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23rd May 2005

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"The real winners of marine parks are anglers" as stated by Lowri Pryce (Afloat, May 2005) is a classic line of marine park advocates attempting to appease the doubts and skepticism of the group of stakeholders that would be most affected by no-take zones, recreational anglers. Recent research done by the WA Dept of Fisheries on the coral trout and baldchin groper in areas of the Abrolhos Islands in Western Australia indicates fishing closures are effective for highly targeted species that have low fecundity and are non-migratory, but for migratory species or those with high fecundity there is no apparent benefit. To quote from an article on this research: "Director of Research Dr Jim Penn said, "This has been a very useful study that highlights the variable nature of responses amongst different species to fishing closures". And another quote: "To explain this inconsistent result between two species, the researchers pointed out the low mobility and territorial behaviour of *P. leopardus* – the coral trout, compared with most fish species". Perhaps the most significant statement is: "The study's findings demonstrate that targeted closures, where not all forms of fishing are prohibited (in this case potting for lobsters was still allowed) can be effective in meeting the objectives of an MPA. For the more typical highly mobile finfish species, we find that specific closures for example during spawning times, are required to manage fishing impacts on both fish stocks and their environment".

One area of concern in the marine park debate is the apparent lack of justification for closures other than to meet a desired objective of 20% closures. Closures are put in place without identifying and understanding all the risks and threats to biodiversity, if any, and allocating resources to address those risks. When fishing closures are in place nothing is done about addressing other threats. Most recreational fishers would accept bans if it could be shown that recreational fishing poses a threat to biodiversity.

Then there is the question of monitoring and base line studies. Other than the grey nurse shark where research has shown incidental catches can impact on their

population, there is no evidence that any species is under threat from recreational fishing alone along the NSW coast. Very little, if any, research has been done on the species targeted by recreational anglers in many of these proposed no-take zones prior to their declaration, and these studies are required for two reasons. Firstly, to determine that there is a problem with particular species and closures are justified. Secondly, to act as a base line for comparison purposes for later monitoring in determining the effectiveness of the closures.

Marine Parks in NSW are purportedly based on the Great Barrier Reef model, but even this model has provisions to open up closed areas to study the effectiveness of the closures. Once a closure is in place in NSW, it is for good. Could this be why base-line studies are not carried out?

As for damage caused by anchors, why not place anchoring bans on the small areas where it is currently against the law to cause damage? I refer to the habitat protection areas for the grey nurse shark. Section 220ZC of the Fisheries Management Act (1994) states that "A person must not, by an act or omission, do anything that causes damage to any critical habitat. Maximum penalty: 2,000 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years or both". When AAG raised the matter with NSW Fisheries, former Director Steve Dunn's reply was that mooring buoys were placed at Julian Rocks and Fish Rock for the eco-divers to minimise anchor damage. But what of the anchor damage being done by the eco-divers at the other critical habitat sites? Why aren't the marine park proponents pushing for an anchoring ban within these areas where it is already against the law to cause damage? Or is it a case that anchor damage caused by a recreational fisher is different to that caused by an eco-dive boat?

Yours sincerely

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