

Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery Review – Port Meetings

Summary of key issues raised during consultation meeting

Location: Southport
Number of attendees: 180

Not government policy

Fisheries Queensland is undertaking public consultation on the Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery with a focus on snapper. This summary consolidates the range of issues raised by individuals who attended the public meeting listed above to discuss the current and future management of the fishery.

These views will be considered by the government in reviewing the current Rocky Reef Fish Fishery management arrangements.

Fees

Issues raised include the following:

- Concerns raised that the permits will not do anything to help snapper.
- Discussion around how the permit fee will be used. Why isn't there compensation for charter businesses?
- Do not believe that the stock is in decline. This has been made up so that you can justify imposing a \$90 fee on ordinary working blokes. The purpose is not about the snapper stock but government raising revenue.
- Why is the permit fee proposed at \$70 to \$90? It is a very high fee.
- Will you make available the information on how the \$90 fee was calculated?
- I own five boats all registered with Queensland transport. Does this mean I need to take out five permits?

Closures

Issues raised include the following:

- The interim six week closure will make no difference to snapper numbers. Why include teraglin and pearl perch, they are not at threat and charter operators make a living out of them. Charter operators could fish for these species without targeting snapper because they are experienced.
- For the interim six week closure, is there an exemption for Indigenous persons? Does this mean that an Aboriginal person can skipper my charter boat and the closure won't apply to my boat or if they operate a charter licence they will be exempt?
- Will the QBFP be implementing a special enforcement focus during the interim six week closure?
- Will the closures apply to commercial fishers under options one, two and three?

Impacts of RIS proposals

Issues raised include the following:

- For charter businesses, the closure time will not help snapper at this time of year. Why include pearl perch and teraglin when there are no concerns for these species? This will badly impact the charter sector especially in the next six weeks.
- What can charter businesses do to avoid suffering from the interim six week closure? Can we use different technology or gear e.g. avoid paternoster rigs? The impact on my business I expect to be very significant.
- Have you thought about the impact on the bait and tackle shops?
- Discussion around compensation for the charter industry as the impact will be very high.

Alternative management strategies

Issues raised include the following:

- A holistic approach to management must be taken. Habitat preservation and addressing overall water and marine environment quality are just as important as managing the take of fish.
- Discussion around the number of charter boats operating - we need a cap on the number of charter boats permitted as overfishing is happening.
- Discussion around an exemption for charter boats from the interim six week closure as they only account for 8% of the snapper take.
- Why not have a per person permit instead of a vessel based permit. I could take one boat and lots of mates to get snapper and be ahead of your plan. If we wanted to get our moneys worth for our permits, we could go out more often than we usually do to make sure we catch more snapper with our permits. Some people fish for snapper without a boat i.e. fish from land. The vessel permit system is flawed.
- What about creating some artificial reefs for the Gold Coast? Are there any here or planned for here?
- There are seven netters in the Broadwater damaging the bottom. I know snapper spawn on the gravel bottom in the Broadwater and these netters are the cause of a problem here. I don't know what you know about snapper breeding cycles but if you protect these spawning areas, you will make a difference.

Data and science

Issues raised include the following:

- The figure of 415 tonne of recreational catch is grossly overestimated. Calculations using the average weight of snapper and number of fishing days available given weather mean that there will need to be a large number of anglers bagging out each day.
- Do seasonal changes from El Nino to La Nina, resulting in drought and wet periods, affect the stock? Drought on land equals drought in the sea.
- Where is the scientific research on stock decline? There are questions about the credibility of the data.
- Logbooks began 25 years ago. Fees have increased and increased ever since and more and more attention given to the way in which someone makes a living on the water. I believe there is

a decline in the snapper stock.

- There is mistrust between recreational fishers and government. We don't want to fill out logbooks and we don't want to tell you where we catch our fish as we think you will close these areas down.
- Don't accept that snapper die when released, if you are careful and use the right technology such as soft plastics, then they live. Another reason the catch rates look like they are down is because fish get smarter. Once they have been caught and released they learn.
- What boats did you include in your survey? Everyone knows that you don't catch snapper up in north Queensland. If these boats were counted as catching snapper then you will have a higher catch estimate.
- Fishermen are the first people who want to ensure protection for the resource. We are the true environmentalists. There must be demonstrated credibility in the proposals. The data has to be peer reviewed.
- A number of the stock assessment peer review reports mention doubts about the data used in coming to the conclusions about the stock. They express concern about its uncertainty. Sunfish do not accept that there is a decline in snapper population. Please listen to our doubts and those of the peer review scientists.
- Snapper recruitment is a key issue. Not enough focus has been given to enhancing recruitment such as restocking. They have already done this with flathead and bream.
- Trawlers and the fact juvenile snapper. What impact are they having on the snapper stock?
- Is tagging of snapper undertaken? What numbers are you tagging? Are there re-catches of tagged snapper?

Process

Issues raised include the following:

- Concern expressed regarding the purpose of consultation meetings because decisions have already been made i.e. the interim six week closure has already been implemented.
- The government is to blame for the current status of the fishery. There has been no enforcement in the fishery. There has been no management action and suddenly drastic action is now required.
- How do you know that the management arrangements you put in will be effective?
- What will happen if the recreational catch reaches 260 tonne in a year?
- What is NSW doing about snapper there? Do you talk with them?
- Why don't you send out logbooks with every boat registration – provide one to every person who has a boat. That might help with data collection.
- If I take snapper in NSW and come back into Queensland, what proof do I need to demonstrate that the fish was caught in NSW waters?
- What about NSW boats fishing in Qld waters without a permit. Will they be fined?
- Surely this needs a Commonwealth approach if it affects Queensland and NSW.
- There is no consensus in this room on any of the four options. Animosity exists. We expect Government will make some decision..
- Will management arrangements be relaxed if the stock status improves
- There is a need to communicate clearly and more widely, the scientific basis for the concern

regarding the snapper stock decline. There is a climate of suspicion about government action, that this is not about snapper protection at all.

- There are problems with completing the feedback form on line. It can't be printed off and you can't fill out the sections separately. The on-line response form does not allow you to NOT answer a question before moving onto the next – forced to answer all questions and we object to that.

For further information on the review of the fishery, or for records of other individual meetings held along the east coast of Queensland, please visit www.fisheries.qld.gov.au