

Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery Review – Port Meetings

Summary of key issues raised during consultation meeting

Location: Mooloolaba

Number of attendees: 70

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.

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

Fees

Issues raised include the following:

- If the fee of \$1.60 per unit is implemented for the charter sector, will there be more enforcement and will the use of fees be audited.
- There is a big difference in quota unit fees between the charter and commercial sectors and how were these fees calculated.
- Is the \$90 fee for the recreational sector per vessel or per person.
- With new fees being proposed to fund additional services such as compliance, what is stopping the government from cutting funding to existing compliance services?
- Will the funds from fees collected be used for restocking?

Closures

Issues raised include the following:

- Why have pearl perch and teraglin been included in the snapper closure if there are no problems with these species.
- Concern about major economic impacts of the closure on charter and commercial fishers by including pearl perch and teraglin in the closures.

Impacts of RIS proposals

Issues raised include the following:

- Discussion over how much snapper is currently taken by net –concerned about the net catches not being part of the proposed commercial total allowable catch (TAC).
- Should the charter sector have restrictions imposed if they are only taking 8% of the catch.
- Why is mahi mahi included in the RIS when they are a fast growing species and there are no sustainability issues.
- Concern over the discarding of fish - if a bag limit of two snapper is introduced there would be a

lot of throwbacks as fishers would upgrade their catch.

- If the commercial catch is reduced, this will impact the supply of fish to consumers and also increase the market demand for imported fish.

Impacts of current management arrangements

Issues raised include the following:

- Discussion over the 35cm size limit and bag limit of 5 for snapper and whether these have failed and not been a benefit to the stock.

Alternative management strategies

Issues raised include the following:

- Whether habitat loss and pollutants in the water are key impacts on the snapper stock and is this going to be addressed.
- Whether nursery habitats need to be increased through artificial reefs and stock increased through restocking. These are proactive management practices. Moreton Bay was alive with juvenile snapper in the 1950s and 1960s.

Management and status of snapper in other jurisdictions

Issues raised include the following:

- As snapper is a single stock with NSW, the size and bag limits for snapper should be the same in Queensland as it is for NSW.
- Discussion on whether NSW is benefiting from the increased restrictions being imposed in Queensland,

Concern over NSW allowing trap fishing and the impact this could have on snapper. What are NSW doing about snapper – are they doing extra to manage the stock in NSW. Everyone knows there are no snapper in Coolangatta because of the NSW trap fishers.

Data and science

Issues raised include the following:

- Stakeholders specified uncertainty in the data therefore the overfished status of snapper is not based on scientific evidence. More correct to say that the overfished status is precautionary or policy based but not based on science.
- Explanation sought on sampling methodology for estimating recreational catches.
- Explanation sought on how snapper are aged, validation of aging and how the information is used.
- How the fishery can be classed as overfished if the biomass of snapper out on the fishing grounds right now is not known.
- Discussion over when the stock would be depleted if the recruitment is constant - constant recruitment should indicate that the stock is okay.
- If a minimum size limit is already in place, the fishery should not be in decline.
- Discussion over the catch reporting system for recreational fishers under options 1 and 2 – recording the weights of each snapper caught, size categories and number released should be compulsory and not optional.
- Historical records of snapper catches are available from the Courier Mail and could have been

considered in the stock assessment. Reported catches include those from fishing clubs from the early 1900s.

- Discussion over when the recreational fishing survey was last conducted.

If the evidence is inconclusive scientifically the government could involve bait and tackle shops to get better data on recreational catch over three to four year period.

Process

Issues raised include the following:

- How and when the government will know the snapper stock has recovered and what level of catch will determine that the stock has recovered.
- How the government will know when the 260 tonne for the recreational sector has been reached and what will happen when it is reached.
- Discussion over what will happen to the charter and commercial sectors when they reach their total allowable catch (TAC).
- Concern over the review process and whether government had already decided on its preferred option.