NOTICE TO FISHERS

FUTURE SNAPPER MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Following the recent review and consultation process for the South Australian snapper fishery, I write to inform you of my decision to implement updated snapper fishery management arrangements, effective 12.01 am on 1 November 2019.

Firstly, I want to thank everyone who participated in the public consultation and made a submission on published scenarios A and B, especially your fishing organisations who sought to represent fishers’ views and provide consolidated recommendations for the future of the snapper fishery. Thank you also to those organisations who met with me during the consultation period.

Many of you requested to be able to continue to fish for snapper and requested I give consideration to an Option C. I want to assure you, I considered all advice provided and interrogated the data available to my department on fishing effort and what we know of the stocks available in our waters. The decision outlined below has been determined with the goal of allowing our depleted snapper stocks to recover as quickly as possible while enabling fishing in areas which are classified as ‘sustainable’, which for snapper is the South East. It will be important to manage the South East fishery to avoid any unanticipated impacts from transfer of effort.

The November 2018 scientific stock status report for snapper classified the Gulf St Vincent and South East stocks as ‘sustainable’, and the Spencer Gulf/West Coast stock as ‘depleted’. Given concerns for the sustainability of the snapper stocks in SA, PIRSA in collaboration with members from the commercial, recreational and charter boat sector reviewed the snapper management arrangements in December 2018. Following this review, additional precautionary management measures for snapper were implemented to support protection and recovery of the Spencer Gulf/West Coast snapper stock and to afford additional protection for snapper stocks in Gulf St Vincent and South East of SA. In December 2018, it was also determined further management measures would be necessary to strengthen snapper management for all relevant fishing sectors (commercial, recreational and charter) prior to the next spawning season in 2019.

In June 2019, SARDI provided updated information on snapper spawning biomass estimates from the Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM), which identified that over the past five years, biomass in Spencer Gulf has reduced by an estimated 23% and biomass in Gulf St Vincent has reduced by an estimated 87%. As with all scientific methods, there is
a degree of uncertainty associated with the updated DEPM biomass estimates and these will be improved over time through refinements to the method and sampling strategy. However, the overall weight of scientific evidence (i.e. size and age information and commercial catches) available for snapper supports the conclusion that stocks have significantly declined and require further management intervention.

SARDI Aquatic Sciences has recently finalised the 2019 Snapper Fishery Assessment report, which has classified the Spencer Gulf/West Coast stock as 'depleted' and the South East stock as 'sustainable', consistent with the 2018 stock classifications (refer to report at www.pir.sa.gov.au/snapper). Taking into account the latest scientific information including the December 2018 spawning biomass estimates, the 2019 report classified the Gulf St Vincent stock as 'depleting'. This means that fishing mortality is too high (i.e. overfishing is occurring) and moving the stock in the direction of becoming recruitment impaired. This is a change in stock status from that of 'sustainable' recorded in the 2018 report.

Recently, the State Government conducted an extensive public consultation process, which included a consultation paper containing two scenarios for significant changes to the management of snapper in South Australia. There were over 900 submissions received from this consultation indicating that further management action was required.

Taking all views into account, including the feedback received through the public consultation process, the latest scientific information and the objects of the Fisheries Management Act 2007, the following management arrangements will apply:

- The Gulf St Vincent, Spencer Gulf and West Coast waters will be closed from 12.01 am on 1 November 2019 to 11.59 pm on 31 January 2023. This closure will prohibit the targeting, taking and possession of snapper in these waters.
- An annual seasonal snapper closure (from 12.01 am on 1 November to 11.59 pm on 31 January each year until 2023) will apply to the waters in the South East. This closure will prohibit the targeting, taking and possession of snapper in this area, during this time.
- During the period from 12.01 am 1 February to 11.59 pm on 31 October each year, the area will be open to commercial, charter and recreational fishing subject to a total allowable catch (TAC), which when caught will restrict any further snapper being taken during this period.
- Further consultation with the commercial fishing sector is required to determine how the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) would be managed, including whether there should be an allocation of the TACC amongst fishers. Further consultation with the recreational and charter sectors is required to determine how the Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC) will be managed through the development of a recreational harvest tag system.

