

# TARFish

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Wild Fisheries Management Branch  
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## **Submission: Scalefish Fishery Management Plan Review 2008**

Detailed below is a submission on the above management plan that has been compiled from a broad range of recreational marine fishing stakeholders input.

In preparing this submission I would like to advise that TARFish have conducted two public meetings, Zeehan in late August and St Helens in late September, and attended two public meetings held by the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) at Stanley and Ulverstone, in September, specifically addressing the scalefish review. We also had a presence at the Deegan Marine Boat Show at Ulverstone for two full days in late August, distributing relevant information and discussing the scalefish review with a couple of hundred people who attended the boat show.

TARFish have been encouraging regional and local communities to prepare submissions as well as individual submissions where appropriate. We believe that regional and local community submissions encourage communities to consider the broad range of implications of any potential changes and the broader social and economic impacts of current fishing activities.

The views expressed within this submission are a combination of regional community input and TARFish members input resulting from the public meetings and considerable personal contact with individual recreational marine fishers.

Before we provide details on the Scalefish Management Plan review there are a couple of issues that we would like to bring to your attention in an effort to suggest some improvements for future management plan reviews.

## **1. Broader Public Meeting Opportunities.**

I attended both public meetings held by the DPIW at Stanley and Ulverstone during September and believe that these provided a very important opportunity for both recreational and commercial fishers to firstly be provided with information on the review and secondly to be provided with the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the written details provided as part of the review. A DPIW representative (Rod Pearn) also attended a public meeting I called for the West Coast which I feel was very beneficial for the DPIW as well as for the local marine fishing community.

I was disappointed to learn that the DPIW had no plans to provide the same public meeting opportunity for fishers on the East Coast or the Tasman Peninsula, two extremely popular recreational marine fishing areas. I subsequently conducted a public meeting for the East Coast where around 30 concerned recreational fishers attended. I also contacted a well known recreational marine fishing identity on the Tasman Peninsula who assured me that the key stakeholders in the area were aware of the review and that submissions would be forthcoming.

I realise that legislation does not require the DPIW to conduct public meetings at this stage in the review schedule, however we strongly suggest that where these were undertaken by the DPIW, or ourselves, the regional benefits were significant and recreational and commercial fishers were enthusiastic in their attendance and input. I suggest not ensuring the key areas on the East Coast and Tasman Peninsula were provided with DPIW public meetings was not well received by the marine fishers I spoke to.

*Suggestion* - The DPIW should consider a state wide representative schedule of public meetings be held in all key marine fishing areas to ensure regional communities are adequately and appropriately informed on the key information they require to prepare a meaningful submission.

## **2. Public Consultation Period.**

To provide 30 days for public submissions on the Scalefish Management Plan, which is 90 pages in length, is an inadequate period of time for the DPIW to expect to receive well prepared and investigated submissions. As noted above for the DPIW and TARFish to conduct public meetings on the review have seen most communities realistically have only about, at best, two weeks to investigate, consider relevant information, seek input and clarification and prepare their submissions.

*Suggestion:* TARFish recommends that a minimum 60 day period be considered for any public consultation period which will allow for well researched and considered submissions to be provided to the DPIW. This should ensure that fishers are better informed and the DPIW should receive a higher quality of public submissions that are more considered and broader reaching in their consideration base.

### **3. Provide All Relevant Information.**

At the West Coast public meeting that I arranged I had to request the DPIW representative to bring along copies of the Fisheries (Scalefish) Rules 2004, they were not going to be provided by default. I had to request copies from the DPIW of the rules to take to the East Coast meeting which I held and I can't recall if they were made available at the two DPIW public meetings at Stanley or Ulverstone.

Whilst TARFish recognise that the DPIW provide copies via electronic means and would post out to anyone where they requested them via telephone or mail, it is expeditious when conducting public meetings to provide copies of the rules that you are asking for public comment on. In my experience in holding a number of regional public meetings and talking to the general public it should not be automatically thought that the majority of people have access to the Internet to gather the rules and associated material. If 30 day public consultation periods are to continue then all avenues for efficiently and effectively distributing all relevant material should be provided.

