

Jody Neiman  
Strategen  
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Dear Ms Neiman

**Re: LOGUE BROOK DAM RECREATIONAL FISHING ACCESS**

Recfishwest is recognized by government as representing the interests of the estimated 643,000 recreational fishers in Western Australia. Recfishwest prides itself on its ability to negotiate outcomes on behalf of its constituency in a reasonable and responsible manner.

Unfortunately we are extremely concerned at the poor consultation processes and seemingly proscribed outcomes that have been presented to us as a result of the proposal to make Logue Brook Dam a drinking water supply.

Recfishwest wishes to express its dissatisfaction at the consultative framework and grossly inadequate timeframes which have been imposed upon the wider recreational angling community. Strategen, which was given the task of organizing the consultative framework, has failed to recognize the extent of the concern which recreational fishers, as the largest single impacted user group at Logue Brook, would have with being denied their historical access to this site.

One of Recfishwest's prime concerns at the wider scale is the erosion of recreational angling access. This is of particular concern where our limited freshwater resources are concerned. The Water Corporation and Department of Environment have already denied access to Stirling and Samson Brook dams and they are planning, with limited community engagement, to close virtually all artificial impoundments in the foreseeable future. This is totally unacceptable.

The government's own Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Sub-Committee (RFFSS) committee has recently released a discussion paper containing a draft management strategy aimed at ensuring a quality future of the recreational marron fishery. This discussion paper highlights the impact that the loss of access to drinking water dams has had on the recreational marron fishery and concludes that any additional closures would seriously threaten the future of this historic and unique pastime.

Particularly concerning is the fact that our freshwater resources continue to deteriorate in quality, due in no small part to the inability of the Department of Environment to demonstrate leadership, planning or compliance in its watchdog role on behalf of the community. Salinity, pollution, erosion, deforestation, sewerage, chemical pollution, over-irrigating and acid sulphate leachate are not being managed. The result is that recreational fishing access is being compromised, and by the very

agency that is apportioning sustainability risk squarely on the recreational fishing activity which they propose to ban.

As a direct result of these management failures, the range and abundance of marron has been greatly reduced along its eastern edge. The move towards banning all public access to all impoundments along the scarp has greatly affected access and amenity from the west. The net result is that through no fault of the fishers themselves, the uniquely and culturally significant Western Australian marron fishing activity is under severe threat. This is unacceptable.

Marron are one of the world's largest freshwater crustaceans which are endemic to the State's southwest and the recreational marron fishery, especially with the 'bushman's snare' is an activity that holds a unique cultural value to generations of Western Australians. At present, Waroona, Harvey, Wellington and Logue Brook Dams are an extremely important component of the recreational marron dam fishery (especially to family groups) and over 20,000 recreational licences are issued which enable fishers to fish for marron and freshwater finfish these waters each year.

Over recent years, water bodies which were once major components of the recreational marron fishery such as Samson, Harris and Stirling Dams and the Harvey River upstream of Stirling Dam, have been progressively closed to recreational fishing and brought on line as drinking water source areas.

To be notified by letter on 11 November with less than two weeks to provide comment on another proposal that is being promoted by government departments which results in a loss of fishing is grossly inappropriate according to the government's own 'Consulting Citizens' document. Fortunately a meeting was able to be held to discuss the matter, but it was clear to all in attendance that the Department of Environment representatives had no interest whatsoever in discussing compromises or potential management solutions that would allow limited or controlled recreational angling in Logue Brook. The dogmatic and uncompromising approach of these officers is in direct conflict with their own policies which clearly state that historical practices such as fishing should be accommodated wherever possible.

Indeed, the Brunswick protection plan states: "**Current activities that involve only minimal contact with the water such as fishing pose a lesser risk to water quality. These activities are considered acceptable to continue in the catchment with management conditions.**"

Recfishwest considers that this position is reasonable, responsible and defensible from a management perspective. We would be pleased to work with the proponent to develop a management plan that allows controlled and low impact recreational fishing and marroning. However, we feel that we are in a desperate struggle with myopic bureaucrats who are unwilling to accept that the community can want quality drinking water but still be allowed to fish in those waters.

Ironically, every other jurisdiction in Australia allows recreational fishing in some or most drinking water supplies other than Western Australia. In other parts of the nation, recreational fishing is permitted in public drinking water dams including Hinze Dam in Queensland (Gold Coast) and Googong Dam in Canberra. In these impoundments several strategies have been employed to minimise any adverse impact on water quality. The concept of 'risk management' rather than 'risk avoidance' in public drinking water source areas in Western Australia needs to be considered as a strategy.