These measures have been implemented through notices issued under section 79 of the Fisheries Management Act 2007.

I appreciate this decision will have impacts on all fishing sectors and individual operations and have not taken this decision lightly. To assist with the adjustment to these new arrangements I have implemented a package of support measures as follows:
Additional support measures

Commercial fee relief: Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders' impacted by the new management scenario will have their fees cut by 50 per cent for the duration of the ban, at a total cost of more than $3 million.

Science funding: The State Government has committed more than $1 million from the Regional Growth Fund to ensure a full suite of snapper science will be conducted for the 2019-20 spawning season. A Management Advisory Committee will also be established to improve the management and engagement of key stakeholders in the fisheries management process.

Snapper recreational fishing restocking: $500,000 over two years from the Regional Growth Fund to fund snapper fish stocking in Spencer Gulf to help replenish depleted fish stocks.

Murray Cod recreational fishing restocking: $200,000 over two years to fund Murray Cod restocking in the River Murray to create recreational fishing opportunities.

Increase penalties for illegal activities: Review and increase penalties for bag and boat limit offences under the Fisheries Management Act 2007. With few exceptions, the current expiation fees under the Act have not increased for over 15 years.

Charter Sector diversification program: A two year program of $500,000 from the Regional Growth Fund will be established to support the charter boat sector diversify in light of the closure and improve their businesses to offer a broader suite of tourism experiences in South Australia's majestic coastal waters. The State Government will work with the Surveyed and Charter Boat Operators Association to develop this program informed by the Charter Sector Growth Strategy to make the state's fleet more attractive for local, interstate and international tourists.

Barotrauma research program: State Government will work with the charter and commercial fishing sectors to enable a small number of fishing trips to undertake a scientific catch, tag and release snapper program during the closure to contribute to new science about minimising barotrauma, movement, and survival, and develop a code of conduct for the release of snapper.

Juvenile snapper monitoring program: Commencing in 2019-20, the State Government is partnering with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to conduct a research project to develop a cost-effective method of monitoring the number of juvenile snapper that enter the South Australian population each year.

Mental Health Support: The peak fishing industry group Wildcatch has been working with the State Government to expand the Family and Business (FaB) Support Mentor Program, launching Fisheries FaBs as part of a new ‘Stay Afloat’ program, to support the mental health and wellbeing of affected commercial fishers, charter operators and seafood processors. For more information, please see attached flyer.

Commercial marine scalefish fishing sector reform: Consultation is currently underway on a number of options for reform, including proposals to rationalise the
number of commercial fishing licences. Formal advice will be provided to the Minister by the end of 2019 as to industry’s preferred reform package for this fishery.

**Lesser known species awareness:** The State Government has established an industry reference group to support the promotion of lesser known species and invest in raising awareness of many of South Australia’s fantastic seafood species to consumers, recreational fishers, charter boat clients and tackle shops. The campaign will promote the great diversity of local seafood and the wide range of fishing experiences and opportunities we have here in South Australia.

**Update to SA recreational fishing app:** Working with the Minister’s Recreational Fishing Advisory Council to update the SA Recreational Fishing guide app to make it more user-friendly to promote self-promoting of catch. Will include consumer education and awareness and the development of new statewide fish maps feature displaying where/how to catch lesser known species.

**New recreational fishing survey:** The State Government is partnering with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation by investing $1 million to undertake a new national recreational fishing research project, to design a more modern recreational fishing survey methodology which will use the latest technology to develop a more accurate picture of the recreational fishing catch data to improve fishing management in the future.

**National snapper workshop:** The State Government is partnering with Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to convene a national snapper workshop in Adelaide in November 2019 to bring together fisheries management, science, recreational and commercial industry experts from around Australia and New Zealand to discuss the most effective ways to conduct scientific stock assessment and management of snapper stocks.

Yours sincerely

Hon Tim Whetstone MP
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

28 / 09 / 2019