*Suggestion:* TARFish recommends that where public meetings are organised seeking public comment then all avenues for efficiently and effectively distributing all relevant material should be provided.

TARFish would like to preface our submission on the Scalefish Management Plan 2008 Review by stating that:

1. We are not looking for change for changes sake,
2. Any proposed changes must be supported by robust scientific information and where robust scientific information is currently unavailable then decisions should be based on the precautionary principle,
3. We expect the Scalefish Management Plan will be predominated on an ecosystem based fisheries management approach when considering any proposed amendments, and
4. Decision making outcomes should be based on sustainable fishing for the future, looking after our fisheries and protecting the environment.

**Submission Issues:**

**1. FURTHER IMPROVING FISHING PRACTICES**

*1.1. Filleting of Fish at Sea*

**TARFish believe that filleting of fish at sea should continue to be allowed.**

The stated justification for changing the current regulations is that it can increase the risk of spreading marine diseases. TARFish request that scientific validation be provided to justify this statement. We would content that the purported risk is so low that from a risk management perspective there is no justification substantiating the proposal. The disposal at sea of fish heads and frames returns natural biological material that is not foreign to the marine environment from which it came. TARFish contends that there is a significantly higher risk of disease being introduced into the marine environment through the use of imported baits, which we understand are currently not screened in any manner and which has been brought to the DPIW attention.

To consider such a proposal the DPIW should consider what will happen to this waste material if fishers are required to bring it to shore, it will either be generally discarded along our coastal environment, thereby creating visual pollution or it will be thrown into the rubbish bin and left to rot and fowl our suburban environments. We would suggest neither scenario is a good outcome for the greater Tasmanian community.

The second reason given for considering a change states that the filleting process helps disguise non-compliance with size limits. In NSW & QLD where filleting at sea is allowed they have simply implemented a minimum fillet size for the various fish species which is a simpler and less complex solution to the stated issue.

If the DPIW were to consider such a proposal how would rock lobster fishers bait their pot's? Would fishers be required to return to shore to fillet the fish and then go back out to sea to set the craypot? And the same scenario exists for recreational fishers who use fillets for bait on hooked lines, are they expected to return to shore, fillet the fish and return to sea to continue fishing?

*1.2. Hook Allocations*

**TARFish do not believe that there should be any changes to the current hook allocation.**

*1.3. Line Allocations*

1.3.1. Line Allocation – Land or Marine Structure

**TARFish believe that consideration should be given to imposing a maximum number of lines per fisher within a 20 metre radius on land or a marine structure.**

Pier fishing is very popular with land based fishers and the opportunity exists to effectively section off parts of a pier for their exclusive use through the provision of this current rule. This practice is not conducive to access equity or the principles of catching a feed of fish.

#### 1.3.2. Line Allocation - Boat

**TARFish believe that a maximum number of lines able to be used on a boat may warrant some consideration.**

TARFish however contend that the size of the boat will automatically limit the number of lines. Too many lines set on a boat creates tangled lines and mayhem when a large fish “takes off” or the tide changes. Consideration of this proposal should take into account the differing fishing practices such as “bottom bashing” and “Game or Pelagic Fishing”. It is accepted that to successfully fish for pelagic species a spread of lures is required to mimic bait activity to entice pelagic species strikes. Somewhere between 5 to 8 lures are required in a successful spread and what (number of lines) would be considered excessive in a small dinghy is a minimum in successful game fishing. The specific requirements of Tasmania’s Charter Boat Operators should also be taken into consideration as they are another important recreational fishing platform that may have particular needs that should be considered.

