

SUNFISH QUEENSLAND INC

SUNFISH SUBMISSION (16 FEB 2008) – DRAFT REZONING PLAN, MORETON BAY MARINE PARK

Note :- This submission does not in any way support or approve the declaration of the green zones proposed by the Queensland Government in the Moreton Bay Marine Park Draft Plan. The suggestions contained in this submission are amendments to the draft proposals released by the Queensland Government for public comment. This submission by Sunfish is crucial to the maintenance of recreational fishing in areas of existing high use by recreational fishers.

INTRODUCTION

This submission has been prepared by Sunfish Qld (Inc) from information provided by member organisations, fishing clubs, local groups with interests in recreational fishing, private individuals, recreational fishing experts, and scientists with expertise in coastal management, fisheries management and marine park zoning. It represents the specific views and interests of 20,000 recreational and sport fishers who are members of Sunfish and who use Moreton Bay on a regular basis. This submission also represents the views of many other recreational fishing interests who have cooperated with Sunfish in the development of this submission. All Moreton Bay recreational fishers rely on the Bay for non work related fishing activities. To these people recreational fishing is a source of relaxation, recreation and enjoyment, family and community tradition, a limited source of seafood for family and friends, and a healthy lifestyle. Recreational fishing in the Bay is a major attraction to many people who live in the large cities and towns nearby.

Basis and limitations of this submission

1. The proposals and views in this submission will only remain current until 1st July 2008 and Sunfish Qld (Inc) reserves the right to amend ,change or retract any element of our submission if :-
 - the stated date is passed without any final zoning decision
 - the December 2007 EPA proposal is modified to adversely affect anglers by closing alternative areas.
 - circumstances change or additional data/information becomes available
 - substantial changes are made to the December 2007 EPA draft rezoning plan that changes the user balance zoning in favour of other users.
2. This submission refers specifically to the draft plan released by EPA in December 2007
3. It has not taken into account any proposals prepared by other groups/stakeholders
4. Where no comment has been made then SUNFISH has no alternative or contradictory proposal.

SUNFISH SUBMISSION

Recreational fishing is the most popular activity in Moreton Bay in terms of the numbers of participants. Approximately one third of all recreational fishing in Queensland is carried out in Moreton Bay and the capital investment in boats,4WD's,

fishing equipment and social interaction through fishing clubs and by other recreational fishers is substantial .

Numerous manufacturers and small to medium-sized businesses are established to support recreational fishing in the Moreton Bay area and restrictions on recreational fishing will impact on their business.

Sunfish member bodies include all the major fishing organisations, regional fishing groups and some of the largest clubs as individual members.

Sunfish also has representation from industries that support recreational fishing.

Sunfish was established some 35 years ago as the Queensland Sport and Recreational Fishing Council, and has actively pursued the interests of recreational fishers in Queensland during that period. It is recognised as the peak fishing body by the Queensland Government.

SUBMISSION ON THE PROPOSED ZONES

At the outset it should be noted that various forms of recreational fishing currently occur in **all** the new green and yellow zone areas proposed in the draft rezoning plan. However SUNFISH has recognised that it is not be feasible for the green zones to be removed or significantly reduced given the recent statements by the Queensland Premier and Minister responsible for marine parks in regard to the very clear intention of the Queensland Government to have 15% of the Moreton Bay Marine Park declared as green zones.

The Scientific Guiding Principles which were compiled by a scientific panel convened by the EPA sought 10% of the marine park as green zones. The 10% proposal for green zones was based on a supposed requirement of the International Convention on Biological Biodiversity. Scientists and experts in international conventions within Sunfish have carefully checked the basis of the 10% principle for green zones and have formed the opinion that there is no binding requirement under the CBD for 10% of the marine park to be green zones. The EPA has been advised of this in writing on several occasions, but no action has been taken to resolve this issue. It is within this context of achieving the Government's aim for 15% green zones and further areas of lesser conservation, that Sunfish provides the following suggestions in support of retaining critical access for future recreational fishing in the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

The suggestions provided here by Sunfish would enable the Queensland Government to achieve its goal whilst minimising the major adverse impacts on recreational fishing in the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

The following is a listing of areas within the green zones proposed in the draft rezoning plan which will have considerable adverse impacts on current recreational fishing activities.

