



8-2005

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Recommended Citation

Ford (Minister for Fisheries; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne), J. (2005), *A five-year management strategy for recreational fishing in the Pilbara/Kimberley. The Minister for Fisheries' decisions in response to the final report of the Pilbara Kimberley Recreational Fishing Working Group*. Department of Fisheries Western Australia, Perth. Report No. 201.

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A FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING IN THE PILBARA/KIMBERLEY

**The Minister for Fisheries' decisions
in response to the final report of the
Pilbara/Kimberley Recreational Fishing
Working Group
(Fisheries Management Paper No. 193)**

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PAPER No. 201

**The Honorable Jon Ford, JP MLC
Minister for Fisheries; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne**

August 2005

ISSN 0819-4327





*A Five-Year Management Strategy for
Recreational Fishing in the Pilbara/Kimberley*

The Minister for Fisheries' Decisions
In Response to the Final Report of the
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FOREWORD

The regional review for the Pilbara/Kimberley Region is now complete and I would like to thank all members of the review working group for their efforts in what has been a challenging task. I would also like to thank those members of the community who attended public meetings and made submissions on the draft discussion paper.

After careful consideration of the Pilbara/Kimberley Recreational Fishing Working Group's recommendations and the wide range of issues raised in submissions, I have made my decisions in respect to the future management arrangements for recreational fishing in Pilbara/Kimberley Region.

I believe the new management arrangements, which will be implemented in 1 January 2006, will go a long way to protecting recreational fishing quality and meeting the long-term needs for the sustainable management of recreational fishing.

I did note that some of the most pressing concerns raised during public meetings, and in submissions, related to the interaction between the commercial and recreational fishing sectors and how to effectively manage the catch by each sector.

The Working Group acknowledged these concerns in their final report and made a number of recommendations to ensure recreational fishers have a sustainable and equitable share of the region's fish resources. I believe it is important that the resource-sharing recommendations are progressed through a proper resource-sharing process with the commercial sector. This is essential to ensure the outcomes recognise the requirements of the broader community from the use of fish stocks.

The introduction of 'Integrated Fisheries Management' is an important initiative aimed at addressing the issue of how fish resources can be best shared between competing users within the community. This process involves setting the total amount of fish that can be sustainably caught from each fishery, and then allocating explicit catch shares between the State's commercial, recreational (including charter boats) and indigenous fishers. Controlling the total amount of fish that are harvested is essential if we are to continue to enjoy the same, or better, quality of fishing in the future.

However I believe there is also scope for resource sharing issues to be resolved locally and processes such as the 'Barramundi Accord' provide an opportunity to address resource-sharing issues in Roebuck Bay and other highly valued fishing areas in the region. I encourage participation in this process to find solutions that meet community requirements and look forward to receiving detailed advice on this matter in the next few months.

Finally, I believe recreational fishers in Western Australia should be proud of their involvement in the development of responsible fisheries management strategies. Without question, WA leads the country in its progressive approach to fisheries management.

The Honorable Jon Ford, JP MLC

Minister for Fisheries; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 1 - Key principles for management <i>The Working Group recommended 10 guiding principles for management.</i></p>	<p>Agree. I endorse the key principals for management for the Pilbara/Kimberley recreational fishing strategy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 - Creel survey <i>The Working Group recommended that a major creel survey to be undertaken every three years.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The level of research undertaken during the term of the plan will be subject to an assessment of state-wide priorities and the availability of resources.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 – Volunteer angler logbook program <i>The Working Group recommended an angler logbook program be established which is linked to the indicator species identified in Recommendation 5.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The level of research undertaken during the term of the plan will be subject to state-wide priorities and the availability of resources.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 - Priority species for research <i>The Working Group listed key species, which should be considered a priority for research.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The level of research undertaken on the identified species will be subject to state-wide priorities and the availability of resources.</p> <p>Realistically the key priority species across the State will be the focus of research for the next 5-10 years. The key indicator species in each bioregion will likely be the 'drivers' for management under an integrated fisheries framework.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 – Quality indicators <i>The Working Group recommended a number of key indicator species, which are linked to the angler logbook program.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. A trial of alternative survey techniques is planned for the West Coast in 2005/06 to determine the efficiency of different methods. Based on these outcomes, funding for the logbook program will be considered (subject to state-wide priorities and available resources).</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 (a) to (f) Recommendation 7 – Bag and size limits</p>	<p>I have approved the following bag and size limits for recreational fishing in the Pilbara/Kimberley Region (see next pages).</p>