#### 1.4. Jig Allocations

**TARFish believe that current jig allocations do not require any change.**

Having particularly questioned recreational fishers about the use of longlines, droplines and setlines at the public meetings held we are of the view that these fishing methods are used by a very small number of Tasmania’s recreational fishing population and contend that there is no detrimental impact of these fishing methods on fish stocks or the benthic marine environment. Should the DPIW have scientific information to support the proposed changes we request that it be made available so that we may further consider our view.

#### 1.5. Attendance or Maximum Soak Times – Longlines, Setlines, Droplines & Gill Nets

**TARFish believes that being in attendance for Droplines, Setlines, Longlines & Gill Nets creates a major safety issue that could not be supported.**

TARFish have a number of concerns with the attendance proposal and they relate mainly to the safety aspects of being forced to be on the water, when otherwise you would not be. Fishers should be able to seek protection from Tasmania’s sudden and

at times short winded fickle weather patterns without breaking the law in seeking this protection.

**TARFish believes that the current regulations in relation to maximum soak times, i.e. by default between one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset, is an appropriate maximum soak time given the flexibility provided for rapidly changing weather conditions and recreational fisher safety concerns.**

We accept that the length of soak times for gill nets would be a direct factor in fish mortality rates, however do not believe that there is a correlation for longlines, setlines and droplines. Longlines and Droplines are used in very deep water by a small select group of fishers who have the boat size that allows this fishing method. We do not believe there is any correlation between the soak time and fish mortality rates as any fish that are caught in such deep water will find it extremely difficult to overcome the effects of barotrauma. The mortality rate is a factor of the fish being caught not necessarily how long the line has been in the water for.

## **2. IMPACT OF FISHING ON WILDLIFE**

### *2.1. Netting, Dropline & Longline Free Buffers Around Important Seabird Rookeries*

**TARFish supports buffer zones around important seabird rookeries in principle.**

TARFish and recreational fishers request that each individual area must be identified for nomination and relevant scientific information provided and an environmental impact assessment should be tabled for each area nominated as a protected buffer zone.

## **3. RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENCES**

***TARFish does not support the introduction of a Recreational Game Fishing or Recreational Set Line Licence.***

TARFish believe that rather than single out each and every recreational fishing method for a separate licence that a better strategic approach is to foster further debate on the merits of implementing a General Fishing Licence. This would provide the opportunity to consider the costs and benefits for a coordinated strategic approach to all recreational fishing licences, including salt & freshwater licencing arrangements. TARFish notes that the issue of a General Fishing Licence was raised by a number of recreational fishers who gave evidence at the ongoing Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Recreational Marine Fishing in Tasmania. TARFish is ambivalent to a General Fishing Licence at present, however believe that there is more strategic advantages to be gained for fisheries management in debating a General Fishing Licence with stakeholders than considering a proposal for another marine fishing licence component.

## **4. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

*4.1. Possession limit for by-catch of inshore crab species.*

**Without scientific information to support the proposal TARFish find it hard to believe that there is an issue caused by recreational marine fishers.**

When a DPIW representative was questioned on what specific species were involved we were advised that it was Velvet Crabs. What is the estimated level of inshore crab species taken as a result of by-catch by recreational fishers? Are their stocks, as a result of this level of recreational take, under any sort of pressure? What are inshore crab species taken by recreational fishers used for as they are too small to be consumed in any great quantity? If the scientific or other valid information exists please forward and we will review our position on this purported issue.

*4.2. Ten Kilogram Limit for Pilchards and Anchovies for Commercial Fishers*

**TARFish cannot support a change to the current legislative requirements unless robust scientific information is provided for the nominated bait fish species.**

Pilchards and Anchovies make up a significantly important link in the food chain for predominantly pelagic fish species. Before consideration can be undertaken to changing the current requirements TARFish believe that the principles of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management should be undertaken complete with a full environmental impact assessment outlining the impact on all dependent fish species of any proposed changes.

