



All correspondence to:
The Executive Officer
Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

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PUBLIC



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

Dear Ms Stephenson

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SOURCE AREAS

The Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee (RFAC) is a statutory Committee established under the Fisheries Resources Management Act 1994 to advise the Minister for Fisheries on issues relating to recreational fishing and its management.

The Minister for Fisheries has also established an RFAC Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Sub-Committee (RFFSS) to develop a 5-year strategy for the management of the State's southwest recreational freshwater fisheries and provide advice on ongoing monitoring and adaptive management of the marron, trout and other freshwater fisheries.

The RFFSS has representation from the following stakeholder groups:
Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RFAC);

- Recfishwest;
- Department of Fisheries;
- Western Australian Trout and Freshwater Angling Association (WATFAA);
- Conservation representative;
- Indigenous representative;
- Marron fisher representatives;
- Freshwater angling representatives;
- Department of Environment and Conservation (observer status);
- Department of Water (observer status); and
- Water Corporation (observer status).

The views expressed in this letter are those of the voting members of the RFAC and the RFFSS only. The Department of Water and Water Corporation do not support the views expressed.

Fishing for the future

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 online as drinking water source areas.

Given the serious impact these closures have had on recreational freshwater fishing activities, both the RFAC and the RFFSS welcome the opportunity to provide comment to this enquiry.

Recreational freshwater fishing for trout and marron are highly valued activities that hold a unique cultural value to generations of Western Australians. Marron are the world's third largest freshwater crustaceans and are endemic to the State's southwest. Over 20,000 recreational licences are issued which enable fishers to fish for marron and freshwater finfish in the remaining dams and rivers that are open to fishing.

The Department of Water'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 being declared public drinking water area. 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.

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. 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.

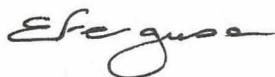
Risk management could include the following measures for recreational activities:

- 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; and
- ongoing water quality testing.

The RFAC and the RFFSS believe that with the appropriate management recreational fishing can co-exist in public drinking water source areas.

To progress this initiative, a number of drinking water source areas could be opened to recreational fishing on a trial basis. Key water bodies that are currently closed to fishing and have self-sustaining populations of trout and healthy stocks of marron include Stirling Dam and Serpentine Dam.

Yours sincerely



Kay Webber

Chairperson

RFAC Recreational Freshwater Fisheries Stakeholder Sub-Committee

27 October 2009