Category 1 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 7			
(Note: * change to current management)			
Species	Species bag limit	Size limit (mm)	Other controls
Barramundi NOTE: State-wide possession limit of 2. Bag/possession limit of 1 in the Ord River. Bag limit of 1 in the Broome area.	2	550	Max. size 800mm (Ord & Fitzroy Rivers)
Billfish (sailfish, swordfish, marlins)	1*		
Cobia	2*	750*	
Cod – combined Within this bag limit you may not have more than two Rankin, estuary or Malabar cod*.	4	400* - Estuary	Max. size 1,000mm* or 30kg
Coral trout and coronation trout (combined) When taken south of the De Grey River When taken north of the De Grey River	2* 1*	450	
Emperors – spangled, blue-lined and north-west snappers (combined)	4*	410 – spangled 320 – blue-lined 280 – other	
Mackerel – shark	4	500	
Mackerel – Spanish, broad-barred	2*	750	
Mackerel – Spanish, narrow-barred	2*	900	
Mackerel – wahoo	2*	900	
Mahi mahi	4	500*	
Mangrove jack When taken around the Dampier Archipelago between Cape Lambert and Cape Preston	4* 2*	300	
Mulloway – northern	2*	700*	
Parrot fish	4*		
Pearl perch	4*		
Pink snapper	4*	410	
Red emperor	2*	410	
Amberjack/yellowtail kingfish/Samson fish (combined)	2*	600	
Sharks and rays (combined)	2*		
Scarlet, crimson, saddle tail sea perch (combined)	4*		
Threadfin salmon – giant	2*	450*	
Tripletail	1*	300*	
Tuna – southern bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye and dogtooth	2*		
Wrasse (inc. blue bone, baldchin groper and tuskfish)	2*	400 – baldchin groper, blackspot & blue tuskfish.	

Category 2 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 16			
(Note: * change to current management; # outcome of the South Coast review)			
Species	Species bag limit	Size limit (mm)	Other controls
Barracuda	4*		
Bone fish and giant herring (combined)	4*		
Bonito and tunas – (other)	8		
Bream- north-west and yellowfin (combined)	8*	350 – yellowfin* 250 – north-west	
Catfish, all species combined	8*		
Dart	8		
Flathead and flounder (combined)	8*	300 – flathead 250 – flounder	
Goatfish	8*		
Javelinfin and sweetlips (combined)	8*	300*	
Leatherjacket	8*	250	
Mackerel – Queensland school and spotted (combined)	4	500	
Queenfish	4		
Snook and pike (combined)	8*	300	
Sooty grunter	8*	250*	
Tarwhine	16*	250 [#]	
Threadfin salmon – other species (combined)	4*		
Trevally (combined)	4*		
Tropical sea perch and snappers – other <i>Lutjanus</i> species including fingermark and job fish (combined)	4*	300 (stripey sea perch and fingermark)*	

Category 3 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 40		
(Note: * change to current management)		
Species	Species bag limit	Other controls
Garfish	40 combined*	
Longtom		
Milkfish		
Mullet, sea and yellow-eye		
Whiting		
Unlisted species - (all species not specified except baitfish and feral freshwater species)		

