

Minister for Primary Industries

MP105/1239

Mr Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc
PO Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW 2101

Dear Mr Ingram

Thank you for your letter of 3rd April 2005 concerning commercial fishing for striped marlin and fisheries management arrangements for baitfish in NSW.

It is important to recognize that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) manages the taking of striped marlin outside 3nm as part of the East Coast Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ECTBF). Commercial fishers operating in NSW waters cannot legally land Striped Marlin. However, these fish may be taken by Commonwealth licensed longliners as bycatch in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish fishery.

NSW could follow the Western Australian example by banning the landing of striped marlin by Commonwealth longliners in NSW. However, this would achieve little unless the Commonwealth prohibited the taking of this species altogether. Rather, I am strongly urging my Commonwealth counterpart, the Federal Minister for Fisheries Forestry and Conservation, Senator Ian Macdonald, to recognize the economic and social benefits of the striped marlin fishery to all Australians and to take the necessary steps to ensure the fishery is managed in a sustainable way.

When tuna longliners take bait within 3nm, they are operating within the jurisdiction of NSW and are managed accordingly by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Access to the resource for these vessels is currently authorized under a system of permits issued under the Fisheries Management Act 1994 that allow the use of small purse seine nets and/or lift nets by a limited number of vessels. This activity was addressed as part of the development of the fishery management strategy and the environmental assessment process for the ocean hauling fishery. As a result, new arrangements are being implemented for tuna fishers to access bait.

Recreational fishers and other stakeholders contributed to the development of the strategy and assessment. The new arrangements include a formal code of practice and a detailed reporting system. The reporting system requires fishers to report their intended activity, prior to fishing, to the local fisheries office and to report their catches each day. The tuna bait fishery will also be covered in the independent scientific observer program for the major commercial fisheries in NSW.

Additionally, the strategy requires that a number of participants in the fishery is limited to an approximate level and that provisions are available so that the number can be changed over time. A restricted fishery will be created to replace the current permit system. Regulations are currently being drafted which will ensure that the majority of operators who have historically participated in the fishery are provided with a way to continue to operate, while ensuring that effort is limited to a sustainable level.

I recognise the importance of striped marlin and baitfish to recreational fishing.

It is important to recognize that the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery is a major export fishery worth an estimated \$67.9 million in 2002/03, with a substantial portion of this economic activity centered on regional NSW communities such as Coffs Harbour and various south coast NSW ports. I am advised that a reasonable level of live bait is needed for these NSW based fishers to operate viable commercial fishing businesses.

I am working hard to bring consolidation to the entire fishing industry in NSW, both commercial and recreational, to maintain the true economic value derived from recreational fishing while ensuring a vibrant commercial seafood industry.

If you have further enquiries please do not hesitate to contact Mr John Diplock, Program Manager Recreational Fisheries on (02) 9527 8473

Yours Sincerely

Ian Macdonald
NSW Minister for Primary Industries

(stamped 14 June 2005)