



Taking Fish by Spearfishing

Policy

Recfishwest supports taking of fish by free diving and compressed air spearfishing, up to the recreational bag limits, as a legitimate form of recreational fishing. Recfishwest accepts that some access restrictions may need to be applied for fisheries management purposes such as the prohibition of spearfishing in rivers, estuaries, marine protected areas, restricting certain species that cannot be taken, on dive wrecks and for the purposes of maritime safety. All of these exceptions to the rule will need to be based upon science that clearly recognises the legitimacy of this fishing activity.

Background

Recreational fishing bag and size limits are determined based upon sustainability. There are some restrictions on recreational fishing in some areas and more recently gear restrictions (fishing for demersal species) have been introduced as part of fisheries management.

Recfishwest considers that free diving has inherent limits on access to fish through physiological limits, on the duration of dives and access limitations due to safety. These limits provide refuges at depths and in locations which cannot safely be accessed by free divers.

Recfishwest also considers that compressed air assisted spearfishing is restricted by depth, but to a lesser extent, and as such, may need to be restricted in certain circumstances such as shallow reef areas inhabited by long living, resident, large fish which may be very vulnerable to such fishing.

It is recognised that spearfishing, as a selective fishing method, has the ability at times to impact on the stock structure of some inshore demersal species and this needs to be considered in the overall context of fish stock management.

Where the recreational take of fish in some areas is restricted to a specific class of fish and recreational line fishing method, then the equivalent free diving method for taking that specific class of fish should be permitted. As an example, in "benthic protection" areas where anchoring is prohibited and trolling for pelagic species is permitted, free diving for pelagic species (without anchoring) should also be permitted.

Appendix 1.

Australian Underwater Federation Code of Conduct

This code of conduct applies to all members of the Australian Underwater Federation. It is intended to discourage certain types of unacceptable behaviour which may discredit the A.U.F. and the sport of Spearfishing. Serious cases, such as members willingly engaged in illegal activities, may result in penalties including expulsion from the A.U.F.

- Consider the safety of yourself and other people at all times.
- Know and at all times practice the A.U.F. Safety Rules and Hints.
- Respect our marine life by never taking more game than for your immediate personal needs.
- Know and at all times obey boating regulations, including:
 - carrying required safety equipment
 - navigating safely at all times
- Know and at all times obey Fisheries regulations including:
 - size limits for certain species
 - bag limits for certain species
 - bans on the taking of protected species
 - ban on the sale of fish by amateur fishermen
 - closure of certain areas to spearfishing
- Guard our seas from law-breakers by reporting suspicious or illegal activity to the proper authorities.
- Always co-operate with regulatory authority officers performing their duty.
- Show consideration towards other water users pursuing their own recreation.
- Clean your catch at a designated cleaning area or away from the general public.
- Whenever you go diving, never leave your rubbish behind.
- Never act in a way which results in public disfavour towards our sport or our organisation.