



**POLICY NAME:** Recreational fishing and threatened and protected fish species

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**POLICY NUMBER:** 2008-01 Version 1

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**DATE OF EFFECT:** 5 September 2008 Contact: CEO Recfish Australia

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**REPLACING POLICY** N/A

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## 1 PURPOSE

To articulate the position of Recfish Australia on the management of endangered\threatened and protected fish species in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the impacts on recreational fishing.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The impacts of human activities have modified and degraded many aquatic ecosystems and led to significant declines in populations of many native fish species, to the point that some are now in danger of extinction and others have a severe or substantial reduction in distribution or abundance (Australian Government, 2008; Morris *et al.*, 2001; NSW DPI 2008). Management agencies, the community and stakeholders have recognised the problems and taken legal and voluntary actions.

Increasingly marine and freshwater fish are being listed as endangered, threatened or protected (Pollard *et al.* 1990; Pollard 2006; Morris *et al.*, 2001; Die, 2006). There has generally been acceptance by scientists and recreational fishers for protected species in freshwater areas and for some marine species that were rare or overfished by some sectors (Smith and Pollard, 1996).

However, with increasing complexity and regulation of fisheries management, including Marine Protected Areas, there has been major issues and conflict associated with management of some protected species and specifically the Grey Nurse Shark (*Carcharias taurus*) in eastern Australia (Recfish Australia 2007). The number of sharks was much debated with Government departments and conservationists suggesting as few as 300-500 sharks remain off the east Australian coast, whereas recreational fishers and divers suggested between 1,000-4,000 (AUF, 2008; RFA, 2008).

Many endangered, threatened and protected species such as birds, seals, turtles, sea stars and whales as well as plants, invertebrates and fish are protected nationally under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

As of June 2008 there were 402 fauna listed as nationally threatened under the EPBC Act of which 46 were fish. A full list can be found at

<http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicthreatenedlist.pl?wanted=fauna>

Threatened species are one category of protected fish. There are also a number of other rare fish that are protected from fishing or collecting by state fisheries or environmental laws. Some fish species are protected and must not be taken:

- at all times
- during certain stages of their life cycle, for example during their reproductive period
- during certain times of the year
- from particular closed areas or reserves.

Threatened species conservation and management involves:

- Determining the threats faced by species;
- Preventing, mitigating and/or managing those threats; and
- Supporting the recovery of the species until they can be removed from the EPBC list of threatened species.

A key benefit of this policy is increased education and stewardship for protected and threatened species of fish by recreational fishers. A key benefit of this policy is improved interaction, trust and co-management between government and recreational fishers for management of protected and threatened species of fish.

### **3 DEFINITIONS**

**Protected species-** is broadly used to describe any species that has some level of protection afforded to it through Australian State, Federal or International law

**Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable-**

The criteria used for listing threatened species under the EPBC Act are contained in the *EPBC Regulations 2000*, Division 7.01 (Australian Government 2008) and are reproduced below:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Category</b>		
		<b>Critically endangered</b>	<b>Endangered</b>	<b>Vulnerable</b>
1	It has undergone, is suspected to have undergone or is likely to undergo in the immediate future:	a very severe reduction in numbers	a severe reduction in numbers	a substantial reduction in numbers
2	Its geographic distribution is precarious for the survival of the species and is:	very restricted	restricted	limited
3	The estimated total number of mature individuals is: and:	very low	low	limited
	(a) evidence suggests that the number will continue to	a very high rate	a high rate	a substantial rate

Item	Criterion	Category		
		Critically endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable
	decline at: or (b) the number is likely to continue to decline and its geographic distribution is:	precarious for its survival	precarious for its survival	precarious for its survival
4	The estimated total number of mature individuals is:	extremely low	very low	low
5	The probability of its extinction in the wild is at least:	50% in the immediate future	20% in the near future	10% in the medium-term future

## 4 POLICY

### 4.1 Recfish Australia will support:

- 4.1.1 Protection of fish species –
  - 4.1.1.1 A moratorium on catching fish species that are proven to be severely (80%) reduced in numbers by fishing.
  - 4.1.1.2 Species listed as endangered or critically endangered under Australian Federal or State laws or listed in the IUCN Red List.
- 4.1.2 Management measures taken to prevent vulnerable species from becoming endangered – this may include lower in-possession limits and/or changes to minimum/maximum size limits.
- 4.1.3 Protection of small areas or time periods (e.g. during spawning) – for protected fish species with very restricted distributions or highly vulnerable to all or some types of recreational fishing.
- 4.1.4 Recreational only species – for fish species that are declining but there is no scientific evidence that recreational fishing is the major threat.
- 4.1.5 Education – to ensure that recreational fishers can accurately identify protected species.
- 4.1.6 Best practise release for accidental capture – if protected fish species are accidentally caught, they will be returned to the water immediately using best practise release methods so that they have the best chance of survival.
- 4.1.7 Reporting of accidental capture – recreational fishers will report accidental capture of protected fish species to relevant national and state databases.
- 4.1.8 Science and community monitoring – we will assist scientists by providing information on sightings of

protected fish species (particularly sharks) as well as with other collaborative projects such as tagging.