Risk management could include the following measures for recreational activities;

- controlled access within public drinking water source areas;
- restricted access to licence holders only (sign in and sign out basis);
- public amenities and waste collection points below the dam;
- only allowing the use of naturally occurring baits or artificial lures;
- prohibiting the use of petrol powered vessels;
- measures supported by a comprehensive education program;
- ongoing water quality testing, and
- secondary or tertiary water treatment as a safeguard.

Incredibly, Alcoa is allowed to drive their mining trucks ACROSS Samson Brook Dam and to mine in the immediate vicinity. This company was recently found guilty of environmental breaches yet continues to work over the top of a drinking water supply that is considered too sensitive to allow even day time fly fishing activities. Similarly, timber workers are allowed to operate in the buffer zones. Their human faecal matter is not formally managed. The hypocrisy is difficult to comprehend or explain to any impartial observer.

Meanwhile, country town after country town withers through a lack of income streams which carefully managed aquatic based tourism could generate. The loss of access to Logue Brook, Harvey and Wellington Dam and the Collie River upstream of Wellington Dam would not only impact significantly on local tourism but could eventually lead to the recreational marron fishery being permanently closed due to the fragile state of river systems in the southwest.

Recfishwest is currently working closely with Collie Shire, the local member and anglers to develop tourism opportunities that are likely to be destroyed when Wellington Dam, with its poor water quality is also closed to public access.

A considerable component of the recreational freshwater angling licence revenue is directed towards stocking Logue Brook Dam with trout fry. Fry from recent stocking events are expected to grow through and enter the fishery within a few years. Banning recreational fishing may result in a waste of public resources if recreational access to the dam is no longer permitted.

The Department of Environment's state-wide policy No. 13 '*Policy and Guidelines of Recreation within Public Drinking Water Source Areas on Crown Land*' stipulates that recreational fishing may be allowed in these areas if the activity has been approved historically and the risk to the resource is accepted following community consultation (Table 2. Compatibility of water based recreational activities). It is important that this option is considered in order to alleviate the disenfranchisement of freshwater fishers in this state.

Recreational marron and trout fishing has been a compatible activity on Logue Brook Dam since its construction in the 1950's. It has also been demonstrated that the presence of responsible recreational fishers acts as a deterrent to undesirable behaviour and activities that are known to occur in catchments where recreational fishing is not permitted. The impact on water quality of over 50 years of largely unmanaged angling and marroning access on Stirling Dam has been so small as to be incapable of being measured.

The Department of Environment state that the risk from recreational fishing is small, but that it is unacceptable. If the Department of Environment were truly concerned about the real risk of any form of contamination, they would be urging real water treatment responses as the risk with and without recreational fishing access is virtually identical (in the order of 1:10,000,000,000 without fishing versus 1.05:10,000,000,000 with this activity). In both cases the risk is small but the impact potentially extremely large. To ignore the wider risk puts all who use the public drinking water potentially at an almost identical (but unmanaged) risk.

The recreational fishing sector is tired of being held responsible for the failure of government to adequately manage the environment of this state. It is an easy and cheap option to ban fishing wherever possible rather than manage this and other similar activities. This proposal represents another attempt to ban recreational fishing without engaging the users to determine if an outcomes based management regime were possible.

Recfishwest is calling upon the Premier to act on behalf of the wider community and intervene in this inconsistent and unacceptable victimisation of recreational fishing.

Recfishwest supports the RFFSS in promoting Logue Brook Dam as an ideal location for the trial of management strategy that allows for the recreational activities such as fishing to co-exist in a public drinking water source area. Logue Brook Dam is readily accessible, already has some public amenities, has a long history of successful fishing and marroning and is a relatively open reservoir where recreational fishing activities could be effectively monitored.

If a situation arises where recreational access to Logue Brook Dam is no longer permitted, the recreational freshwater fishing sector must be

adequately compensated for water bodies that have already had stock enhancement, via activities such as further stock or habitat enhancement in other dams where fishing will continue to be permitted. We promote the construction of a special fishing dam or the installation of suitable water treatment as realistic options.

Finally, while the planned 'open day' to outline proposed management and mitigation measures will be of great benefit to local Harvey residents, Logue Brook Dam is a 'whole of community' resource. Indeed, the community continues to subsidize the water charges paid by irrigators. We make a direct contribution for the ability to fish for trout and marron in Logue Brook Dam. We believe that a similar event must also be held in Perth to provide metropolitan stakeholders with the opportunity to comment.

We reiterate that the current consultative process is inadequate and falls well short of community expectations. It is unlikely to have any real chance to address the identified management prejudices against recreational fishing.

Yours sincerely

Frank Prokop  
Executive Director  
Recfishwest

8 December 2005

Cc. Premier  
Minister for Environment  
Minister for Fisheries  
Executive Director – Fisheries  
Chairman RFAC