

Consultation on management scenarios for snapper in South Australia

The iconic South Australian snapper species is at risk through overfishing of stocks. The latest recent scientific research shows an alarming decrease in snapper stocks in Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent. Urgent management action is required to return stocks to sustainable levels.

Background:

A [recent scientific stock assessment report](#) prepared by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) in November 2018, identified concerns about the sustainability of the snapper stock in Spencer Gulf/West Coast, which has been assigned a stock status classification of 'depleted'.

The Gulf St Vincent and South East stocks have been assigned a stock status classification of 'sustainable', however, there are indications of increased pressure on the Gulf St Vincent stock, which also need to be managed.

[Updated information on snapper biomass estimates](#) provided by SARDI in June 2019, indicate an 87% decrease in snapper biomass in Gulf St Vincent over the past five years and a 23% decline in the Spencer Gulf stock.

Your feedback:

PIRSA is seeking public feedback on two management scenarios developed in consultation with key industry partners and stakeholders to promote stock recovery of the Spencer Gulf/West Coast stocks and to maintain other stocks as sustainable, consistent with legislative and regulatory obligations.

Proposed Management Scenarios:

While each management scenario will have short-term impacts on businesses and regional tourism, without suitable management action there will be further decline in snapper stocks. A further decline would have much greater impact to the health of snapper stocks, businesses and regional tourism.

Management Scenario A: A statewide snapper closure would apply to all state waters from 1 October 2019 to 28 February 2023. This closure would cover four summer snapper spawning periods. During the closure, the State Government will work with all fishing sectors to develop a snapper stock recovery strategy, informed by research, which includes Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM) surveys to estimate biomass, pre-recruitment survey research and post-release survival and tagging research. The stock recovery strategy will include development of an updated formal harvest strategy. While the fishery is

closed, a co-management committee for marine scalefish fish stocks, which includes commercial, charter, recreational and Aboriginal traditional fishers, will be formed to guide future decision-making. Stronger longer-term management arrangements will be developed together with fisheries management, science and industry experts from around Australia and New Zealand so that when the Fishery reopens stronger controls exist.

Likely benefits of the management scenario:

- Maximum protection for the snapper stock while longer term management arrangements are established.
- Provides additional protection for spawning aggregations during the spawning period.
- Is likely to improve the number of juvenile snapper reaching maturity, which would ultimately lead to increased production in the fishery.
- Eliminates fishing pressure by all sectors.
- A closure is easy to communicate and comply with.

Potential impacts and other considerations:

- Impacts on recreational fishing holidays/regional tourism across the state.
- Impacts on regional towns where snapper is important for recreational fishing tourism.
- Impacts commercial and charter fishers who have built a reliance on snapper.
- Commercial fishers may increase effort on the other primary species during the closure period.
- Eliminates supply of South Australian snapper to consumers.

Management Scenario B: A total snapper closure would apply to the waters in the West Coast/Spencer Gulf and Gulf St Vincent regions from 1 October 2019 to 28 February 2023. The South East region would have an annual seasonal snapper closure until 28 February 2023 (applying from the start of each October until the end of each February). During the rest of the time, the area would be open to commercial, charter and recreational fishing subject to a total allowable catch determined by PIRSA. When the total catch is reached this would result in the fishery being closed. During the closure the government would work with all fishing sectors to undertake research and management projects set out in management scenario A.

Likely benefits of the management scenario:

- Allows some fishing to occur of 'sustainable' snapper stocks whilst the remainder of the stocks are provided maximum protection while longer term management arrangements are established.
- Will enable growth in the South East charter fishery and recreational fishing opportunities.
- Provides additional protection for spawning aggregations during the spawning period.
- Is likely to improve the number of juvenile snapper reaching maturity.
- South East snapper fishers will achieve a higher price for their product.

Potential impacts and other considerations:

- Impacts on recreational fishing holidays/regional tourism for the majority of the state during peak periods.
- Impacts commercial and charter fishers on West Coast and gulfs who have built a reliance on snapper during the spring and summer periods.
- Commercial fishers may increase effort on the other primary species during the closure period.
- Reduces supply of South Australian snapper to consumers.
- The partial closure will be more difficult to communicate with the public than scenario A.
- Cost of snapper will increase for the seafood consumer.