Snapper is an iconic fish in South Australia, but a decline in stocks sees the State facing a serious challenge in relation to the future management of Snapper.

New measures are now in place across all sectors – commercial, recreational and charter – to achieve long term improvement and return the Snapper fishery to sustainable stock levels.

It is important all recreational fishers follow these rules to support the rebuild of our Snapper stocks.

### Snapper fishing rules and regulations

#### West Coast, Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent waters
- A total Snapper fishing closure applies to the West Coast, Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent waters until 31 January 2023.
- During these closures, the targeting, take and possession of Snapper is prohibited. Additionally, catch and release fishing that targets Snapper is prohibited.
- Unintentionally caught Snapper must be immediately returned to the water. The process of release must not be delayed for any purpose, including the taking of photos.
- Recreational fishers are encouraged to carry a release weight on board to assist in the release of the fish, in the event that a Snapper is unintentionally caught.
**South East waters**

- A Snapper fishing closure also applies to the South East waters from 1 November to 31 January each year.
- During the closure period, the targeting, take and possession of Snapper is prohibited.
- Catch and release fishing that targets Snapper is prohibited at all times.
- During the South East open season from 1 February to 31 October Snapper can only be targeted by fishers who hold a current recreational and/or Charter Boat fishing tag.
- Before attempting to target a Snapper the valid tag holder must also carry a release weight.
- You must cease fishing for Snapper as soon as your issued tags have been used.
- Unintentionally caught, or undersized, Snapper must be immediately returned to the water using a release weight. The process of release must not be delayed for any purpose, including the taking of photos.
- Recreational fishers are not permitted to transit through a Snapper closure area if they have legally caught and tagged Snapper on board.

**Snapper handling and release weights**

**What is a release weight?**

- A release weight is designed to rapidly send a fish back to the depth from which it was caught.
- The use of release weights to return fish has been shown to increase the chances of fish survival.
- The weights work by assisting the fish to re-pressurise after being released, as well as reducing the chances of predation by sharks, birds, marine mammals and other large fish after release.
- A release weight is most commonly a 40 oz. lead sinker attached to a barbless hook that has a loop at the top to attach a heavy retrieval line.

**How do I use a release weight?**

Use of a release weight is best done with two people - one person supports the fish and the second person handles the line to steadily release the fish. The following approach is recommended:

- attach the release weight to a rod or handle prior to fishing
- attach the release weight through the upper jaw/top lip of the fish
- place the fish in the water and allow for water to run through and over the gills prior to releasing the fish
- let the attached line run free as the fish is released

Detach the release weight from the fish by tugging on the line when it reaches the bottom.

**Increasing the chance of survival of undersized or unintentionally caught Snapper**

Fishing in shallow water will help to minimise barotrauma. Snapper suffer barotrauma when caught from depths greater than 10 metres due to the rapid change in pressure when they are brought to the surface. While there may be no external signs, the damage caused by barotrauma can result in internal injuries, death or affect their ability to reproduce in the future.

Select appropriate hooks and rigs for the target size of Snapper (target Snapper only if you are in possession of a Recreational Fishing Snapper Tag). Cut and deep hooking is a key cause of Snapper mortality. If the fish is deep hooked, cut the line close to the outside of the mouth – do not try to unhook.

Reduce the chances of hook damage by:

- using circle hooks when bait fishing
- fish with a tight line
- using barbless hooks
- avoiding long playing times that exhaust fish and can cause delayed mortalities.

**More information**


For queries relating to Snapper tags and reporting please contact PIRSA Fisheries & Aquaculture on (08) 8204 1370 or by emailing [PIRSA.Feedback@sa.gov.au](mailto:PIRSA.Feedback@sa.gov.au)

For the latest information about other rules that apply to fishing in South Australia go to [pir.sa.gov.au/fishing](http://pir.sa.gov.au/fishing) or call the 24 hour Fishwatch hotline on 1800 065 522.

Recreational fishing information is also available through the free SA Recreational Fishing Guide app which is suitable for Apple and Android mobile devices. Visit [pir.sa.gov.au/recfishingapp](http://pir.sa.gov.au/recfishingapp) to download the app.

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