



POLICY NAME: Recfish Australia Marine Protected Area (MPA) Policy

POLICY NUMBER: 2007-02 Version: 1

DATE OF EFFECT: 21 September 2007 Contact: CEO Recfish Australia

REPLACING POLICY N/A (NB – this does replace a statement on MPAs)

1 PURPOSE

To articulate the position of Recfish Australia on the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Australia in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the impacts of MPAs on recreational fishing.

2 BACKGROUND

Australia's governments have obligations and an agreement under the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity Conservation, to set up a national system of protected areas throughout our entire marine zone (Australian Government, 2007). As of 2004 the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas covered approximately 64,800,000 hectares or 7.16% of Australia's marine jurisdiction, excluding the Australian Antarctic Territory. There has been a huge acceleration of marine protected area declarations in Australia with over 70 new MPAs declared in the last 10 years and almost 100 possible marine protected areas identified (Australian Government, 2007).

MPAs are being established primarily for biodiversity conservation however many have an impact on fisheries management and recreational fishing. Some see the purpose of MPAs as fully closed areas where no human activities should be allowed, while others see MPAs as multiple use managed areas designed for conservation and reasonable use (GBRMPA 2007).

There are different views on MPAs. Conservationist groups, such as WWF, argue that MPAs safeguard the ocean's rich diversity of life while supporting local economies and therefore act as an insurance policy for the future both for marine life and local people. User groups, particularly fishers argue that MPAs have detrimental impacts on marine business at both local and national levels (AMIF 2006).

Recreational anglers recognise the difficult challenge Australian governments face when seeking to achieve a balance between biodiversity conservation and access to marine resources. This is particularly relevant given the current uncertainty that surrounds not only the extent of biodiversity in each marine region, but also the nature and extent of the impact that recreational fishing is having on that biodiversity.

Recreational anglers are not opposed to the creation of Marine Protected Areas. Establishing Marine Protected Areas has the potential to conserve Australia's rich marine biodiversity and ensure a more sustainable future for recreational anglers, and the regional economies that depend on recreational fishing.

However, recreational anglers are concerned that no-take MPAs are being created in some areas even when there is little or no evidence that recreational fishing in

those areas is having an adverse effect on the marine environment. Application of the 'precautionary principle' (which reverses the 'burden of proof') enables measures to be taken even when there is little or no evidence recreational fishing is having an adverse effect.

This policy has been developed following a Recfishing Research national seminar on MPAs (Recfish Australia, 2007).

3 DEFINITIONS

"Marine Protected Areas" an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legislative or other effective means.

4 POLICY

4.1 Recfish Australia will support:

- 4.1.1 **Science** - a national representative system of multiple use MPAs in Australian waters based on biodiversity protection and sustainability of fisheries resources where the need has been identified through independent peer reviewed science;
- 4.1.2 **Management** - MPAs with simple, practical management plans based on decisions that are risk-based, transparent, informed and timely and with sufficient resources for implementation and future management;
- 4.1.3 **Reviews** -MPAs that are subject to review and monitoring to measure the effectiveness and appropriateness of management plans;
- 4.1.4 **Reasonable use** - MPAs that provide reasonable use and minimise impacts on existing users.
- 4.1.5 **Unity** - a unified approach (national, state and local) and will assist recreational fishers to present well researched, credible alternatives to Government that meet the objectives of MPAs but minimise the impacts on recreational fishers;
- 4.1.6 **Socio-economic consideration** - social and economic factors being given equal consideration to environmental factors in the evaluation of MPA proposals;
- 4.1.7 **Compensation** - initiatives to enhance recreational fishing where MPAs have a significant impact on recreational fishing;
- 4.1.8 **Alliances** - strategic alliances with other groups (commercial fishing, tourism, oil and gas, conservation) where common objectives have been established;
- 4.1.9 **Guideline** - the development of guidelines for effective engagement of stakeholders including adequate opportunity for consultation in the development phase in MPA establishment;
- 4.1.10 **Monitoring-** recreational fishers to get involved in the collection of baseline data in MPAs including catch and effort, value of fishing to local economies, values, attitudes, opinions, desires of recreational fishers;

