

Mr Andrew Hill
Indicative Management Plan for the Proposed Dampier Archipelago Marine
Park and Cape Preston Marine Management Area
Marine Conservation Branch
Department of Conservation and Land Management
47 Henry Street
FREMANTLE WA 6160

Dear Andrew,

**Indicative Management Plan for the Proposed Dampier Archipelago
Marine Park and Cape Preston Marine Management Area 2005**

Recfishwest is the peak body representing the interests of the estimated 645,000 recreational fishers in Western Australia. We are formally recognised and funded by the Government in that role and have regular meetings with the Minister for Fisheries and with the Minister for the Environment as well as interaction with other Ministers and Government agencies on a range of topics.

The habitat in which fishing is carried out, and access to those areas is particularly important to Recfishwest's constituency and we place the highest priority on preserving the future of recreational fishing and the resources it depends on.

Recfishwest nominated for a position on the Advisory Committee, as the recreational fishing sector will be impacted upon by the proposals to the greatest extent. However, our nomination was not supported even though a key consideration identified during preparation of the proposal was the future recreational uses within the areas concerned.

While Recfishwest recognises the need for local community involvement, a Marine Park is a resource for the entire Western Australian community and the importance of a strategic, state-wide outlook should not again have been overlooked.

Recfishwest supports the need for overall management of the area in which the proposed Dampier Archipelago Marine Park (DAMP) and Cape Preston Marine Management Area (CPMM) are located. However the rationale behind the proposals needs more transparent exposure to assure recreational fishers that the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is able to equitably implement a parks proposal that is able to meet clearly defined objectives. The recreational fishing community in the Pilbara is able to meet the challenge if it is treated in a manner that its importance to the proposal deserves.

Western Australian Marine Conservation

Recfishwest's dissatisfaction with the current system of marine conservation in Western Australia is well documented through verbal and written presentations to the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority (MPRA), the Minister for the Environment the Minister for Fisheries, CALM, and the Department of Fisheries (DoF).

We do not propose to revisit our views in detail at this stage other than to repeat that our principal concern is the failure of the Western Australian government system, over successive governments, to integrate the responsibilities and contributions of CALM and DoF, and the absence of an all encompassing marine plan for WA coastal waters employing triple bottom line reporting.

Recfishwest believes there is an over-concentration of marine conservation effort by CALM on Marine Parks. Nonetheless, we recognise the unique values of the proposed DAMP and agree that some overall management is appropriate.

Recfishwest objects to the process involved in planning this marine park whereby areas of interest to commercial fishing, shipping and industry were excised entirely from the park. As a result the stakeholder group on which the park will have the greatest impact is recreational fishing.

Specific Comments on the Indicative Management Plan (IMP)

1. Introduction

Recfishwest agrees that the Dampier Archipelago and Cape Preston region is “*unique....having very significant conservation values*” (pg.1, par.5). We also agree with the acknowledgement of complementary management practices that occur within and adjacent to the proposed reserves (pg.1, par.7).

2. Definition of the Area and Reserve Tenure

Recfishwest agrees with the proposal “*that the Dampier Archipelago area be vested as marine park given the high ecological values as well as the fact that the primary social values are reliant on the maintenance of these ecological values (e.g. nature-based tourism, pearling, aquaculture, recreational and commercial fishing)*”(pg. 2, par.5).

4.2 Social Values

(pg.11, par.2) Recfishwest believes the following social values should be added to the document.

- The particularly high participation rate in recreational fishing in the Dampier Archipelago by the local community and tourists providing significant social value for the local community and visiting recreational fishers.
- The Dampier Archipelago provides a wide range of attractions and opportunities for local and visiting recreational fishers alike, including shore-based, small boat and large boat fishing experiences in the productive and sheltered waters of the Archipelago.
- A strong catch and release ethic exists amongst local fishing clubs promoting a better understanding of the spatial and temporal movement of fishes within the Dampier Archipelago and adjacent areas. This information is vital to help elucidate patterns of migration or aggregations of fish within the Dampier Archipelago and between adjacent waters. The dedication and involvement of local anglers results in significant social value to a local community wishing to ensure sustainability of the fisheries resource.

4.2 Summary of Social Values (pg.11, dot-point 9)

As per summary dot-points for other activities, the summary for recreational fishing should include/reflect the “importance and value of the Dampier Archipelago to recreational fishers”.

