

Submission to the Proposed Management Arrangements for the Joint Authority Northern Shark Fishery

Submitted the Department of Fisheries 6th February 2003

Recfishwest supports the introduction of management for the Joint Authority Northern Shark Fishery (JANSF).

Recfishwest is concerned that this fishery has existed, and continues to exist, without basic management to the extent that there are no regulations preventing new operators entering the fishery and fishing for sharks using demersal longlines, gillnets and powered hauling gear.

While we consider that it would be preferable to implement a management plan or even an interim management plan for this fishery we are aware that this could not be achieved quickly. For this reason we support the proposal to implement a section 43 order as an interim management step.

However we note with concern the proliferation of ad hoc management arrangements which the Fish Resources Management Act 1995 was specifically designed to eliminate.

Management Proposals - Specific Comments

4. Gear Method

1. Recfishwest supports the proposal 4(b) that the use of pelagic gill nets be phased out of this fishery and believe that this should occur as soon as possible after management is implemented.

We note that as a result of this change the fishery will become a demersal longline fishery.

2. We note an inconsistency in the proposed management arrangements whereby, although proposal 3 states that the OCS specifies that all sharks and rays caught by demersal gill netting will be managed by the joint authority, it is proposed in 4(a) that the gear type in the JANSF will be either demersal longline or pelagic gill net only.

Following an inquiry with the Department of Fisheries, Recfishwest has been verbally assured that the use of demersal gill net will be prohibited under the section 43 order. While we accept this assurance we would appreciate formal confirmation that the use of demersal gill net will be prohibited under the proposed section 43 order.

10. Pelagic Gill Net Closure

Recfishwest supports the proposal that the use of pelagic gill net should be limited to outside 12 nautical miles from the low water mark effective on implementation of the management arrangements until its use is prohibited entirely.

12 Possession Limits on Scalefish

Recfishwest supports the proposed possession limits on scalefish bycatch (number of fish on

board at any one time) proposed for the species listed under proposal 12.1.

However Recfishwest does not support the proposed combined possession limit of 10 for the species listed under proposal 12.2. The majority of these species are highly prized by the recreational fishing sector in the Kimberley region.

While we do recognise that commercial shark licensees will catch these species on a relatively frequent basis we believe that targeting of these species should be discouraged. Recfishwest believe that a combined possession limit of 5 for the species listed under 12.2 will recognise an incidental capture and be sufficient to minimise discard wastage by commercial shark operators without providing an incentive for them to occasionally specifically target fin fish species