part of the reply to a forwarded AAG letter by the (State) Ian MacDonald, (the Federal) Ian Macdonald is as follows:

"As there are fewer than five boats operating in Zone D at the present time, catch information from these operators falls under a data confidentiality agreement between the operators and the Australian Fisheries Management

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**Become a member of the ANGLERS ACTION GROUP and contribute to the future of recreational fishing in NSW**

We aren't a fishing club and we don't hold fishing competitions.

We do stand up for your rights and act on your behalf when issues emerge that threaten your future in recreational fishing.

You can contribute to a healthy recreational fishery by becoming a member, have input into AAG discussions and get informed with issues of the ANGLERS ACTION throughout the year.

Fill out this form and send a \$10.00 cheque or money order to:

**The Secretary, AAG, PO Box 630 Narrabeen NSW 2101**

(for further info contact Warwick Gibson 02 9460 6444 bus. hours)

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Authority and cannot be released to the general public. However, I am able to tell you that across the three key species (Blue and Jack Mackerel and Yellowtail Scad), less than 200 tonnes in total was harvested in the Commonwealth-managed Zone D during 2003".

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the trigger limits for the jack and blue mackerel in the 3 fishing zones that cover Australia's southern waters are 9,000 and 12,000 tonnes respectively, and there are currently 5 active licenses out of 78 granted. These figures do not include the tuna fishers who catch mackerel and yellowtail scad to bait their longlines.

Despite the assurances of sustainable management expressed by the Minister there are still concerns regarding the commercial harvesting of baitfish, particularly yellowtail scad. This species is not migratory as with blue mackerel and tend to inhabit particular areas. They also have a fairly long life span of 4 to 7 years and even longer, so a depletion of stocks in an area will have serious consequences as it may take a long time for stocks to recover, and this puts pressure on populations in other locations, plus affects fish higher in the food chain.

Unknowns that need answers are: what are the numbers of Commonwealth endorsed fishers that have permits to collect bait in NSW waters and will this number be capped; what is the quantity of baitfish that a Commonwealth endorsed fisher takes in one bait gathering exercise at any one location; what frequency is one baitfish location harvested by Commonwealth endorsed fishers for bait collection; how accurate and verifiable are the figures being obtained from the log-book system; and what is a sustainable rate for harvesting yellowtail scad in a particular area?

