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A FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING ON THE SOUTH COAST

**The Minister for Fisheries' decisions
in response to the final report of the
South Coast Recreational Fishing
Working Group
(Fisheries Management Paper No. 194)**

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PAPER No. 202

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

September 2005

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*A Five-Year Management Strategy for
Recreational Fishing on the South Coast*

The Minister for Fisheries' Decisions
In Response to the Final Report of the
South Coast Recreational Fishing Working Group

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FOREWORD

The regional review for the South Coast Region is now complete and I would like to thank all members of the South Coast Recreational Fishing 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 South Coast 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 South Coast 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 for 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.

Clearly, the roll-out of this process will take some time, however I believe there is also scope for resource sharing issues in highly valued fishing areas to be resolved locally, through mediation processes or through the use of the voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme.

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

The Honorable Jon Ford, JP MLC

Minister for Fisheries; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne

SOUTH COAST 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 principles for management for the South Coast recreational fishing strategy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 - Creel survey <i>The Working Group recommended that a major recreational fishing creel survey 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 that 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 five to 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 South Coast Region (see next pages).</p>

Category 1 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 7

(Note: *change to current management; # outcome of the Pilbara/Kimberley review)

Species	Species bag limit	Size limit (mm)	Other controls
Billfish – including sailfish, swordfish, marlins (combined)	1*		
Boarfish	4*		
Cobbler	4*	430	
Cods – including breaksea and harlequin (combined) but excludes grey-banded rock cod	4	300 - breaksea	Max. size 1,000mm# or 30kg
Dhufish, West Australian	2*	500	
Groper, western blue	1	500	
Hapuku/trevalla/bass groper and grey-banded rock cod (combined)	2*		
Mahi mahi	2*	500#	
Mulloway	2*	500	
Pink snapper Wilson Inlet pink snapper	4*	410 280	
Queen snapper (blue morwong)	4*	410	
Samson fish/amberjack/yellowtail kingfish (combined)	2*	600	
Sharks and rays (combined)	2*		
Trout, brown and rainbow (combined)	4	300	Recreational licence
Tuna – southern bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye (combined)	2*		

Category 2 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 16

(Note: * change to current management; # southern bluefin, yellowfin and bigeye tuna are Category 1 Fish)

Species	Species bag limit	Size limit	Other controls
Black bream	8*	250	
Dory, John and mirror (combined)	8*		
Flathead and flounder (combined)	8*	300 – flathead 250 – flounder	
Goatfish	8*		
Leatherjacket	8*	250	
Red snapper (Bight redfish/nannygai) (combined)	8*	300*	
Salmon, Australian	4	300	
Snook and pike (combined)	8*	300	
Swallowtail	8*	300*	
Sweep, banded and sea (combined)	8*		
Tailor	8	300	2 fish over 600mm* (see Recommendation 8c)
Tarwhine	8*	250*	
Trevally, silver (skippy) etc.	12*	250	
Tunas - other# including bonito (combined)	8*		
Whiting, King George	12*	280	
Whiting, yellowfin	16*		
Wrasse – including western king wrasse and western foxfish	8*		

Category 3 Fish – total mixed daily bag limit of 40

(Note: * change to current management, # King George and yellowfin whiting are Category 2 Fish)

Species	Species bag limit	Other controls
Australian herring	40* combined	
Garfish		
Mackerel, blue		
Mullet, sea and yellow-eye (combined)		
Whiting – other [#]		
Unlisted species - (all species not specified except baitfish and feral freshwater species)		

Crustaceans

(Note: * change to current management)

Species	Bag limit	Other 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
Prawns, school and king (combined)	9 litres	Gear controls
Rock lobster, western and southern (combined)	8	Boat limit of 16, licensed fishery, size limit, gear controls, season.

Molluscs and other reef animals

(Note: * change to current management)

Species	Bag limit	Boat limit	Possession limit	Other controls
Abalone, brownlip Abalone, greenlip	5 combined	10 combined	10 (20 at place of residence)	Size limit, licence, season
Abalone, Roe's and all other abalone species not specifically mentioned (combined)	20		20 (80 at place of residence)	Size limit, licence, season
Ark shells	20*			
Cockles	20*			
Oysters	20*			
Razorfish	20*			
Scallops	20*			
Mussels	9 litres			
Sea urchins	20*			
Squid, cuttlefish and octopus (combined)	15	30		
All other species of edible mollusc not specifically mentioned (combined)	2 litres			

