



Dear Minister

Please be advised of our serious concerns regarding the severe decline of demersal fish stocks in the inshore coastal waters of the southern ocean from Albany to Bunbury.

Due to this depletion of fish stocks over the last 3 to 4 years a public meeting was called in the Manjimup District Hall on the 9 June 2010 to discuss this very serious issue, nearly 200 people turned up to vent their anger & frustration at the depletion of scale fish stocks in the inshore ocean waters adjacent to Peaceful Bay, Walpole, and Windy Harbour. These areas of coast have for generations been a holiday venue for families to relax and catch a feed of fish.

We believe this is our birthright, our heritage and our way of life for the past and the future generations to be able to continue in this manner. Because of the severe depletion of fish stocks on the west coast due to overfishing & poor management practices for many years the fishstocks have virtually disappeared, resulting in a shutdown of ocean areas along the west coast for all types of fishing both Commercial & Recreational fishing.

We question the fairness of closing the metropolitan waters to commercial fishing which has now resulted in a massive redirection of commercial effort to the southern coast while at the same time allowing metropolitan recreational anglers to benefit. Records show that past catches in the Southern waters were much less than today's, furthermore no research was done on fishstocks in this area.

The south coast waters are classified as a Shark fishery where for many years the commercial fishing for Shark on a basis of around 80 % shark and 20 % scale fish has been carried out, resulting in a fair and realistic balance in our Southern Ocean waters. This balance has worked well until the sharks started to become over fished and demand for Demersal Scale Fish increased significantly to the extent where the commercial gillnet fishing practices have now reduced fish stocks in the southern ocean waters to an unsustainable level. Inshore recreational fishers are now finding it very difficult to even catch a feed of fish anywhere near the limits set by the WA Fisheries. This problem is forcing recreational fishers to travel a lot further offshore into a very dangerous ocean to catch fish.

The general methods of catching fish in our ocean waters is large commercial boats with one sometimes two large reels set on deck carrying up to approximately 5 or 6 thousands meters long and 2 meters deep gill nets. The gill net is made up of very strong nylon cord, the mesh size is 105 mm x 105 mm square approx. Supported on floats and set on the ocean floor.

This type of commercial netting causes severe damage to the the ocean floor in the way of the breaking down of Small Coral Colonies, Kelps & Fish Habitats of marine animals both large and small. We also firmly believe that through over fishing and poor management of fish stocks there is a changing ocean fish balance to such a degree where unwanted species of fish will increase in numbers so as to become a dominant force in the ocean waters.

When Commercial fishers retrieve there long gillnets a fair but unknown percentage of fish fall out. This is by-catch and so far, despite requests fisheries W.A research is unable to quantify this amount of waste. This is because the fish are too big to mesh up by the gills and as the net is drawn in some times under great strain these fish fall out onto the ocean floor as waste ,never to be eaten. By catch is a term used for other than the target fish be it Protected Shark, Giant Sea Turtle, Sea Lion, a Seal, or large amounts of undersized fish.

FRIGHTENING ISN'T IT. Frightening when you consider the untold irreparable damage and Destruction of our Fragile Wild Fish Stocks in the Southern Ocean. This method of FISH HARVESTING IS CONDONED, AUTHORIZED AND MANAGED by FISHERIES WA. GILLNETS have to be Banned IN ALL OCEAN WATERS FORTHWITH.!

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Over the past 12 months period our group S. O.F. S (Save Our Fish Stocks) have held meetings with a combined groups comprising of WA Fisheries, WAIF, Recfish and Mr. Nigel Haslett (Minister for the South West) in Manjimup. These meetings and discussions have not produced any fair solution to the reduction of fish stocks in the Southern ocean adjacent to our coastal shores.

All that we can hear from the Minister for Fisheries is that we the recreational fishers must share the resource. We firmly believe that we cannot even think about sharing a precious and fragile resource which is being systematically **DESTROYED** on a **daily basis** by **over fishing and poor management practices**. **We feel the only answer is a total ban of Gill Nets.**

Because of the above information our group (S.O.F.S), has been forced into setting up this Petition to try and bring this very serious issue to the **ATTENTION TO ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO OPEN THEIR EYES TO THIS VERY SERIOUS MATTER.**

In hoping they do it will bring enough concern to bring about **A Total Ban on all Commercial Gillnet Fishing in all ocean waters from Albany to Bunbury.**

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