



New West Coast fishing proposals a ‘mixed bag’

Recfishwest today has described the proposals for recreational anglers on the West Coast as a ‘mixed bag’.

Executive Director of Recfishwest, Frank Prokop commented, “The principles behind the proposals are sound and we fully accept the need for management reforms for the recreational fishing community. Indeed, the recreational fishing community has been the driver for sustainable management of our finfish stocks, urging research on species like dhufish, snapper and Samson fish and promoting the release weight to improve the survival of released fish.”

“Recfishwest can accept the need for a closed season to provide additional protection for important demersal species that are vulnerable to over fishing.” Mr Prokop said. “This is a difficult and challenging management tool that if too restrictive has the potential to seriously affect the enjoyment of fishing.”

It is for this reason that Recfishwest strongly asked the Minister to implement a two month closure and to give the Recreational fishing community the opportunity to provide comment on when this closure should take place. Because of the experimental nature of this form of management and the lack of data available, Recfishwest is urging the government to take a staged approach to closed seasons.

“It was the recreational sector that initially lobbied for the pink snapper spawning closure in Cockburn Sound so we understand the need for caution in managing these stocks. Then when the research indicated that changes were required, the recreational fishing community fully supported those changes. We are extremely confident that the recreational fishing community would accept the need for further management when quality research has been undertaken.”

“But to put ALL of the recreational fishing access for these species for all of summer into the windiest month of the year in January will have enormous impact on fishers, the tackle and boat industries and the tourism industries from Kalbarri to Augusta.” Mr Prokop said.

Recfishwest has asked for additional species such as Queen snapper, foxfish, spangled emperor and coral trout to be added to the list of species to which the closure applied to reduce the need for recreational fishers to venture into deeper water to fish for these demersal species. The closed season would only apply to only these species and only in the west coast region.

“As you can see, Recfishwest is asking for greater protection to make the compliance easier and more cost effective. It also means that any of the vulnerable species that are caught will be taken from shallow water where they can be released with minimal impact.” Mr Prokop said. “We are not opposed to tight management controls, but recreational fishing still needs to be an enjoyable activity and the crowds at boat ramps in January will be most unpleasant.”

Recfishwest urges research into the behavioural changes that the new management causes. People will still be able to fish for species such as King George whiting, skipper, tailor, squid and the pelagic species such as tuna and dolphin fish.

“What Recfishwest does not want to see happen is that recreational fishers all target King George whiting during the closed season and have a big impact on their stocks. It is essential that the researchers work much more closely with the recreational sector to gather information that is useful for future management.”

Recfishwest urged the Minister to provide additional resources for compliance, management and recreational fishing participation in monitoring the success of future management measures.

“It is great to see that recreational fishers will get greater say in the expenditure of existing licence monies but that this should have been happening already, especially with research programs of interest to recreational fishers.”

Mr Prokop said that the proposals failed to address the issue of licences for demersal scalefish and the opportunity to link participation to a better log book system but he understood that this was a government policy.

“The recreational sector knew that there would be significant changes coming. It is essential that they provide comment to the Minister before the end of the April on these recommendations, especially if there are any proposals with which they disagree.” Mr Prokop concluded.

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Media Contacts

Frank Prokop – Executive Director Recfishwest ph. (08) 9246 3366 Mob. 0419 949 118