



P.O. Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW
2101

18th February 2006

The Honourable Ian MacDonald, MLC
Minister for Primary Industries
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear Minister,

Re: DPI Fisheries Science Methodology

The estimates of the grey nurse shark population is based upon a survey conducted between 16-31 August 2003 and published in a DPI Fisheries report of 2004. Many people are skeptical of the results of this survey in the data acquisition phase, and this is based on possible bias introduced in the sampling process with the use of volunteers from the Underwater Research Group and the scuba dive industry. It is perceived that these groups have agendas other than pure scientific endeavor into the grey nurse shark. This is evident in claims by various dive groups and individuals of the percentage of grey nurse sharks with hooks, the obviously "Photo Shop doctored" images of grey nurse sharks with hooks, the images of which are placed on various web sites.

In previous correspondence we have raised issues in the scientific process used by DPI Fisheries on various matters, including the use of results by DPI of underwater fish surveys obtained from untrained and unqualified volunteers, the apparent lack of follow-up surveys to indicate population trends, and conclusions based on incomplete areas of study such as genetic variability. Other concerns we have with respect to the grey nurse shark has to do with scientific methodology, namely:

- Was there any subsequent survey undertaken to confirm the estimate the grey nurse shark population from the August 2003 survey? If so, then who undertook this survey,

what results were obtained and why haven't these results been presented in a DPI report?
If not, then why not?

- Would DPI Fisheries be willing for other groups to either assist in DPI grey nurse shark research or to undertake independent research and surveys? If so, then what would these objections be?

- Is there any chance that the tagging process can harm or damage individual sharks? If there is, would this be included in the data used in the analysis, or at least mentioned in the report? Was all of the tag data included in the August 2003 survey?

- Is the science presented in the DPI Fisheries reports on the grey nurse sharks open to peer review? Are the results and conclusions to be presented in other scientific journals? If not, then why not? Is it common practice not to have DPI science open to peer review?

One of the most important aspects of scientific endeavor is the reproducibility of results, and for these to be open for peer review and publication in recognized scientific journals. The use of proper scientific enquiry and methodology, and confirmation that these have been adhered to, will alleviate many of these concerns.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group