

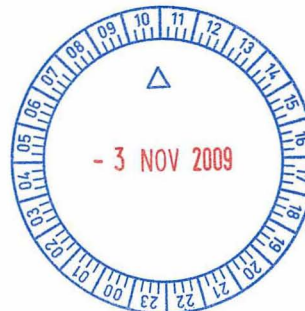


**PUBLIC**

**West Australian Trout & Freshwater Angling  
Association Inc.**

**P.O.Box 1050, Booragoon WA 6954**

Committee Clerk  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Madam,

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SOURCE  
AREAS**

Western Australian Trout and Freshwater Angling Association (WATFAA) is the Major Stakeholder for freshwater fishing in the state with over 200 members. WATFAA is represented on both Recfishwest and the Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Sub-Committee (RFFSS) of RFAC.

Over recent years, water bodies which were once major components of the recreational trout and 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 online as drinking water source areas. and recently Lefroy Brook upstream from the Town Dam has been closed to fishing, despite there being no change to the drinking water status of this stream.

Given the serious impact these closures have had on recreational freshwater trout and marron fishing activities, WATFAA welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to this enquiry.

Recreational freshwater fishing for trout and marron is a highly valued activity that holds a unique cultural value to generations of Western Australians and provides a welcome source of revenue through tourism to many towns in the Southwest. Over 20,000 recreational licences are issued each year for freshwater trout and marron fishing in the remaining dams and rivers that are open to these activities.

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. It is **important that this option is considered** in order to alleviate the disenfranchisement of freshwater fishers in this state, however the policy appears to dismiss this option by stating that additional barriers to contamination and/or costly treatment would be required.

Recreational fishing was a compatible activity on Samson, Harris and Stirling Dams and the Harvey River upstream of Stirling Dam prior to these being declared public drinking water areas. 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. This is particularly true of WATFAA members, whose adherence to the Associations ethics require them to leave “nothing but footprints” and to report all activities that are not in keeping with the relevant fishing regulations.

In other parts of the nation, recreational fishing is permitted in some public drinking water dams including Hinze Dam in Queensland and Googong Dam in Canberra, and is common practice in overseas countries. 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**’ which is the current way of thinking, concerning 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;
- allowing the use of artificial lures only for trout, and snaring for marron;
- prohibiting the use of all powered vessels (other than electric) on any waters to be considered for new or renewed access.
- measures supported by a comprehensive education program, and ongoing water quality testing.

WATFAA believes that with the appropriate management, recreational fishing can co-exist in a public drinking water source areas. To progress this initiative, a number of drinking water source areas could be opened or re-opened to recreational fishing on a trial basis.

Dams which could fit in with this managed access policy, and would be valuable fishing venues close to the metropolitan area are:

Bickley Brook Reservoir; Churchmans Brook Reservoir; Victoria Reservoir; Serpentine Dam; Serpentine Pipehead Dam; South Dandalup Dam.

Also the Lefroy Brook above the Town Dam should be reopened.

With more than 40 years experience of freshwater angling in WA, we would like to offer any assistance in formulating an environmentally sustainable future for the many thousands of West Australian and visiting anglers that would use these waters.



**Mel Pearce**  
**President WATFAA**