



Hey! Do you fish for abalone ?

Did you know Fisheries Victoria is proposing to greatly reduce and restrict your rights to fish for abalone?

In all the marine areas between Aire River near Cape Otway in the west, and Arch Rock in Venus Bay in the east, they are going to:-

- Reduce the daily bag & possession limit for abalone from 10 fish to 4 fish.
- Reduce the days you can fish for abalone from all year round to 30 days total, and they will tell you which 30 days in the year you can fish.

They say it's to protect stock in the inshore reefs, but there are no new restrictions on commercial fishers. Recreational abalone fishers take only 1-3% of the commercial catch.

The new regulations are draconian and are designed to force legitimate recreational abalone fishers from the fishery so that the commercial fishers can have it all.

**Like the sound of it?
Want to see it happen for other fish species?
NO?**

Then tell them NO WAY!

Let them know your strong opposition to lousy fisheries management by lodging a submission rejecting the proposed changes in the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) Fisheries (Recreational Abalone) Regulations 2004.

Closing date for submissions: Wednesday, 27 October, 2004. *See overleaf*



The Issue, short and sweet

Fisheries Victoria says the new recreational regulations for abalone are necessary because the stocks of abalone on in-shore reefs are depleted. But they have no scientific data that measures the extent or rate of the depletion, and the new draconian regulations they propose restrict recreational fishers from **all** reefs in the defined Central Victorian Waters area, not just in-shore reefs. They say that legitimate recreational fishers of abalone take around 1-3% of the commercial catch. In the area proposed, the commercial fishery removed about 600 tonnes of abalone last year. That's about 2,400,000 fish in one year. And they have been removing fish from the area at this level, or higher, for the last 15 years or more. Commercial fishers have been complaining that the inner reefs are not so productive anymore, and that Fisheries Victoria should do something so that the stock levels on the inner reefs can improve to make them attractive for commercial fishing again. Fisheries Victoria also say that a number of people are abusing the spirit of the existing regulations by repeatedly collecting the daily bag limit of 10 fish, and this would also be contributing to their (unsubstantiated) claim of inner-reef depletion. They say these people then illegally trade the fish, but they can't catch them. Fisheries Victoria don't know (or won't say) how many people do this, but they say the problem is 'significant'. Selling recreationally-caught abalone is illegal. We say, if you know about it, and it is significant, how come you can't catch them? Competency?

Rather than considering the obvious possibility that commercial fishers have over-fished the inner reefs in the past, Fisheries Victoria have concluded that recreational fishers are taking too much. They have thus proposed a package of new regulations to be applied to recreational abalone fishers which are said to be designed to better 'protect' the inner reefs, and curtail the illegal fisher activities in the Victorian Central Waters. They say that limiting recreational access and reducing recreational bag limits will 'leave more fish in the water'. No new regulations are proposed for the commercial fishery.

We say that Fisheries Victoria's proposed new recreational regulations are unfair, reflect an entrenched subservience to the commercial sector, and are designed to making their compliance effort easier. We say that the real intent of the new regulations is to drive the recreational fisher out of the fishery. The proposed bag/possession limit of 4 per day is considered below what the stakeholder community considers reasonable for personal consumption. Under the new proposals, recreational fishers are going to be given 30 days only access to the fishery, and Fisheries Victoria is going to pick those days. Abalone fishing requires good weather, and we doubt that Fisheries Victoria has the ability to ensure good weather on the 30 days they pick, which means there will be less than less 30 days in which recreational fishers can catch abalone. Hence, the new bag limits and access restrictions will effectively force many recreational fishers out of the fishery, and thereby further deny Victorians rightful access to their fish. This will simply consign the fish that the recreational fishers have historically caught to the commercial fishers. And this is what they want.

This is bad fisheries management. Fisheries Victoria has steadfastly refused to engage with the recreational stakeholders in this 'issue'. Yet, they will engage the commercial sector on virtually every whim. Just another example of the poor track record Fisheries Victoria has in meeting the community's expectations of equity and balance in managing Victoria's wild-fish stocks.

Say No. Tell Fisheries Victoria they need to do better, to do their job properly!

Submit a response to the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) Fisheries (Recreational Abalone) Regulations 2004, by 5pm, 27 October, 2004, to:-

Greg Hayes, Manager, Recreational Fisheries Manager, Fisheries Victoria, GPO Box 4440, Melbourne, 3001, or to greg.hayes@dpi.vic.gov.au

Send a copy to your local MP, and also to the SDFV at sdfv@vicnet.net.au or the address at the top of this page. We want to ensure your submission is properly considered. For further information about this briefing paper, contact 9688 4397 or 9764 2001.