Baitfish	
(Note: * change to current management)	
Species	Bag limit
Bait fish of the Families Clupeidae (Pilchards and Whitebait), Atherinidae (hardyheads) and Engraulidae (anchovy) (combined)	9 litres*

Crustaceans		
(Note: * change to current management)		
Species	Bag limit	Other controls
Cherabin	9 litres	Gear controls
Crab, blue swimmer (manna)	20*	Boat limit of 40*, size limit, gear controls
Crab, mud	5*	Boat limit of 10*, size limit, gear controls Note boat limit of 20 in King Sound
Prawns, school and king	9 litres	
Rock lobster Within this bag limit you may have no more than 2 ornate and 2 western rock lobster.	4*	Boat limit of 8*. Recreational licence required. Possession limit of twice bag limit outside place of residence*.

Molluscs and other reef animals		
(Note: * change to current management)		
Species	Bag limit	Other controls
Cockles	9 litres	
Mussels	9 litres	
Oysters	9 litres*	
Razorfish	20*	
Sea urchins	20*	
Squid, cuttlefish and octopus (combined)	15	Boat limit of 30
All other species of edible mollusc not specifically mentioned (combined)	2 litres	

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 8 - Totally protected fish <i>The Working Group recommended that several vulnerable species become totally protected.</i></p>	<p>Agree in part. I support the classification of the following fish as totally protected fish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater sawfish – all species (Family Pristidae). • Speartooth shark (<i>Glyphis sp.</i>). • Queensland groper (<i>Ephinephelus lanceolatus</i>). <p>It is important however that the potential impact of this decision on customary fishing practices is further assessed prior to the listing of these species.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 - Haul net fishing <i>The Working Group recommended that the use of haul nets should be prohibited with the exception of the Dampier Archipelago where the following conditions should apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum length of haul net to be 30m. • Mullet to be the only species permitted to be retained when using a net. 	<p>Agree. The use of haul nets for recreational fishing will be prohibited in the Pilbara/Kimberley Region with the exception of the Dampier Archipelago where the following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum length of haul net to be 30m. • Mullet to be the only species permitted to be retained by net.
<p>Recommendation 10 - Redclaw traps in Lake Kununurra <i>The Working Group recommended that a structured gear trial be undertaken in Lake Kununurra to assess the viability of using traps to collect red claw.</i></p>	<p>Agree. A gear trial is currently being undertaken under the supervision of the East Kimberley RRFAC.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 - Fishing competitions <i>The Working Group recommended that large public competitions be registered, that the organisers keep records and a code of conduct should be developed.</i></p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>(a) All fishing competitions with more than 50 participants should formally register in advance with the Department of Fisheries.</p> <p>(b) Competition organisers should keep an accurate record of participation, catch and effort and forward catch returns to the Department of Fisheries for inclusion in the recreational fisheries database.</p> <p>(c) A formal code of conduct for fishing competitions should be developed by the Department of Fisheries in consultation with fishing clubs and organising bodies.</p>

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 12 - Recreational fishing priority areas <i>The Working Group recommended that the importance of recreational fishing as a component of tourism and lifestyle should be recognised in fisheries management.</i></p>	<p>Agree. Future decisions regarding priority access to fish stocks or areas by particular user groups need to be undertaken in a structured manner (see response to recommendation 16)</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 – Code of conduct <i>The Working Group recommended that a workable code of conduct for accessing fishing locations through pastoral leases, nature reserves and Aboriginal land should be developed with key stakeholders.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The Department of Fisheries and key recreational fishing stakeholder groups should enter into negotiations with landowners and leaseholders to develop a workable code of conduct for accessing fishing locations through pastoral leases, nature reserves and Aboriginal land. The code of conduct should then be referred to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, who has responsibility for these matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14 – Access routes <i>The Working Group recommended that a regional recreational fishing representative liaison with key stakeholders to access fishing routes located on private land.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The Department of Fisheries and key recreational fishing stakeholder groups should enter into negotiations with landowners and leaseholders to develop a workable code of conduct for accessing fishing locations through pastoral leases, nature reserves and Aboriginal land. The code of conduct should then be referred for consideration to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, who has responsibility for these matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15 - Stock enhancement <i>The Working Group recommended that Government support the construction of a fishway at Lake Kununurra to assist with the creation of an inland still water barramundi fishery.</i></p>	<p>Agree. Consistent with the Government's fisheries policy commitments, the Government supported a fishway conference in Kununurra in May 2005 to explore the feasibility of this project.</p>

