



MEDIA RELEASE

WA Must Embrace Artificial Reef Technology

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Western Australia's recreational fishing peak body says it's time Western Australia seriously considered the benefits of artificial reefs to improve fish stocks for the future and sustainability of the marine environment.

Recfishwest Acting Executive Director Kane Moyle recently took part in a study tour looking at world-leading artificial reef and marine fish stocking technology in Korea and China.

"Artificial reefs have been used extensively around the world to create additional fish habitat, regenerate damaged ecosystems and enhance catches," Mr Moyle said.

"Korea and China, along with a number of other northern hemisphere countries have a long history of developing a variety of purposely designed artificial reef materials that are cost effective, biologically sustainable and environmentally beneficial.

"We looked at how Korea and China are enhancing marine and fish habitat and visited some great examples such as Korea's Haejoo Group and Haeyoung Ltd Artificial Reef Construction."

Mr Moyle said the key question the tour participants set out to answer was whether artificial reefs are simply fish aggregation devices or fish production devices. Through extensive discussions with local scientists and government officials the tour delegation discovered strong evidence supporting the fact that these structures significantly increase fish production.

"It was clear that purpose built reefs achieve specific outcomes such as increased biodiversity and abundance of fish stocks," Mr Moyle said.

"There has been significant advancement in these countries from the traditional approach to artificial reefs being the dumping of decommissioned ships and tyres to create marine structure."

Studies on Korean and Chinese purpose built artificial reefs have shown that certain targeted species have increased in stocks between two and 13 times the abundance expected from a natural reef.

These results have led to large scale investment programs to enhance fish production and increase commercial catch volumes. Due to the proven success of the programs, annual artificial reef investment in Korea is expected to exceed \$US100 million in 2011.

“It would be fantastic to have artificial reef sites deployed in WA, adding to our capacity to provide sustainable recreational fishing for generations to come,” Mr Moyle said.

“We are hoping to gain support for construction of a number of artificial reefs, which will not only encourage marine habitat and stock enhancement, but can also act as a potential trade-off loss of access, or habitat loss through urbanisation and/or development.

Recfishwest’s next step is to consult with local communities about sites that may be suitable for the deployment of artificial reefs and assist with the environmental approvals processes.

Representatives from the Department of Fisheries and marine science experts also attended the study tour.

To see pictures of artificial reefs seen during the study tour please visit the Recfishwest website www.recfishwest.org.au/content/fishing-western-australia and for the full trip report. http://www.recfishwest.org.au/content/submissions/files/2644_final_south_korea_china_report.pdf

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