5. Management Frameworks (pg.14, Table 1)

The description of responsibilities of the DoF in the proposed DAMP and CPMMA needs to be expanded to include “education and compliance responsibilities” as these will pose significant demands on DoF resources.

7.2.10 recreational Fishing

Social Value (pg.75, par.1)

It is disappointing to read the *Social Value* description for *Recreational Fishing* after having read the summaries for *Education*, *Scientific Research*, and *Seascapes* etc... It depicts an impression that the authors are not enthusiastic about recreational fishing regardless of its social value.

The *Social Value* summary should include “*the high participation rate by the local community and the wide range of fishing experiences and opportunities for local and visiting recreational fishers in the productive and sheltered waters of the Archipelago*”.

Background (pg.76, par.3)

It is our understanding that the Pilbara/Kimberley Recreational Fishing Management Strategy is currently before the Minister for Fisheries for consideration. The Pilbara/Kimberley review covered an area including the proposed DAMP and CPMA and the recommendations received a high level of community support following 18 months of wide consultation. To propose at this stage that the review be broadened to consider tighter restriction in the proposed marine park is illogical. Ample opportunity existed to enter the debate through submission to the draft management strategy or at any of the many public meetings.

Having said this Recfishwest firmly believes that if further management changes were to be deemed necessary for the DAMP and CPMA on sustainability grounds then consideration should be given to fisheries management changes to address sustainability issues. Any recommended changes would be subject to further Department of Fisheries initiated public consultation.

Recfishwest agrees with the *Management Objectives* outlined on page 76 but education of recreational fishers should be included.

Recfishwest notes (pg.86, par.2) that the IMP states that “*the proposed sanctuary zones and conservation areas provide high protection areas that will provide comprehensive opportunities for research and monitoring, and insurance against unacceptable impacts of human activities. These areas have been chosen to ensure that all habitats are represented in such zones, and in many cases that also include areas of high biodiversity and ecological importance.*”

Uses permitted in each zone... (pg.95, Table 2)

There must be restrictions on anchoring in special purpose (benthic protection) zones, whether in the form of designated moorings or designated anchoring areas adjacent to these zones. Many anglers feel that drift fishing over such areas will pose minimal impact on the benthic biota that is being protected; however Recfishwest agrees that the use of drop nets and lobster pots should not be permitted as these methods of fishing have the potential to damage benthic biota.

8.1.2 Zones in the Proposed Dampier Archipelago Marine Park

Recfishwest believes that the zoning proposal for the DAMP and CPMM appears to match the risks identified for each area.

It is questionable whether passive nature-based tourism, boating and some forms of scientific research result in a zone *free from significant human influence*. We believe that the biodiversity conservation benefits for some of the proposed sanctuary zones need to be more clearly defined.

❖ Delambre Island Sanctuary Zone

Recfishwest is in general agreement on the need for a sanctuary zone west of Delambre Island. The northern edge of Delambre Island provides deepwater fishing adjacent to land and is an important recreational fishing and spearfishing area without significant sensitive habitats

Recfishwest is satisfied that the proposed zone acknowledges the importance of the area to recreational fishers. Although we have concerns with how the boundaries of this proposed zone would be marked so that the community would be aware of the boundaries.

❖ *Watering Cove Sanctuary Zone*

Recfishwest in general agrees with the sanctuary zoning for Watering Cove. We point out that the proposed sanctuary zone is relatively accessible, and utilized by both shore-based and boating public. Four wheel drive tracks also lead to the area and a boat launching facility exists in the adjacent Cowrie Cove.

❖ *Searipple Passage Sanctuary Zone*

Recfishwest believes the uniqueness of the marine life and habitat in this area would be quite useful as a scientific reference point making a strong case for sanctuary zoning of the area. We consider that a case can be made for enlarging this zone to include the entire passage. The passage itself contains a large variety of marine diversity in a very small area. These include but are not limited to mud flats and mangrove habitats, shallow coral reef, and sandy spit. To further protect this area we believe that an adequate mooring system should be established for commercial operators and recreational boaters to limit the impact of anchoring in this proposed sanctuary area.