In most cases a minor adjustment to the boundaries of the proposed green zone would completely or significantly reduce the impacts on recreational fishing.

The listing below and the attached maps therefore give the general changes that are sought to the proposed green zones.

It should also be noted that Sunfish has confined its suggestions to what it considers as the eleven most important areas. Sunfish emphasises that the following eleven amendments are not the only areas within green zones that will adversely impact on recreational fishing, as all 33 proposed green zones will impact to varying extents on current recreational fishing activities.

Sunfish Qld (inc) does not support the continuation of the current non conforming netting activities in the Peel Island green zone. It is totally

unacceptable that large scale netting operations are allowed in a green zone area where recreational fishing is prohibited. The case that net fishers traditionally fished in this area is dubious because many recreational fishers have also traditionally fished in that green zone for many years.

Green zone proposed amendments

The following listing is not in order of priority – the areas listed will have the greatest adverse impact on recreational fishing in the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Sunfish repeats and emphasises the important point that other areas of proposed green zones not in this list of eleven will also adversely impact on recreational fishing.

The following listing gives the eleven most significant areas of proposed green zone adversely impacting on recreational fishing.

Amendments to proposed green zones suggested by Sunfish(refer to the attached maps):

1. **Heath Is** – exclude the exposed beach and a small amount of yabbie bank at the entrance creek to the lagoon. (This is a minor change)

The beach at Heath Is including the creek entrance and either side of the creek entrance is a prolific and extremely popular recreational fishing area. It is sheltered from easterly and southerly winds. The beach gutters are renown recreational fishing areas for whiting, bream, flathead, dart, tarwhine, tailor, etc. Just inside the creek entrance many anglers pump yabbies for bait. This is the only yabbie bank on the north end of Moreton Is

2. **Mirapool** – exclude the Long Point exposed beach and the Rufus King wreck offshore (This is a minor change)

At Mirapool the ocean meets the calm waters of the Bay. Beach anglers have called this area Long Point and have fished the beach in this area in very large numbers for many years. The beach either side of Long Point at Mirapool is a renown recreational fishing location for whiting, dart, bream, tailor and tarwhine. Offshore the Rufus King wreck has been a popular location for boat anglers travelling through the South Passage. The Mirapool lagoon is the remnants of a boat channel through the South Passage. It is mainly cut off from the sea but occasionally breaks out. The Mirapool lagoon is occasionally fished by anglers.

3. **Point Halloran** – exclude the yabbie bank in front of the road esplanade (This is a minor change).

The yabbie bank at Point Halloran is by far the most popular yabbie bank, accessible from the mainland on the south side of Brisbane. In fact it is the only good yabbie bank accessible from the mainland on the southside.

4. **Kalinga Bank at Jumpinpin.** - exclude from the proposed green zone a strip along the edge of Stingaree Is (Kalinga Bank) so that anglers can fish from the shore without standing in the proposed green zone. (This is a minor change).

Kalinga Bank at Jumpinpin is one of the most prolific recreational fishing areas for small boats in sheltered waters of the Bay. Many anglers go ashore at Kalinga to camp and they fish from the shore at Kalinga. The bank is renown for bream and flathead catches.

5. **Tripcony Bight** – exclude the navigation channel, camping foreshore on Bribie Is, and the rocky ledge at the south west corner of the proposed green zone.(This is a minor change)

Pumicestone Passage was established by the Queensland Government as the only large recreational only fishing area in south Queensland. No net fishing is permitted as all net fishers were removed and compensated by considerable government funding. The Tripcony Bight area is a prolific fishing area in a wilderness setting. Limited camping is provided for people who wish to visit and fish in this area from the bank or in small boats.

