

## Getting It Right For Recreational Southern Garfish

Southern Garfish are rated as a depleted stock, showing no signs of recovery in the last five years.

One of Tasmania's favourite target fish during the cooler months of the year, recreational fishers are estimated to have caught 300kg in 2017/18 compared with commercial catches of around 10t.

Seasonal spawning closures have been in place in the commercial fishery since 2009, prompted by declining catches. Due to the clear separation in the timing of spawning activity between the north and the south of the state (the 'north' being the north coast and Furneaux group, and the 'south' being the remainder), there are two separate commercial closed seasons:

South of the line: 15 November – 14 December

North of the line: 15 January – 14 February

The Government is proposing to extend the spawning closures to recreational fishing for the next three years to give Southern Garfish stocks a better chance of recovering.

Most recreational fishing for garfish happens throughout winter and will probably have minimal impact on rec fishers.

There have been no other commercial constraints (management controls) to limit garfish landings since the fishery has been rated as depleted.

TARFish undertook a survey of recreational fishers in October 2022 to gauge their support for a recreational season closure.

Almost 90% of respondents supported the annual spawning closure be applied to the recreational sector.

We also asked fishers views on the commercial catch.

Almost 60% want to see the commercial sector continue to catch garfish with added management controls such as a total allowable catch (TAC).

It is not clear why garfish populations are not recovering. Environmental changes such as warming waters and habitat degradation may be factors.

TARFish develops its policy positions in line with our five priorities

1. Abundant fish stocks
2. Healthy habitats
3. Fair and protected access to well managed fisheries
4. Safe, easy and inclusive access
5. Robust science and best practice

Our position on southern garfish below is in line with our priorities and guided by the feedback to our survey

### **Southern Garfish Position**

**TARFish supports extending the spawning closure for Southern Garfish to the recreational fishing sector for the next three years to give Southern Garfish stocks a better chance of recovering.**

**In addition, TARFish strongly supports additional management controls on the commercial sector to limit total landings of Southern Garfish. This may include a total allowable catch (TAC) or other control mechanism. TARFish does not believe the commercial catch is sufficiently constrained to facilitate stock recovery. TARFish further notes that the issues with stock recovery are unlikely to be exclusively the result of fishing pressure but that environmental factors such as warming water and habitat change are also likely to be impacting southern garfish**