



19 May 2020

The Hon Peter Tinley MLA
Minister for Fisheries
Level 7, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005
BY EMAIL: Minister.Tinley@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Minister Tinley,

WRL PROPOSAL FOR COMMERCIAL WCRLMF ACTIVE FISHERS TO LAND UP TO 50 TAGGED SCALEFISH PER YEAR FOR PERSONAL CONSUMPTION

At a recent meeting, the Western Rock Lobster Board requested I write to you proposing a new system that would authorise each active fisher in the West Coast Rock Lobster Managed Fishery (WCRLMF) to land up to 50 scalefish per year while commercially fishing for rock lobster.

By way of context, up until 2008, commercial lobster fishers were authorised to land unlimited scalefish from their commercial fishing boats for personal consumption or commercial sale. However, in 2008 Minister Jon Ford removed that access right without compensation. At the time, recreational fishing was not permissible from any commercial fishing vessel, so commercial WCRLMF active fishers had their authorisation to land scalefish for personal consumption completely removed.

In 2011, Minister Moore allowed Commercial Fishing Licence holders to also hold Recreational Fishing Licences, however recreational fishing was not permitted from commercial fishing boats. The current regulatory expectation is that WCRLMF active fishers return to port, de-register their boat for approximately \$450 total transfer, take their boat out recreationally fishing and then re-register as a commercial vessel following the return to port. The alternative is that WCRLMF active fishers purchase a second recreational boat and use that for recreational fishing after the commercial boat returns to port.

Both of those options require significant expense and effort that naturally results in a tendency to maximise passengers and daily recreational bag limits for each dedicated trip. Furthermore, fishing activities would naturally occur in locations that are the least distance from port and therefore under the most fishing pressure by the community, leading to reduced catchability and fishing experience for the recreational sector.

WRL proposes the following:

- DPIRD to allocate 50 registered tags to WCRLMF active fishers for each annual lobster fishing season for the purpose of landing scalefish while commercially fishing for lobster
- Tags are non-transferrable and expire with each annual season closure
- Up to 50 scalefish can be landed anytime in that 12-month period according to daily recreational bag limits
- Fish must be tagged within 5 minutes of landing using a method that eliminates the potential reuse of tags (eg through mouth/gills)
- Tagged fish must be recorded in Fisheye prior to landing
- Tagged fish are for personal consumption only and may not be sold commercially

This proposal allows WCRLMF active fishers, who in 2008 had their licence to land unlimited scalefish from their commercial fishing boats removed without compensation, to once again land scalefish from their commercial fishing boats to feed themselves and their crew on extended trips, or feed their families if landing daily. This proposal, which is the equivalent of up to one scalefish per week per boat, is far from unreasonable given the 5.75% GVP resource access fees paid by those commercial fishers annually.

In keeping with the values of the western rock lobster industry, it is of the utmost importance that any personal consumption fishing from commercial WCRLMF boats ensures fishery sustainability and enhances the data and research capabilities of both ours and related industries. This proposal of limited registered tags and requirement to record landings of every scalefish in Fisheye would produce the highest standard of accurate and quantifiable catch data for any fishery in Western Australia.

As previously explained, the current requirements to de-register commercial lobster boats or own a second non-commercial boat in order to land scalefish for personal consumption results in daily recreational bag limits being maximised (including by more passengers) and fishing effort occurring in locations that are the least distance from port and therefore under the most fishing pressure by the community, leading to reduced catchability and fishing experience for the recreational sector. The WRL Board believes this proposal will result in a reduction of scalefish landed by WCRLMF active fishers and that those scalefish will be taken far more efficiently from more remote areas under significantly less fishing pressure by the recreational sector. This will result in sustainability benefits for the west coast demersal scalefish resource.

Finally, there is a safety aspect to this proposal. WCRLMF fishers in remote regions such as the Abrolhos Islands rely on fish as a main protein source for their meals. It is simply not possible to go to a shop and buy meat or another protein for dinner. Under the current arrangements, fishers must return to their base at the end of a commercial fishing day only to head back out on a small non-commercial runabout to try and catch a fish for dinner. Given fishers normally start work in the early hours of the morning, this second trip occurs late in the afternoon when the sea breeze is the strongest and conditions most dangerous for small boats. It is far better from a safety perspective that the fisher lands a scalefish for them and their crew's dinner from the safety of their large commercial vessel while it is out in more remote waters.

As a Minister for Fisheries with strong common sense and practicality, WRL requests leadership by way of approving this proposal that seeks to resolve this most regularly complained about issue that originated in 2008 when Minister Ford removed the right of WCRLMF fishers to land a scalefish from their commercial boat for personal consumption, and did so without compensation.

I would be happy to provide you with any further material you require for your consideration of this proposal. I look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Matt Taylor
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Ralph Addis
 Nathan Harrison
 Graeme Baudains
 Murray Criddle
 Andrew Rowlands