❖ *Dolphin Island Sanctuary Zone*

Recfishwest generally agrees with sanctuary zoning for this area of Dolphin Island. Recreational fishing does occur to a reasonable extent in this area, particularly as shelter from prevailing winds, however we recognise the importance of the extensive habitat is recognised.

❖ *North Legendre Island Sanctuary Zone*

While Recfishwest supports the recommendation to split this area into two separate areas and include special purpose zones, consideration could be given to a “catch and release” only fishing zone for the entire outer part of Legendre Island. This area contains diverse habitats that need special regulation. Catch and release fishing is consistent with the protection of all of the core biodiversity values for the Legendre Island area. The sanctuary zone is for protection of turtles etc, recreational fishing is proposed to be banned but other recreational activities permitted eg skiing, boat access etc. This is inconsistent treatment discriminating against recreational fishers. Restricted speed areas and anchorage controls must be defined. The provision of public moorings, especially in inner areas are considered essential.

❖ *South Legendre Island Sanctuary Zone*

We are concerned that the western boundary of the South Legendre Island sanctuary zone will be difficult to identify. We maintain that the boundary should be revised to simplify identification of the sanctuary zone boundary; this will also assist in simplifying compliance within the area. We recommend that the revised boundary should follow the edge of Gidley Island and then to Keast Island and to the tip of Legendre Island.

Recfishwest would like consideration for allowing shore-based beach fishing around Keast Island. Keast Island provides an important recreational fishing opportunity without impacting on the identified biodiversity objectives of the area. The island is also an important family picnicking spot and the provision of public moorings adjacent to this beach will greatly foster community stewardship of the adjacent, inner sanctuary zone.

As a trade-off for this change we suggest extending the eastern boundary of the South Legendre Island sanctuary zone to the southern part of inner North Legendre Island (Appendix I). Recfishwest regards this as an important amendment.

❖ *Enderby Island Sanctuary Zone*

Recfishwest supports this zone. The possible inclusion of a recreational fishing buffer zone or a catch and release fishing zone adjacent to this zone should be investigated. Provision of recreational fishing zones provides an important buffer from any spill-over effects from the sanctuary zone.

❖ *Nickol Bay Special Purpose (Mangrove Protection) Zone*

Recfishwest recognises the importance of mangrove habitat as a nursery area for many important fish species in the region. Recfishwest agrees that the actual waterways should continue to allow recreational fishing as per activities permitted in special purpose (Mangrove Protection) zones. Additionally, we request that jet skiing and water skiing are prohibited from the area to prevent wake damage and physical damage to mangroves.

❖ *Rosemary Island Special Purpose (Benthic Protection) Zone*

Recfishwest has concerns about the rationale for excluding drift fishing from this benthic protection zone.

❖ *Goodwyn Island Special Purpose (Benthic Protection) Zone*

Recfishwest is aware of community opposition to the original proposal to zone this area as a sanctuary zone. As drift fishing will be excluded from this area, the problem of distinguishing the boundaries of this zone when on water will be extremely difficult.

❖ *West Lewis Island Special Purpose (Benthic Protection) Zone*

Recfishwest supports this zoning. We believe a case can be made for making this zone larger.

❖ *West Enderby Island Special Purpose (Benthic Protection) Zone*

Although Recfishwest supports this zone, the Draft 4 amendment to make it more practical for compliance does exactly the opposite. Recfishwest commends the shore buffer for recreational fishing, however we believe the boundary could be simplified by prescribing a distance from the high water mark of the island rather than the 90° line in the ocean.

❖ *Clearville Special Purpose (intertidal reef protection) zone*

Recfishwest recognises the importance of the intertidal coral reef habitat in the region. We also have concerns about transient/tourist population usage of the area. We propose that stricter controls be implemented for this area to manage/minimise damage from trampling and collecting.

❖ *Nickol Bay Reef Flats Special Purpose (intertidal reef protection) zone*

Recfishwest recognises the importance of the intertidal coral reef habitat in this region.

❖ *Conzinc Bay Recreation Zone*

Recfishwest agrees with this zoning. We believe that there is a strong case for habitat enhancement in this area with artificial reefs. Recreation zones must become a key part of CALM's plan for managing multiple uses in Marine Parks and not seen as a last resort concession to recreational fishing lobbying.