- 4.1.9 Cost effective restoration – for endangered fish species (particularly freshwater species) where the community can be involved in restocking, habitat enhancement and resnagging and removal of introduced species.
- 4.1.10 Recovery or threat abatement plans – with specific, achievable, realistic, measurable and costed criteria that are focussed on the interaction between recreational fishers and endangered fish species.

#### **4.2 Recfish Australia will NOT support:**

- 4.2.1 Unreasonable decisions and process – Protected fish species that are proposed, introduced and currently enforced by management without the justification of rigorous science, risk, and consultation involving a risk-based stakeholder workshop.
- 4.2.2 Biased information – where Government declare protected fish species using information that is biased or has large potential for errors.
- 4.2.3 Social, safety, iconic or other protection – where Government declare a protected “iconic” fish species without considering environmental information on numbers, distribution and risk and the impact on recreational fishers.
- 4.2.4 Discrimination – where selected types of recreational fishers (i.e. spearfishers) are prevented from access or sustainable harvest of a protected fish species.

### **5 CONGRUENCE WITH OTHER RECFISH AUSTRALIA & MEMBER POLICIES**

National and state fishing organisations do not have a written, publicly available policy on recreational fishing and threatened or protected species.

### **6 CONSULTATION**

This policy was developed by Adam Smith in consultation with the Recfish Australia board and CEO. The draft has been circulated to delegates (members) and key stakeholders for input and comment. This policy has followed the accepted Recfish Australia process of consultation.

### **7 ENDORSEMENT**

The Recfish Board and members have the authority to approve policies and guidelines. This will occur after appropriate consultation in line with the key steps involved in developing Recfish Australia policy.

### **8 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

The Recreational Fishing and Threatened and Protected Fish Species 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).

### **9 REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO and will follow Recfish Australia policy development and maintenance procedures.

## 10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Recfish Australia Marine Protected Area (MPA) Policy

NSW DPI (2008). Threatened species and biodiversity program

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/species-protection>

NSW DPI (2008). Key threatening processes.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/species-protection/species-conservation/what-current#KTP>

QLD DPI&F (2008). Looking after protected species in Queensland. A guide for recreational anglers.

<http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/extra/pdf/fishweb/recprotectedspecies.pdf>

## 11 REFERENCES

Australian Government (2008). Threatened species and ecological communities.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/index.html>

Die, D.J (2006). Are Atlantic marlins overfished or endangered? Some reasons why we may not be able to tell. *Bulletin of Marine Science* **79**, (3, 529-543.

Hunstman, G.R. (1994). Endangered marine finfish: Neglected resources or beasts of fiction? *Fisheries*. **19**,(7), pp. 8-15.

Morris, SA; Pollard, DA; Gehrke, PC; Pogonoski, JJ (2001). Threatened and potentially threatened freshwater fishes of coastal New South Wales and the Murray-Darling Basin: report to Fisheries Action Program and World Wide Fund for Nature. *NSW fisheries final report series* [N.S.W. Fish. Final Rep. Ser.]. no. 33, 68 pp.

Pollard, D.A.; Ingram, B.A.; Harris, J.H.; Reynolds, L.F. (1990). Threatened fishes in Australia—an overview. *Journal of Fish Biology*. **37** pp. 67 – 68

Pollard, D. (2006). Threatened Species. Pages 78–79 in: Forrest, R.E., Scandol, J.P. and Pitcher, T.J. (eds). "Towards ecosystem-based fishery management in New South Wales: Proceedings of the experts and data workshop, December 8–10, 2003, Cronulla, Australia". *Fisheries Centre Research Reports* 14(5): 124pp.

Recfish Australia (2007). Recfish Australia Marine Protected Area (MPA) Policy. 2007-2. 4 pages

Smith, A.K. and D.A. Pollard (1996) The best available information—some case studies from NSW, Australia, of conservation-related management responses which impact on recreational fishers, *Marine Policy* **20** (3), pp. 261–267.

### 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: \_



Dated: 8 September 2008

