



MINISTER FOR FISHERIES

MEDIA STATEMENT

Attention: News Editor/Chief of Staff

15/11/07

Metropolitan fishing closure will help sustainability of iconic fish.

Today marks the closure of commercial line and gillnet fishing in the Metropolitan Fishing Zone, between Lancelin and south of Mandurah, as part of a fishing reform package to ensure sustainability of fish for the future.

Fisheries Minister Jon Ford said a \$5million compensation package will be available to buy-out commercial line and demersal gillnet fishers within the metropolitan zone.

Only about eight licence holders are expected to be fully impacted by the new ban, with other metropolitan zone fishers able to continue fishing in other parts of the West Coast Bioregion, which runs from Kalbarri to near Augusta.

Various commercial fisheries will still be allowed to operate in the metropolitan zone including the lobster fishery, purse seine fishing for sardines and the South West Trawl fishery which takes prawns, scallops and small fish.

Mr Ford said that although a handful of fishermen would be impacted by the ban, consumers should experience little if no impact from this Western Australian Government policy.

“Only about three per cent of demersal scalefish consumed in WA comes from the metropolitan zone, with 97 per cent of the supply coming from WA’s northern fisheries. So there should be very little if any change in prices,” he said.

“In any case, fish such as dhufish and pink snapper have been over-priced for most Western Australians for several years. But with better sustainability practices by this fishery, supply should improve in the long-term and prices should become more realistic.”

The Minister said the difficult decision to introduce the metropolitan zone fishing ban was necessary to ensure sustainability of iconic demersal scalefish such as dhufish and pink snapper.

“New research presented to me showed an immediate reduction in catches of key demersal scalefish, of about 50 per cent, was required to ensure the sustainability of these fish in the Metropolitan Fishing Zone,” he said.

“In making the decision, I considered the following points: The metropolitan zone attracts about two-thirds of all recreational fishing effort between Kalbarri and near Augusta; commercial catches of demersal species in the metropolitan zone accounts for about three per cent of the State’s entire catch of demersal scalefish; a shared reduction by commercial and recreational sectors was likely to have made the remaining commercial sector unviable; and compensation would be available for affected commercial fishers, while many metropolitan zone fishers will still be able to operate outside of the metropolitan zone.

“Having considered these issues, I decided to remove all commercial line and gillnet fishing in this area. This decision is in keeping with the Integrated Fisheries Management that allows me to make allocation decisions, which can include the option of zero allocation.”

Mr Ford said that while the Metropolitan Fishing Zone was now effectively an exclusive zone for recreational fishing of demersal scalefish such as dhufish and pink snapper, he was not ignoring the fact that recreational fishing also had an enormous impact on fish stocks.

“Our current management arrangements such as bag limits are no longer sufficient to keep abreast with the increasing pressure on our fish stocks. That’s why we need a new and innovative management strategy for recreational fishing of demersal scalefish along the West Coast Bioregion,” the Minister said.

“The discussion paper I released in September invites the public to have their say about what this new management strategy should involve. Submissions close tomorrow, November 16, so I urge people to make their submissions. Your ideas will be very helpful in deciding the fate of recreational fishing.”

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