

SUNFISH FRASER COAST – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2011

How time flies – apparently it's now been two years since I accepted the position of Chairman for the Fraser Coast branch of Sunfish!

The snapper debacle is an ongoing issue with another review now being planned for 2014. The current restrictions introduced on the 1st Of September are still questionable – with NO restrictions being applied to the commercial sector at this stage. Our concern is that DEEDI has not discussed with Sunfish how the 2014 Snapper stock assessment will be done - what methodology would be used, and what data would be available or required. It is therefore difficult to consider another index of Snapper abundance based on this proposal to investigate abundance via a genetic analysis.

The abundance indices that are currently available are fishery dependent and include time series of catch and effort from commercial logbooks, State wide rec. fishing surveys, and charter logs. There is also a Long Term Monitoring Project looking independently at abundance of small Snapper (recruitment) in Moreton Bay (about 5 years data).

"I am not sure how critical or useful a new index of Snapper abundance would be in the 2014 stock assessment review." Barry Pollock.

We are currently working with DERM in relation to a review of Go Slow zones in the GSMP. QSIA are conducting their own review with the use of FRDC funding. We have questioned the validity of the funding under FRDC guide lines. We believe that the current Go Slow zones are currently well positioned to best protect the local turtle & dugong populations. We also believe there is evidence in numbers of these animals to extend the current Moon point/Bogimbah Go Slow zone outwards to take in all of the flats to the end of the main channel so as to add extra protection during the lowest of the tide cycles.

A HUGE thanks to all involved with the successful Kids fishing clinics at Poona & Burrum Heads – these are always very popular & well received. It is hoped that these kids will continue to fish & shape recreational angling in the future. These clinics are only made possibly with the addition of our successful funding applications & our members who support them.

The Burrum boat ramp issue still appears to be lost in a bureaucratic wilderness. Active discussions with QT regarding future needs is still to remain a focus of discussion in order to best provide a quality facility to cater for the growing population base – of which recreational angling plays a vital role. There also need to be major improvements made to the River Heads boat ramp/s with access & parking now a significant issue since Kingfisher Bay moved their ferry services out there. The local area is also expanding in population & will see a lot more relational anglers & boaters in future.

With Lake Lenthall spilling heavily during last summer's flooding rains it has become even more important to get the new fish way on No 1 weir finalised. This issue needs to be followed through to ensure fish that do escape over the wall can migrate back upstream when needed & ensure a healthy fishery remains in the Burrum River. There also appears to be access issues with the current Council recreation area with new discussions to be held with Wide Bay Water shortly. The outcome from this meeting will be covered at future committee meetings.

We will also need to remain vigilant in relation to the proposed Marine Protected/Bio Regional areas issues. We need to ensure we maintain our position on these areas & ensure that no further access to recreational angling is lost – again without scientific reason!

I also believe we need to become more pro-active in pursuing better funding sources to manage recreational angling across the state in future. The current PPV levy system is not providing the transparency OR funding for the recreational angling sector that it should, and as was originally promised. We also do not have specific control over how or where it should/is being spent.

Recreational anglers are currently paying \$36.05 to fish in selected stocked impoundments & a further \$17.05 is being taken from our rego's. The PPV levy is ALL going into consolidated revenue & SIP's is being fleeced at 25% for administration

Imagine if these were both removed & one general recreational angling license/levy was introduced at approx \$35- PA – with the first \$1 million raised going to a designated Freshwater Trust account. (This would be more than what Sips is currently raising as a starting point.) The balance would then go into designated Saltwater Trust accounts. Select areas would NEED to be identified as NEW recreational angling areas i.e. Great Sandy Strait springs to mind as one These would be important sales tools for the wider recreational angling community in selling the new license/levy to the public.

I cannot see how the recreational angling community could see this as being worse than what we are currently working with

If Sunfish can lobby government to provide serious funding to create these NEW recreational angling areas, better research, more artificial reefs , FAD's etc etc WITHOUT INCREASING THE PPVY LEVY or via some other source that DOES NOT include incurring further costs to the wider recreational angling community – then I'm right behind it

Otherwise what is Sunfish doing to lead the way in better management / fund sourcing to do what we all know needs doing?

I still sometimes wonder if all our efforts are worthwhile & how much easier it would be to just go fishing now – while we still can. BUT who would ensure our kids & their grand kids will be able to enjoy all the aspects that make recreational angling one of the most popular & healthy sports on our great planet?

Thanks to our committee & in particular our secretary – Marty, you truly are an asset to Sunfish & anglers in our area. To our members – thank you for your continued support & efforts to ensure we all enjoy our fishing in the future.

So many Fish – So little Time!

Scott Mitchell
September 2011