



Fishing for the Future

PO BOX 3013 Warner QLD 4500
www.sunfishqld.com.au

Phone (07) 3882 4518
ABN 26 590 693 754

STATEMENT

Sunfish Position Paper on the Rocky Reef Finfish (Snapper) Fishery Management

Management of the Rocky Reef Finfish Fishery was discussed in detail at the Sunfish Annual General Meeting, 24-25 September 2011. The AGM decided that a Sunfish Position Paper should be produced and distributed in accordance with the specific details agreed by delegates. It was also decided that all members and regional branches of Sunfish could provide comments and other input via a circulated draft.

The process within Sunfish has been completed. This position paper provides the views of Sunfish at this time, and it is available to Government and other stakeholders for information and attention. Sunfish intends to further action the items of concern given in this position paper.

1. The preferred management arrangements for this fishery remain as set out in the Sunfish submission of 8 April 2011 to the Queensland Government review of this fishery. This submission is posted on the Sunfish website (www.sunfishqld.com.au).
2. The minimum sizes of 35cm for Snapper and Pearl Perch and 38cm for Teraglin and the recreational bag limits of 5 each per person for Pearl Perch and Teraglin are supported.
3. The Snapper bag limit preferred by Sunfish, and given in the Sunfish submission of 8 April 2011, is five Snapper per person, with two of these over 70cm. Sunfish accepts that there is scientific evidence of growth overfishing of Snapper stocks in the more heavily fished areas in Queensland, and the restriction on Snapper over 70cm is accepted as a practical way of addressing it.
4. The decisions taken by the Queensland Government and announced by the Acting Premier on Sunday 26 June 2011 are regarded by Sunfish as being a short-term fix. This applies especially to the decision on the Snapper bag limit of 4 in possession with only one of these to be over 70cm, and to the decision to impose no additional restrictions on the commercial fishing sector – both line and net.
5. Sunfish is seeking immediate attention by the Government to amend the recreational bag limit for Snapper to 5 with two over 70cm, in accordance with the original Sunfish submission. This should be done as soon as possible.

Representing the interests of Recreational Fishing

6. Sunfish accepts the practical problems of applying a Snapper maximum size limit of 70cm to commercial line fishers. As a practical alternative, Sunfish seeks the application of an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of Snapper on the commercial fishing sector. In determining the amount of an annual TAC for the commercial fishing sector, Sunfish is guided by the conservative estimate recommended by the Stakeholder Network Working Group of 108 tonnes. This TAC proposal was published in the Government discussion paper of 2010. Information has recently come to hand that the total commercial catch last year only reached 75 tonnes. Therefore a mandatory TAC for the commercial sector of 108 tonnes is not sought until management of the fishery is reviewed in 2014. However Sunfish strongly requests that a "trigger point" TAC of 108 tonnes per year be set for the commercial sector from now, until the review in 2014. If the trigger-point of 108 tonnes is exceeded, actions must be taken to limit the commercial catch to 108 tonnes annually.

7. Sunfish will cooperate with Fisheries Queensland to establish a monitoring programme for Snapper whereby experienced recreational fishers will provide details of their catches on a voluntary basis. This information will be useful in future reviews.

8. Sunfish strongly opposes the use of commercial nets to catch any rocky reef fish species. A "nil-bycatch" of all rocky reef fish species should be immediately applied to commercial net fishers.

9. Sunfish requests that all commercial fishers be required to record in their fishing logbooks the numbers of Snapper they catch which are over 70cm. This information will be very important for use in Snapper stock assessments.

11. The Snapper stock assessment for the 2014 review MUST be carried out in a way that is understandable and acceptable to recreational fishers.

The current indices of Snapper abundance are associated with commercial and charter logbooks and recreational State-wide surveys - and they have many associated problems especially with accuracy. The feedback on the Snapper biomass model has indicated that its use as the sole method for stock assessment is unacceptable to the recreational fishing sector.

The Snapper recruitment monitoring in Moreton Bay has strong acceptance by Sunfish as a way to gauge some aspects of the status of Snapper stocks - as has the size/age frequency monitoring of catches. These methods can be understood by recreational fishers and they can be directly related to the status of Snapper stocks (eg the notions of growth and recruitment overfishing possibilities)

4. Sunfish agrees that recreational fishers who fish on fishing charter vessels should be subject to the same bag limits, minimum size requirements and gear specifications as other recreational fishers.

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For any additional information or clarification please contact Dr. Barry Pollock on 3398 9306 or Judy Lynne on 3882 4518.