6. **Amity spit** – exclude the spit up to the entrance channel to Amity Basin, and the yabbie bank at Amity Basin. (This is a minor change)

Amity Point is a popular holiday and camping location. A small sand spit runs southward from the camping ground where families with small children often fish in safety mainly for whiting. The rock walls at Amity are for the skilled angler and are dangerous for kids. The preferred bait for whiting at this spot is yabbies which are pumped inside the spit. There is no other source of yabbies at Amity.

7. **St Helena**. - exclude the eastern part of the zone where coral dredging occurred. (This is a minor change.)

The eastern side of St Helena is popular with boat anglers for sand crabs and rocky reef fish, snapper, sweetlip, parrot, etc. The area was degraded due to coral limestone extraction, but fishing remains popular.

8. **Peel Is** – current green area NOT to be extended further offshore as proposed. (This is a minor change.)

Peel Is is the most popular area in the Bay for small boats fishing for rocky reef fish such as snapper, sweetlip and parrot. A huge green zone already exists on the north west side of Peel from the shore to the 2metre contour. This is respected by recreational fishers and should not be further extended as would have major impacts on the remaining fishing area outside the existing green zone. **AS MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY COMMERCIAL NETTING IN THE EXISTING GREEN ZONE MUST BE STOPPED AS IT IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR LARGE NETS TO BE USED IN A GREEN ZONE WHERE ANGLING IS PROHIBITED.**

9. **South Stradbroke** – exclude the offshore rocky area where live bait is collected outside the Southport Seaway entrance. (This is a minor change.)

Offshore boat anglers commonly exit to the ocean via the Southport Seaway. Live bait is an important element to offshore fishing in the area. The only reliable source of live bait is the offshore coffee rock area just north of the seaway entrance

10. **Offshore North Moreton** – allow offshore trolling in the two green zones offshore of north Moreton Is. (This is a minor change)

Game fishers keep excellent records of their catches as part of their catch, tag and release programmes for scientific evaluation. Their records show that the two green zones offshore of north Moreton are the most prolific fishing grounds for pelagic fish in that region. Pelagic fish are highly migratory and so are only temporary visitors to the fishing areas. Pelagic fish are caught by trolling not by bottom fishing.

Amendments are sought to these green zones so that game fishers can continue to operate for trolling in these prolific fishing grounds.

11 . **Scotts Point** – Northern area to be excluded and green extended out (east) to the trawl closure line. The sandy shore areas be excluded from the green zone.

The proposed green zone is adjacent to a popular parking & high tide fishing access area. In addition worms(sand wrigglers) have historically been dug (with forks) along the sandy foreshore area just below the high water line by anglers during the whiting season (summer).

SUBMISSION ON THE PROPOSED YELLOW ZONES

Pumicestone Passage (ROFA – recreational only fishing area – a unique situation within the MBMP) – Following from the Burns Inquiry into recreational fishing, the whole of Pumicestone Passage was established by the Queensland Government as a recreational fishing only area. Considerable Queensland Government funds were provided to compensate commercial net fishers who were excluded from further fishing in the Passage. Pumicestone Passage is by far the largest and most prolific recreational only fishing area in the State. Boat fishing in the sheltered waters of the Passage is by far the most common form of recreational fishing although many shore based angling locations are used by recreational fishers. The area is renowned for its DIVERSITY of fish taken, and anglers have commonly used three rods from their boats for example one for whiting/bream and one for flathead/tailor. Major concerns are expressed by Sunfish and local and visiting anglers about restrictions being placed on the apparatus allowed to be used in the proposed yellow zoning in Pumicestone Passage in the already legislated Recreational Only Fishing Area.

Scientific evaluations indicate that restricting apparatus does decrease catches disproportionately and reduces incentive to go fishing.