*4.3. Recreational Only Species*

**TARFish supports the principle of recreational only fish species.**

TARFish believe that as a result of climate change and the resultant changes in the East Australian Current moving further south that the Tasmanian coastal marine environment has already started to change and we also believe that these changes should be expected to continue into the future. There will be negative and positive impacts on the marine environment and fish species. As new fish species make their way into our waters the precautionary principle should be invoked for fisheries management of these species.

In this instance we are suggesting that as an initial first step that new or increasing species numbers should be restricted to access for recreational fishers only. The current possession limits strictly control individual fisher take with the resultant fishing pressure being at a very low level. Second step would be to initiate scientific investigation into the stock status and identification of a sustainability level profile. This scientific information will provide the basis for fisheries managers to determine if additional fisher access through the commercial fishing industry is sustainable. Ongoing scientific monitoring will identify trigger levels for future changes in fish stock access by recreational and commercial fishers.

#### *4.4. Recreational Only Scalefish Areas*

##### **TARFish supports the consideration of recreational only scalefish areas.**

In arriving at this position TARFish do not want to suggest that our objective is to restrict sustainable commercial fishing practices. TARFish strongly believe that fish stocks are a shared community resource that should be fished, both recreationally and commercially, at sustainable levels with minimal impact on the environment. TARfish believe that there are areas within Tasmanian estuarine waters that would benefit enormously from being declared recreational only areas. Georges Bay and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel are prime examples of areas that have been set aside for recreational fishing activities only. Both waterways have provided world class fishing opportunities within a very short period of time from delegation as a recreational only area.

The estuarine waters of Ansons Bay and Port Sorell may be two specific areas that are on the doorstep of very popular regional community recreational fishing populations. Both areas have limited commercial fishing activity or overall commercial fishing value and should the same increase in fish populations and species result from designation as a recreational fishing only area then the surrounding regional communities will see the direct results of the significant social and economic contribution that world class recreational fisheries can provide as has been the case particularly shown for St Helens.

#### *4.5. High-Value Fish as Bait in Fish Traps, Rock Lobster Pots and Rings.*

##### **TARFish do not support any change to the current regulations.**

To suggest that a fish species should not be allowed to be used as bait because it is economically valuable does not make logical sense. If economic value was used as the basis then no fish species would be allowed to be used as bait because the economic cost for recreational fishers to go fishing is considerably higher than the economic commercial value attained for any fish species. Are flathead stocks under stock pressure? TAFI's information indicates they are not. TARFish has to question the validity of excluding fish species as bait when the stock situation is not under any real or perceived threat.

## **5. SIZE, POSSESSION AND BOAT LIMITS**

### *5.1. Minimum Size for Snapper*

**TARFish believes that the minimum size for snapper should be set at the size level that allows this fish species to breed twice, as is the DPIW default basis for other fish species, we believe.**

If there is insufficient scientific information then the precautionary principle should be used until scientific information becomes available. TARFish suggests a minimum

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size of 35cm could be a precautionary starting point. Information from other states would be valuable information to also take into consideration, NSW & QLD are 30cm and VIC is 27cm. TARFish can't understand why this question was included as an issue when the DPIW have a default process for setting such levels in abnormal situations.

*5.2. Possession Limit for Snapper and Yellowtail Kingfish*

**TARFish believe that in the absence of scientifically valid information then the precautionary principle should be used to determine possession limits.**

TARFish suggests that prudence indicates a general limit of 15 is excessive for each species, considering we have little if any scientific information to base decisions on. TARFish suggests a limit of 5 per person would be a more realistic possession limit until more information is at hand. It should be noted that both species can, and do, attain large sizes and 5 fish per person is a realistic balance between a feed of fish and the lack of scientific information on both fish species.

*5.3. Squid & Calamari Possession Limits*

**TARFish believes that possession limits should be based on levels that provide sustainable fishing for the future.**

If the scientific information supports differing possession limits then they should be adjusted accordingly. Recreational possession levels should not be based on value of a fish stock and may or may not be based on abundance levels.