SOUTH COAST WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 8(a) - Western blue groper <i>The Working Group recommended that a spear fishing prohibition should not be introduced for blue groper.</i></p>	<p>Agree. There should be no change to the current rules regarding spear fishing for western blue groper (<i>Achoerodus gouldii</i>) on the South Coast.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8(b) - Black bream <i>The Working Group recommended the introduction of a slot limit for black bream of two fish over 350mm.</i></p>	<p>Disagree. I do not support the introduction of slot limit for black bream on the South Coast at this stage. Black bream are relatively abundant on the south coast and a slot limit would provide little additional benefit to the fishery.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8(c) - Tailor <i>The Working Group recommended the introduction of a slot limit for tailor of two fish over 600mm.</i></p>	<p>Agree. A slot limit of two tailor over 600mm will be applied to the South Coast.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8(d) - Cockles, oysters and razorfish <i>The Working Group recommended that additional protection be applied to areas where these animals are found.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. The local Regional Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee, in conjunction with Department of Fisheries' research and compliance staff, will develop further advice on specific areas for management action.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 - Recreational net fishing <i>The Working Group recommended that recreational netting be phased out on the South Coast over a three-year period.</i></p>	<p>Disagree. Recreational netting will be allowed to continue on the South Coast under this Plan with the following management arrangements -</p> <p>Set netting will be prohibited from all South Coast waters with the exception of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wilson, Beaufort, Wellstead, Gordon and Hamersley Inlets, Pallinup and Thomas Rivers and Princess Royal Harbour – all-year-round; and 2. Broke, Irwin, Stokes Inlets and the Gairdner River - between 1 May and 31 October. <p>All set netting in permitted areas will be restricted to Friday and Saturday nights only between;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4:00pm and 9:00pm from 1 May and 31 October; and 2. 5:00pm and 10:00pm from 1 November and 30 April. <p>Set nets must be checked and cleaned every hour. Throw netting will continue to be permitted in ocean waters only on the South Coast as a means of collecting baitfish. Recreational haul netting will be restricted to within 800m of the shore in all oceanic waters of State not specifically closed to netting.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 - Fishing competitions <i>The Working Group recommended that large public competitions be registered, that the organisers keep records and a code of conduct for competitions 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>

SOUTH COAST WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 11 - 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 in principle. 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 15).</p>
<p>Recommendation 12 - 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 13 - Access routes <i>The Working Group recommended that regional recreational fishing representatives liaise 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 14 - Position statement on restocking as a stock enhancement strategy <i>The Working Group recommended that restocking should only be considered as a strategy to assist with the recovery of a stock where it can be identified that the stock has been significantly depleted, and its recovery is endangered or will be prolonged. Stock enhancement projects should be assessed against disease risk, biodiversity and genetic diversity criteria.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. Protocols around restocking will continue to be developed by the Department of Fisheries.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15 - Resource Sharing <i>The Working Group recommended that a number of key species on the South Coast should be considered for total catch 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. 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.</p>

SOUTH COAST WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION	MINISTER'S DECISION
<p>Recommendation 16 - Low impact wilderness fishing experiences <i>The Working Group recommended that consideration be given to managing Twilight Cove as a remote wilderness fishing area 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 recreational fishing experiences. I note the remote nature of these locations presents inherent compliance difficulties in having separate rules for localised areas, however I have asked the Department of Fisheries to develop this concept further in consultation with user groups.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17 - South Coast Region community education plan: <i>The Working Group recommended that a comprehensive community education plan for recreational fishing in the South Coast 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 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>
<p>Recommendation 18 - Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officers (VFLO) program <i>The Working Group recommended that the VFLO program be enhanced in key regional centres on the South Coast Region.</i></p>	<p>Agree. I support the enhancement of the VFLO program in key regional centres.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19 - Additional patrol capacity <i>The Working Group recommended that an additional two patrols (four Fisheries Officers) be introduced on the South Coast for recreational field compliance and education activities during peak periods</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. This will be considered in the context of state-wide priorities around compliance risks and available resources.</p> <p>The Department of Fisheries has introduced a program of mobile patrols to service regional areas, including the South Coast region, particularly during peak seasons.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20 - Recreational Fishing Management Officer <i>The Working Group recommended that adequate resources be allocated to coordinate the implementation of the South Coast Regional Review and assist with the development of Integrated Fisheries Management plans.</i></p>	<p>Agree in principle. Additional management resources will be considered as part of Government budget processes.</p>