Recommendation – remove the yellow zoning from the already declared non commercial area closure. This will allow for three rods to be used per angler in an area noted for its diversity in catches.

NOTE. Sunfish strongly supports both yellow zones and the use of a single rod by anglers in yellow zones. It is solely the unique and special case of Pumicestone Passage where Sunfish and local and visiting anglers seek to use three rods per angler due to the existing ROFA and the diversity of fish available to be caught in the Pumicestone Passage.

Additional yellow zone proposals

1. Scarborough Reef - Newport

This was one of the initial areas considered by the EPA Scientific Advisory Group as having conservation value. Because of its intense recreational use it was considered impractical to close it down completely to recreational fishing. Sunfish suggests that the unique values and biodiversity could be protected by zoning it yellow. This would alleviate some of the recreational pressure and stop the transfer of commercial netting effort from adjacent closed areas. Eg Pine River & Deception Bay.

2. North Moreton Beach Areas

The beach and inshore area from the Curtin Artificial Reef to North Light is a highly used recreational fishing area by locals and tourist families all year round (please see previous comments on Heath Is). The only permanent feature in the area is Yellowpatch lagoon/Heath Is, and Sunfish has previously suggested the inner area of the lagoon being zoned green and the outer area suggested as a yellow zone.

To improve the integrity of the area Sunfish suggests that the whole beach area from the Curtin Artificial Reef to North Light be zoned yellow. This would stop the beach netting. Most importantly it would reduce the ongoing major conflicts between netters and anglers.

Commercial netting in this area is of low value and very disruptive to fish migrations of whiting, dart, tailor and bream. The high value mullet fishery would not be affected as mullet schools can be taken in nets on the eastern beaches at Moreton Is.

Any proposed extension of the yellow zone further south by local residents would be supported if there is justification.

Yellow zone uses

It should be noted that even though Yellow zones restrict recreational fishers to one rod and one hook, they are strongly supported by Sunfish **where they benefit recreational fishers** as a way of partially compensating anglers for the loss of access in green zones. The exception to this general support for yellow zones relates to the unique situation of Pumicestone Passage which is a recreational only fishing area, and an area where small boat angling is the most popular form of recreational fishing. The Passage is renowned for its diversity of recreational fishing catches, and anglers have traditionally used one line for whiting/bream and one for different line for flathead/tailor. A large yellow zone in the Passage would have major adverse impacts and is not supported.

The removal of commercial netting and restricting other commercial operations has been proven to enhance recreational fishing opportunities in other areas.

Sunfish understands the concept that commercial bait netting continue in all yellow zone areas but this should apply only for specifically endorsed bait net fishers that sell their bait.

Sunfish recognises that various forms of commercial fishing will be reduced in the Moreton Bay Marine Park by the proposed yellow zones, but it must be realised that the Queensland Government is offering a Structural Adjustment Package to minimise the costs of the new zoning plan on commercial fishers.

Sunfish is fully supportive of the proposed yellow & dark blue zones not already commented on.

DEFINING BAIT NETS IN YELLOW ZONES

Sunfish has major concerns that the nets available for “commercial bait netting” have been and will be further modified so they can be used for other forms of netting in the yellow zones. It is the policy of Sunfish that “bait nets, both amateur and commercial be only used to catch/take bait fish”. Sunfish has made a submission on this issue to the current review of the inshore fin fishery managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPIF). An extract from this submission is as follows:

“Bait nets

Sunfish strongly recommends the adoption of the policy **“all bait nets, both commercial and amateur, should only be used to catch bait”**.

In the case of amateur bait nets, only bait species may be retained. All other fin fish must be released.

This also applies to commercial bait nets, that is only bait may be kept. All other species must be released.

Bait may need to be specified. Hence Sunfish provides a list of bait fin fish:

Gar, pilchards, hardheads, herrings, anchovies, yellowtail pike, biddies, all mullet except Mugil cephalus.