*5.4. Should the holders of a commercial fishing licence (rock lobster) remain in line with the recreational possession limit for calamari.*

**TARFish are undecided on this issue as no reason has been given as to the circumstances that would warrant a change.**

*5.5. Recreational Possession Limit of Blue-Eye Trevalla.*

**In the absence of any supplied information TARFish are unable to support the proposed change.**

TARFish maintain that recreational fishing effort for Blue-Eye Trevalla is very low due to the specific boat size requirements and adverse weather conditions that are prolific in the offshore waters where this fishing practice takes place. Recreational fishing effort is at best conducted only about 3-4 times a year by the keenest of fishers with the resultant impact on fish stocks negligible.

*5.6. Other Scalefish Boat Limits*

**In the absence of any information supporting a change TARFish do not believe that additional boat limits are warranted for any other scalefish species not already noted above or covered in the current scalefish rules.**

*5.7. Snapper, Yellowtail Kingfish & Striped Trumpeter Commercial Trip Limit*

**TARFish support a reduction in the 250kg (combined total) trip limit for the 3 species noted.**

As far as Snapper and Yellowtail Kingfish are concerned we believe that the limits are excessive if a precautionary approach is taken considering the lack of robust scientific information in relation to the stock status of these two species. Abundance of these two species appears to be related to the impacts of climate change on our coastal waters and until scientific assessment has been undertaken we feel that these two species should initially be designated recreational only fish species.

As far as Striped Trumpeter are concerned TARFish are aware that this species is, and has been for a considerable period of time according to TAFI research, under considerable stock pressure. The seasonal closure in September & October 2009 was a stock management decision recently supported by TARFish as there is robust scientific data to support the implementation of this measure.

**TARFish believe the commercial trip limit for Striped Trumpeter should be reduced to 50kg.**

## **6. STRIPED TRUMPETER**

TARFish are aware Striped Trumpeter are, and have been for a considerable period of time according to TAFI research, under considerable stock pressure. The seasonal closure in September & October 2009 was a stock management decision recently supported by TARFish as there is robust scientific data to support the implementation of this measure.

**TARFish believes more needs to be done to protect this species including:**

- 1) A significant reduction in the commercial trip limit to 50 kgs**
- 2) A reduction in the recreational possession limit from 8 down to 5,**
- 3) Consideration of increasing the minimum size limit, and**
- 4) Consideration of imposing a maximum size limit.**

TARFish believes the current management arrangements do not provide a scientifically justified basis for continued stock sustainability of this fish species. In determining the appropriate management measures recreational fishers argue that whatever measures are considered must be based on a range of shared reductions for

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both commercial and recreational fishers so that the impacts of all fishing practices are reduced equitably and on a parity basis.

## 7. BASTARD TRUMPETER

**TARFish believes that additional management practices should be implemented based on sound scientific information.**

TARFish would support a range of measures including, but not limited to, a reduction in the recreational possession limit along with the introduction of a small commercial trip limit and a reduction in the commercial rock lobster fisher limit to the recreational limit. In determining the appropriate management measures recreational fishers argue that whatever measures are considered must be based on a range of shared reductions for both commercial and recreational fishers so that the impacts of all fishing practices are reduced equitably and on a parity basis.

## 8. ELEPHANT FISH

### *8.1. Protecting Breeding Elephant Fish*

**TARFish supports protection of breeding Elephant Fish in Shark Protected areas.**

TARFish support is based on providing protection of Elephant Fish depositing their eggs in Shark Refuge areas.

### *8.2. Recreational Take Limit*

**TARFish do not support an increase in the recreational possession limit for Elephant Fish.**

Due to no justification being provided to increase the possession limit TARFish do not agree that an increase is warranted.

## 9. SCHOOL FISH AND SHARK FINNING

### *9.1. School Shark Maximum Size Limit*

**TARFish does support a maximum size limit for school shark.**

TARFish support is based on the premise that maximum size protection provides a preservation measure for fully mature breeding females.