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 16 - Resource sharing <i>The Working Group recommended that a number of species in the Pilbara/Kimberley be considered for total catch management under an integrated management framework. As an interim step the 'Barramundi Accord' should be reviewed as a matter of priority, and unmanaged commercial wetline fishing in the Pilbara be brought under management.</i></p>	<p>(a) Agree. Future decisions regarding priority access to fish stocks or areas by particular user groups need to be undertaken in a structured manner. Later this year I will be developing a schedule for the roll-out of Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) over the next five to ten years. The formal IFM process (involving review by the Integrated Fisheries Allocation Advisory Committee) does not preclude resource-sharing matters being pursued at a local level by use of Voluntary Fisheries Adjustment Scheme or mediation processes (e.g. the 'Barramundi Accord').</p> <p>(b) Agree. A joint recreational/commercial working group has been established to review the 'Barramundi Accord' and seek ways to resolve any resource-sharing issues that may exist between the commercial and recreational sectors.</p> <p>(c) Agree. Appropriate management arrangements will be introduced to manage commercial wetline fishing in the Pilbara.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17 – Low impact wilderness fishing experiences <i>The Working Group recommended that consideration be given to managing a number of areas in the Pilbara/Kimberley as remote wilderness fishing areas with the following principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Low take;</i> • <i>Low environmental impact; and</i> • <i>A code of conduct for recreational fishers.</i> 	<p>Agree in principle. I support the concept of “wilderness fishing areas” to provide high quality fishing experiences and may further enhance the tourism appeal of such areas. I note that the remote nature of the Kimberley presents inherent compliance difficulties in having separate rules for localised areas, however I have asked the Department of Fisheries to further develop this concept in consultation with user groups.</p>
<p>Recommendation 18 - Pilbara/Kimberley Region Community education plan <i>The Working Group recommended that a comprehensive community education plan for recreational fishing in the Pilbara/Kimberley be produced. The plan should contain the following elements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A regional fishing guide;</i> • <i>Education resources materials;</i> • <i>An annual media campaign; and</i> • <i>Volunteer involvement in education.</i> 	<p>I agree with the broad elements of the education plan, noting that the Department of Fisheries will continue to utilise the media to increase awareness and understanding of fishing rules as required.</p>

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 19 – Additional patrol <i>The Working Group recommended that an additional three patrols (six Fisheries Officers) be dedicated to recreational fisheries field compliance and education activities during peak fishing seasons in the Pilbara/Kimberley Region.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. This will be considered in the context of state-wide priorities around compliance risks and available resourcing. Offshore stocks are 'low risk' in this region and the focus of recreational compliance activities will continue to be rivers and nearshore areas. The Department of Fisheries has introduced a program of mobile patrols to service regional areas, including the Pilbara/Kimberley, particularly during peak seasons.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20 - VFLO program <i>The Working Group recommended that the VFLO program be established in key regional centres in the Pilbara/Kimberley Region.</i></p>	<p>Agree. The Department of Fisheries will investigate establishing the VFLO program in key regional centres where the program is not operating.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21 – Recreational Fishing Management Officer <i>The Working Group recommended that adequate resources be allocated to coordinate the implementation of the Pilbara/Kimberley review and assist with the development of Integrated Fisheries Management plans.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. A fisheries management officer was appointed to the Broome regional office last year and additional resourcing requirements will be considered as part of Government budget processes.</p>