Sunfish strongly opposes the use of long, large mesh bait nets due to the targeting of non bait fish. Sunfish opposes the range of commercial bait nets put forward in the draft plan, and strongly advocates **only the use of the “ocean beach bait net” throughout the east coast for catching bait by commercial fishers(200m long, mesh 12-25mm).”**

In regard to the proposed yellow zones in the Moreton Bay Marine Park, **Sunfish is concerned that the commercial net fishing sector will NOT be restricted by DPIF**

to the intent that only bait netting will be permitted in yellow zones. Sunfish seeks to eliminate the current loop-hole in the fisheries legislation which allows commercial net fishers to use very large gill nets to take all types of fish in the name of “bait netting”.

The fisheries legislation in regard to Moreton Bay allows “commercial bait nets” to be 400m in length and to use monofilament gill mesh from 12mm to 45mm. SUCH NETS ARE NOT BAIT NETS AND MUST BE PROHIBITED.

DISTURBANCES TO BIRDS, DUGONGS, AND GREY NURSE SHARKS

The draft plan proposes considerable actions to reduce disturbances to birds, turtles and dugong which have the general support of Sunfish. Scientific evidence has resulted in the listing of Grey Nurse Shark as an endangered species with populations estimated to be very low at this time.

Dugong and shore/wading birds are NOT considered as endangered. One of the six species of sea turtle which occur in the marine park is considered as endangered.

In the case of the endangered Grey Nurse Shark(GNS), Green zones/GNS areas have been proposed at Flat Rock, Hendersons Rock and Cherubs Cave which prevents disturbance from line fishing. This is supported by Sunfish. Given that the GNS is the one of only two endangered species in the marine park, and is now reduced to very small populations, surely all disturbances to GNS should be eliminated.

This is particularly important as the GNS at the proposed three green zones are reproductive aggregations.

The regulatory framework put forward in the plan to control scuba divers and protect GNS is very clumsy and almost impossible to enforce. Most importantly it will not prevent GNS disturbances by divers. It is proposed in the draft plan that a diver would commit an offence by “interrupting the shark’s swimming pattern”. Scuba divers at Flat Rock, Henderson Rock and Cherubs Cave invariably impact on the swimming patterns of the resident GNS.

It seems to Sunfish that in regard to managing the endangered GNS, the draft rezoning plan is biased against line fishing, and in favour of scuba diving. Sunfish would suggest that all disturbances to the endangered GNS be eliminated – so both line fishing and diving should be stopped at the three proposed green zones/GNS areas previously mentioned.

NEW ARTIFICIAL REEFS

Sunfish supports the brief comments in the draft plan to provide additional artificial reefs in support of recreational fishing. Few details of the process or of funding support by the Qld Government are given. Sunfish and its member organisations would be pleased to participate in future processes of the Qld Government to provide and fund artificial reefs in the marine park.

GENERAL COMMENTS.

Restrictions on apparatus for recreational anglers

It is unclear in the draft what the regulation is regarding carrying fish and apparatus through green and yellow zones. As some of these exist adjacent to one another a clear definition of what is allowed is needed.

The stowed and secured definition should apply and as long as the rod is in a holder and not being used then there is no offence. Likewise fish in an icebox/container are not illegal.

Enforcement

The responsibility of increased enforcement and associated cost is not clear Neither is the enforcement responsibility where different legislation is duplicated by different government agencies eg yellow zones & fish habitat reserves.

Research & Performance Monitoring

This is not clearly defined nor is it apparent where the monies are to come from.

Structural Adjustment – commercial fishers

Sunfish supports the proposed structural adjustment package but only on the basis that commercial licences are forfeited by those commercial fishers who receive payments – and such fishers should NOT be able to purchase/lease a latent licence and re-enter the fishery. For example there are about 500 net licences at present and these are transferable and may be bought or leased. DPIF has issued too many commercial licences for the amount of fish available and as a result most are only partly used or not used (latent licences).

End of text.