### *9.2. Shark Finning*

**TARFish supports any range of management measures that are implemented to prohibit the practice of shark finning.**

The capture of any fish species for the taking of only a very small percentage of its edible component is a waste of a valuable ecosystem fish stock that is not an acceptable fishing practice in today's society.

## **10. SHARK REFUGE AREAS**

**TARFish supports establishing Shark Refuge areas where appropriate scientific information validates the nomination.**

Any identification of an area that is considered as a shark refuse area should be based on robust scientific information and having attended the Stanley public meeting held by the DPIW the local commercial fishing community are questioning the validity of the named regions of The Hunter Group and Flinders Island (Franklin Sound). They do not believe that these areas are breeding areas rather they are transit areas for large numbers of sharks who are merely moving around and through the area. TARFish do not have any knowledge of the accuracy of this point of view and we certainly are not supporting these assertions. What we are advocating is that valid scientific information should be provided to the relevant stakeholders so that decisions can be made on information rather than people's views or points of difference.

## **11. DANISH SEINE**

**TARFish supports, in principle, the consideration of a range of measures to improve this state based fishery.**

Consideration of regional based management to disperse fishing effort, amending non-transferability of licences and area closures may be supported by TARFish to maintain the local industry and supply locally caught fish into the future. TARFish would like to see a complete management solution put on the table so that the implications and effects of its interactions with, and on, recreational fishers and the broader Tasmanian communities can be understood.

## **12. SPATIAL MANAGEMENT**

### *12.1. Norfolk Bay and Frederick Henry Bay*

TARFish are aware of considerable localised recreational fisher interest in protecting some of the key easily accessible and protected bays for recreational fishing within this area. We currently do not have the detailed knowledge of particular areas but support, in principle, the concept of some recreational fishing areas. Unfortunately due to the time restrictions imposed by a 30 day public consultation period it has been impossible for TARFish to gather the specific information, however we rely on the local communities involved who have indicated they will be providing a submission detailing the nominated areas. TARFish reserves it full support pending further details and will be providing a clearer perspective at the public comment phase on the Draft Management Plans in around February/March 2009.

12.2. *Eaglehawk Bay*

**TARFish does not support any extension to the commercial No-Gillnetting operators fishing restriction beyond 1 November 2009.**

### 13. SCALEFISH C LICENCES

**TARFish believe that redundant or dormant fishing capacity in Scalefish C licences should be removed from the fishing industry.**

The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council noted back in 2004 that there were 198 Scalefish C licences and of these 110 (55%) had no catch history. The DPIW website currently lists 151 Scalefish C Licences (as at September 2005) therefore it can be assumed that there are somewhere between 60 to 80 licences with no catch history, i.e. they are dormant and have never been used. The licences are non-transferable.

TARFish considers that these dormant Scalefish C Licences should be removed from the commercial fishing licence system as they are superfluous to industry needs. If they are not removed from the fishing industry there is a real risk that should the market price for fish able to be caught on a Scalefish C Licence increase significantly then there could be a doubling of commercial fishing pressure on some fish stocks that we have limited scientific knowledge of. Having redundant and dormant fishing licences able to be quickly activated on fishing stocks that are currently managed effectively could result in an adverse stock situation occurring that is reasonably foreseeable.

If DPIW have information that indicates that this level of latent effort does not pose a risk to fish stocks we request that it be made available and we will review our position on this issue, otherwise we believe that redundant/dormant Scalefish C Licences should be permanently removed from the fishing industry.

Should you have any questions in relation to our submission or require any clarification on any information provided please do not hesitate to contact me. TARFish looks forward to working with the Government through the Department of Primary Industries and Water in providing comment and recreational fisher input into the process for developing the Scalefish Fishery Rules.

Regards

**Mark Nikolai**  
Chief Executive Officer