

Executive Officer
Recreational Marron Fishery Review
c/- Recreational Fisheries Program
Department of Fisheries
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A QUALITY FUTURE FOR RECREATIONAL MARRON FISHERY

Recfishwest is the peak body representing the interests of the estimated 643,000 recreational fishers in Western Australia. We are formally recognised and funded by the Government in that role. Recfishwest places the highest priority on preserving the future of recreational fishing and the resources it depends on.

Recfishwest's comments and recommendations to the proposals developed in this management paper are listed below.

Proposal 1 – Priorities for research

Recfishwest strongly supports the areas that have been listed to take priority for future marron research.

Proposal 2 – Target catch range

Recfishwest supports a target catch range between 12 and 17 tonnes. However, we note that there has already been a significant biological dividend paid to the resource by virtue of the previous restrictive management. The methodology for measuring the recreational catch must be carefully reviewed given the vast alterations in catch estimates which have been presented by the Department of Fisheries for rock lobster and abalone in the Integrated Fisheries Management process.

In addition, it must be recognised that environmental factors such as salinization, acid sulphate leachate, deforestation, erosion and sedimentation, a lack of environmental flows, loss of access through draconian policies and excessive damming of streams is contributing to a far greater extent to the problems facing marron stocks than recreational fishing. We can see little or no evidence of government action on these fundamental problems which are conspiring to eliminate the historical and culturally significant (from both indigenous and European perspectives) activity which is marron fishing.

Recfishwest demands that an action plan be developed which will protect the basic integrity of the marron stocks without just banning the activity which seems to be this government's response to aquatic resource management.

Proposal 3 – Season duration

Recfishwest supports an increase in the season duration to a 37 day season that encompasses two complete dark moon phases. The catch rates and participation should be carefully monitored and if the catch exceeds 17 tonnes it should be reduced automatically. Marron fishers should be informed that this will occur when the season is changed.

Proposal 4 – Season start date

Recfishwest supports a marron season that will start in January. Recfishwest appreciates the research and consideration which the RFFSS has put into investigating alternative season dates.

Overall, the possibility of poor weather over Easter and changing water levels would make an Easter starting start impractical. The current January start provides the best conditions for fishing and incorporates a time of year when a lot of people are holidaying in the south west.

Proposal 5 – Marron possession limit

Recfishwest supports a possession limit of 20 marron per person, but notes that this should not apply to a person's place of residence.

Proposal 6 – Minimum legal size limit

Recfishwest supports an increase in the minimum legal size limit to 85 mm.

Proposal 7 – Hutt River

Recfishwest supports the establishment of Hutt River as a 'Trophy Water', with a bag limit of five marron and a minimum legal size limit of 90 mm.

Proposal 8 – Warren River

Recfishwest supports the removal of the 'snare only' requirement on the Warren River within the Warren National Park. This area will require a greater compliance presence.

Proposal 9 – Donnelly River

Recfishwest supports permitting people to carry marron drop nets and scoop nets by boats to the area they intend to fish down stream of the 'Boat Landing' only section of the Donnelly River. A special education campaign will be required when this is introduced as this proposal represents an exception to a long standing principle concerning carrying marron gear on boats. A greater compliance

presence will be required and ongoing breaches will cause this concession to be reviewed.

Proposal 10 – Shannon River

Recfishwest supports the closure of Shannon River as an unfished reference for future marron research. Indeed Recfishwest supports banning all fishing in this catchment for an initial 5 year period on the clear proviso that it is recognised that the recreational fishing sector is driving the process, that the Department of Fisheries maintains a close involvement in the management of the catchment and research projects and that this is not seen as a precedent for any additional river closures.

Proposal 11 – Management of dams

Recfishwest supports the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Fisheries and the relevant water management authorities. Given the appalling behaviour with respect to Logue Brook Dam the MOU must be extremely specific and have penalties for the Water Corporation failing to adhere to the protocols and outcomes.

The MOU must address consultative measures, access, fish down provisions for closed dams' maintenance and research programs to address the impact of recreational fishing on water quality and biodiversity in fished and unfished dams.

Proposal 12 – Restocking marron as a stock enhancement strategy

Recfishwest strongly supports the use of restocking as a measure to aid in the recovery of depleted stocks of marron. Indeed we believe that this is an essential component of compensation for the loss of dams where marron fishing was historically practised and where, for dubious reasons, it is now prohibited.

Proposal 13 – Artificial habitats

Recfishwest supports the establishment of artificial habitat in dams identified to be lacking in natural habitat. The design and monitoring of these projects must be undertaken in consultation with Recfishwest, the RFFSS or associated committee and the Department of Fisheries. We believe that this is an essential component of compensation for the loss of dams where marron fishing was historically practised and where, for dubious reasons, it is now prohibited.

Proposal 14 – State freshwater faunal emblem

Recfishwest agrees that marron should be declared as a State freshwater faunal emblem.

Proposal 15 – Community education plan for the recreational marron fishery

Recfishwest supports a community education plan to keep the recreational fishing community informed of management changes to the fishery. Provision of marron gauges for the new size limit is considered an essential component of this strategy.

Proposal 16 – Field management and compliance

Recfishwest supports an increase in the effort of the Department of Fisheries towards field compliance and education both during and outside of the marron season. The effectiveness of the management plan will hinge on the Department's allocation of resources to the marron fishery. The plan must include compensatory mechanisms for the failure to provide adequate compliance presence in this fishery.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this draft management plan. We commend the RFFSS for its consideration of the issues and the preparation of this management paper.

If you require further information, please feel free to contact me directly on 9246 3366.

Yours sincerely

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Recfishwest

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Cc. Minister for Fisheries
Executive Director – Fisheries
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