

Hon Jon Ford MLC  
Minister for Fisheries  
**Geographe Bay Comments**  
Department of Fisheries  
Locked Bag 39  
Cloisters Square WA 6850

Dear Minister

**Re Geographe Bay – future closure**

Thank you for your letter 12 July 2007, outlining your proposal to close waters of Geographe Bay to commercial fishing.

Recfishwest supports the proposed closure in principle, however, we believe with some minor amendments to the boundary the outcome for fish stocks and recreational fishing within Geographe Bay can be significantly enhanced.

The proposed northern boundary provides little buffer between commercial and recreational activities around Naturaliste Reef as commercial fishers could still legally set their nets around the northern, eastern and western edges of the reef.

Recfishwest has consulted with the local community group "GeoBay for the Future" and supports their view that the proposed area closed to commercial fishing should be redefined as;

*An area bounded by the coast and extending north west from the tip of Cape Naturaliste to the north west corner of the proposed Cape Naturaliste Sanctuary Zone (Longitude 114° 58' 00'' East and Latitude 33° 31' 00'' South), then north to Longitude 114° 57' 50'' East and Latitude 33° 19' 00'' South, then north east to Longitude 115° 00' 00'' East and Latitude 33° 10' 00'' South, then southeast to the eastern boundary of the proposed Capes Marine Park (Longitude 115° 27' 12'' East and Latitude 33° 34' 51'' South). Please refer to the attached map.*

Aligning the boundaries of the closure with already delineated boundaries for the Capes Marine Park creates a common line of reference for compliance. This will help ease the burden on local compliance officers when enforcing these closures.

The above mentioned amendments to the boundary also allow for a greater buffer between recreational and commercial activities around Naturaliste Reef alleviating potential for resource sharing issues. Likewise, by extending the western boundary of the closure to the north western point of the proposed Cape Naturaliste Sanctuary Zone allows South West Bank (popular recreational fishing location) to be included as well as affording a greater buffer to Wright's Bank.

The Department of Fisheries must be cautious of a potential displacement in commercial effort from Geographe Bay to the inshore waters between Busselton and Bunbury. Should further resource sharing issues arise, we believe consideration should be made into closing the inshore waters from Bunbury to Busselton to demersal gill netting and salmon fishing.

Recfishwest's understanding is that the closures to commercial fishing are not applicable to commercial rock lobster potting and abalone fishing. Recfishwest does not object to these fisheries continuing within the proposed closure as our key interest lies in resolving resource sharing issues between commercial demersal gill netting, beach seining and long lining and recreational anglers within Geographe Bay.

Recfishwest highly praised the implementation of a commercial salmon fishing closure during Easter 2007 in Geographe Bay. We are pleased that this proposal will ensure this closure is effective all year round to the benefit of local and visiting recreational fishers. Recfishwest believes that their would be enormous community benefit in a permanent Easter commercial salmon fishing closure for the entire south west bioregion. Indeed Recfishwest still believes that the south-west salmon fishery becoming recreational only is an extremely high priority for the state.

Once again, thank you for progressing this issue and we look forward to your upcoming announcement of your decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Des Wood  
Chairman

27 July 2007

CC Doug Bathgate, Chair RFAC