- 4.1.11 **Involvement** greater involvement by local communities in the development, implementation and management of the MPAs in their localities and a greater sense of 'ownership' of those MPAs;
- 4.1.12 **Locals** - using local community knowledge to develop a much better understanding of marine biodiversity within MPAs and the nature, extent and impact of activities within;
- 4.1.13 **Partnerships** - creation of partnerships with stakeholders of MPAs to forge a greater effectiveness in management, monitoring, reporting, education and extension of common interest objectives for sustaining biodiversity;
- 4.1.14 **Advisory Groups** - establishing a stakeholder advisory group or committee to provide opportunities for the community to engage with government and its agencies on the continuing MPA management processes and direction of research for increasing the knowledge base; and
- 4.1.15 **Other policies** - the policies or positions taken by individual state or territory peak representative recreational fishing bodies on specific MPAs or MPA programs in the waters of their state or territory.

4.2 Recfish Australia will NOT support:

- 4.2.1 **No take/no go zones** - the establishment of any no-take/no go reserves unless it is satisfied there is sound scientific justification;
- 4.2.2 **Discrimination** - discrimination against any forms of recreational fishing and exclusion from areas and species that are available to other fishers; or
- 4.2.3 **Unreasonableness** - any MPA which will impact on recreational fishing to protect species, elements of biodiversity or natural features that could be protected in areas where there would be less impact on recreational fishing.

5 CONGRUENCE WITH OTHER RECFISH AUSTRALIA & MEMBER POLICIES

AFANT advised that the Recfish Australia Policy is congruent with AFANT policy on MPAs. No other member organisation commented on congruency.

6 CONSULTATION

This policy has been formulated after extensive input from stakeholders at the Recfishing Research MPA Seminar November 2006 where most states and recreational fishing interest groups were represented.

Endorsement of this policy has followed the accepted Recfish Australia process of consultation with members.

7 ENDORSEMENT

The Recfish Board and members have the authority to approve policies and guidelines. Endorsement (Step 7) will only be bestowed after steps 1 -6 have been followed.

8 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The MPA Policy will be communicated to all key stakeholders and particularly recreational fishers in Australia through the Recfish Australia website, and regular communication channels (including members and networks).

The Ministers for Fisheries and other Ministers (Commonwealth, State and Territory level), Shadow Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries with Environmental portfolios, and relevant Government agencies will be formally advised of adoption of the policy and any subsequent reviews.

9 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO and will follow Recfish Australia Policy Development and Maintenance.

10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Nil

11 REFERENCES

Australian Government (2007). National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/nrsmpa/index.html>

Australian Government (2004). Marine Protected Areas and Displaced Fishing: A Policy Statement. <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/displaced-fishing.html>

Australian Marine Industries Federation (2006). Marine Protected Area Policy. http://www.amif.asn.au/downloads/Marine_Protected_Area_Policy_December_2006.pdf

Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries (2006). *Marine Protected Areas Policy and Implementation Plan*.

<http://www.biodiversity.govt.nz/pdfs/seas/MPA-Policy-and-Implementation-Plan.pdf>

GBRMPA (2007). Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/management/management_philosophy

Recfish Australia (2007). Marine Protected Area's – stocking the toolbox for recreational fishers. National Seminar, Brisbane 4-5 November 2006.

WWF (2007). Marine protected areas - insurance policies for our future. World Wildlife Fund. <http://wwf.org.au/articles/feature43/>

Recfish Australia use Only

This policy has been adopted by the Recfish Australia Board and is effective from date of signature by the Chair of the Board.

Signed on behalf of the Recfish Australia Board

Chair Name: Bruce Schumacher _____

Chair Signature: <<original signed by Chair>> _____

Dated: 21 September 2007 _____