

# Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council

## Management Option C

### *The Strategy for Advancing Future Snapper Management in SA*

The Ministers Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (MRFAC) is proposing an alternate path to Scenarios A and B, Option C, which follows the recognised *precautionary principle* method as an interim time defined alternative. Such a course has clear precedence in the actions of former Minister Gail Gago in declaring a "Reduction in Blue Swimmer Crab Fishing Limits to Aid Recovery" (24/05/2013). We consider Option C is a significant improvement, which not only primarily addresses the long-term sustainability of not only Snapper stocks, but also all the key primary species. In addition, Option C also seeks to integrate Community expectation, as well as the critical requirements of the myriad of associated industries and businesses dependent on the SA fishing stakeholders.

At this moment the scientific direction(s) to are uncertain, since there is a need for further confirmation/replication of biomass measurements coupled with a detailed scientific review of all available methods, how they are performing in other Australian fisheries for snapper. This would ensure future decisions are underpinned by the best evidence-based scientific methods presently available. Accordingly a three year, or any substantial closure, given the cross-sectional impact (primarily sustainability but also economic), is a decision that requires rigorous justification.

We are concerned that there exists, within any closure period high risk of significant snapper stock loss through post-release morbidity/mortality, and the deleterious shift of increased fishing effort directed towards the other primary species. The correct overall management strategy is our only priority, and that will ultimately only stem from selection and implementation of the most appropriate methods available today to ensure rapid recovery of SA's snapper stocks.

Therefore we sincerely believe, that the best interest of all parties involved can only be properly realised by restrictions from 1 October 2019 until 30 June 2020, by which time the

necessary studies, recognised as most important, will have been enacted and the results released.

We desperately need to achieve the right long term goals consistent with the basic requirements of the SA Fishery and community, as a whole.

## **The Pathways**

### *Increase Funding For Snapper Science And Fisheries Management*

1. Extensive literature review by SARDI of current state of snapper marine science methodology being used in Australia to delineate best practice with respect to estimating spawning biomass to inform fisheries management, including quota setting. The chosen methods to be funded accordingly.
2. All the key marine species
  - King George Whiting
  - Snapper
  - Garfish
  - Calamary

to be assessed annually (currently three yearly), and monitored monthly, by individual scientists specifically assigned to that role and function.
3. Investigate the potential for snapper stock enhancement within the Gulfs using the South Australian Aquatic Sciences Centre (West Beach) and the Lincoln Marine Science Centre (Port Lincoln)
4. Investigate the feasibility of a well-managed, affordable, oceanographic, data collection program and resulting archive as part of the conditions linked to the marine scale fishery restructure. Such an archive would help in defining any trends in our Gulfs associated with climatic changes and other environmental issues. Our gulf waters are susceptible to climatic and environmental events due to their shallow nature and relative large surface areas.

### Extend The Current Spawning Closure – October 1 To December 27.

Snapper aggregate and become vulnerable in October pre-spawning, with very high catch rates observed. The two week run up during spawning to Christmas is a particularly increased catch time. The full moon is the second week of December and should provide the peak spawning event.

Tackle traders and coastal communities have indicated this is as far as a closure can be extended into the holiday period without the financial consequences being quite significant.

Make all existing spatial closures into permanent closures. Within the precautionary time-frame we are indicating (1 Oct 2019 to 30 Jun 2020) the Barge at Ardrossan is to be designated as a spatial closure

### Change Recreational Fisher Requirements (only for 1 Oct to 30 Jun 2020)

This type of short-term change has precedent from similar changes to recreational fisher bag sizes, during the 1 to 15 Dec 2012 exclusive snapper closure for the commercial fishery.

1. Individual recreational bag limit - 2 Snapper, with only 1 over 60 cm.
2. Minimum hook size 6/0, to reduce the number of undersized snapper being hooked. This also to be adopted by the Charter Boat Industry.
3. Snapper release weights to become mandatory on all boats.

The latter options, particularly the minimal bag size, should not only minimise the impact on existing snapper stocks, but will also reduce the likelihood of significant effort shift towards the other three primary species.

It also has to be acknowledged that in Dec 2016 recreational fishers had their personal bag limits, for snapper less than 60 cm, reduced from 10 to 5 throughout the State.

## **Commercial Fishing Industry**

The MSF Reform has no established outcomes at this time. Accordingly due to the significant harvest potential, commercial snapper fishing should be closed during the period 1 Oct 2019 to 30 Jun 2020.

## **Prawn Trawling**

Habitat destruction has been proven worldwide to hamper recruitment success. The removal of scallop boats on Port Phillip Bay is a prime example, as shown by the rejuvenation of their snapper fishery.

Accordingly during this critical period, 1 Oct 2019 to 30 Jun 2020, we propose that prawn trawling is not allowed to take place in less than 15M of water. We also strongly recommend that prawn trawling is prohibited within the spatial closure zones, to ensure the habitat and ecology is most beneficial to snapper spawning events.

## **SA Snapper Shepherds (Stewards)**

Learning from the *WA Snapper Guardians* and *Tuna Champions* campaigns, the MRFAC similarly envisages the building of a community stewardship for one of SA's iconic species, snapper. The outcomes focusing on promoting good will, respect and stewardship for snapper, through a wide range of educational and awareness programs

## Option B

Option B that has been considered and rejected by the MRFAC. It primarily fails to address the severe impact of a 3.5 year snapper closure for almost the remainder of the State. There are also other important and specific reasons for rejecting this scenario which include

1. The South East fishery has only had an annual commercial catch of some 5-10 tonnes during the last four years, after experiencing a massive 95% decrease since 2010, when the commercial harvest was 258 tonnes. Moreover no snapper biomass estimate is presently available for the region.
2. This is a particularly dangerous region for novice fisherman with limited boating skills, who should not be encouraged to fish these waters. Presenting it as the only place to catch snapper, will most likely cause an increase in recreational fishers going to the region with the attendant risks we have highlighted.
3. We reject the notion of the region being used to trial harvest tags, not only because "tags" represent a draconian move towards our sector, but also because "tags" have failed to provide a reliable estimate of recreational fishing snapper harvest. The MRFAC is actively engaged in addressing the differing methodologies for recreational fishing surveys, and note the other States have never adopted "tags". More to the point, the major failure of recreational fishing surveys is typically financial under funding to achieve the required precision. This was clearly shown and also acknowledged by the authors of the SA 2013/2014 survey.

27/8/2019

Graham Keegan

Chair *Ministers Recreational Fishing Advisory Council*