❖ *Rosemary Island Recreation Zone*

Recfishwest commends the recreational zoning of this area particularly due to the proximity of the 'patches' which are extremely popular recreational fishing areas including boats anchoring to fish

for demersal species. We believe that recreation zones must become a key part of CALM's plan for managing multiple uses in Marine Parks and not seen, as is apparently now the case, as a last resort concession to recreational fishing lobbying. Recfishwest believes that the boundary for the offshore component of this zone will still cause concern.

8.1.3 Areas in the Proposed Cape Preston Marine Management Area

❖ South Eaglehawk Island Conservation Zone (Flora/Fauna Protection)

Recfishwest strongly opposes this zone. The basis for this zone is poorly defined and there are other representative areas proposed for the habitat types which have been described and observed in this area. Cod management is already properly the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries. This appears to reflect client capture by non-consumptive divers in this area. It also highlights the need for greater cooperation between CALM and Fisheries.

If there is a need for a conservation zone (flora/fauna protection) in this area, negotiations must be undertaken with all stakeholders and not just diving groups. We believe that a compromise can be reached and a suitable alternative area, if justified, can be found.

❖ South West Regnard Island Conservation Zone (Flora/Fauna Protection)

Although Recfishwest supports this zoning, we do not agree with the boundary. Distinguishing the boundaries of this sanctuary when on water will be extremely difficult for boaters. Boundaries need to be made easier to identify i.e. reference points on the mainland and Regnard Island, not simply right angles and arbitrary lines in the ocean.

We believe that shore fishing should be permitted around South West Regnard Island. We suggest that a special purpose recreational zone could be established outside the proposed area to provide a buffer to the conservation zone (flora/fauna protection) and ensure that any spill-over benefits are not removed through fish trapping adjacent to the reserve. As an alternative, "catch and release" fishing only may be allowed in the special purpose buffer zone. This is an important and significant area within this marine park.

❖ Maitland Conservation (Mangrove Protection) Area

Recfishwest agrees that recreational crabbing and recreational line fishing should be allowed from boats only within this special purpose area. Commercial crabbing and other commercial fishing should not be permitted. Recreational crabbing from boats does not compromise the biodiversity objectives of this zone.

Conclusion

Recfishwest strongly objects to the process involved in planning this marine park whereby areas of interest to commercial fishing, shipping and industry were excised entirely from the park. As a result the stakeholder group on which the park will have the greatest impact is recreational fishing. Recreational fishers were denied the benefit of the knowledge and organisation of their peak body, Recfishwest, on the preliminary advisory committee.

Recfishwest believes that the problem of managing the many complex boundaries of zones in the park will prove an expensive nightmare for compliance agencies and users alike.

Although recognition is given to fisheries management tools, the IMP does not acknowledge the advances in recreational fisheries management or the proactive nature of recreational fishers as advocates of the sustainability of the resource.

The IMP fails to adequately express the social value of recreational fishing to visiting and local recreational fishers. The lack of anchorage management plans is also a significant concern.

More emphasis must be placed on how the park will be maintained and monitored, what resources will need to be provided and by whom. This should be made part of this draft. Zoning in itself is not the only solution. There is a need to recognise that zoning is only one of the management tools available for natural resource management and that other management tools have been successful and strongly supported where there has been meaningful input into their development. Without solutions to these considerations the proposed Marine Park will lack community credibility.

Although Recfishwest strongly opposes the marine conservation strategy currently pursued by MPRA/CALM we agree that the unique characteristics of the DAMP warrant protection by overall management. However, as pointed out in our covering letter we think that this particular marine planning and management process has been carried out badly. It is our view that marine management either as a separate authority or as a CALM Marine Management Area would have been more appropriate.

Recfishwest has made a number of specific comments on the proposed zoning changes. In making these comments we have made these suggestions towards producing what we believe to be a reasonable outcome for the whole community and at the same time avoiding any risk at all to biodiversity in the long term.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office on 9387 7864 should further information or clarification be required.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Prokop
Executive Director

31st May, 2005

CC Hon Jon Ford, Minister for Fisheries
Dr Judy Edwards, Minister for the Environment
Mr Peter Rogers, Executive Director, Department of Fisheries
Mr Doug Bathgate, Chair, Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

APPENDIX I

DRAFT 4

The advisory committee considered the community feedback received and made amendments to the proposed zoning scheme at their 6-7 February 2003 meeting.

