



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RECREATIONAL FISHING ADVISORY COUNCIL INC
(First convened in 1975)

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29 February 2020

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Sir/Madam

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION ON THE REGIONAL AREA OF SOUTH EAST OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA
RECFISH SA RECREATIONAL FISHING TRAIL
KAKADU OF THE SOUTH**

This Supplementary Submission is provided to the Committee as there have been several significant developments since the Initial Submission of 11 November 2019.

RecFish SA appreciates the invitation to present to the Committee in South Australia in the period around 17/18 March 2020 and is willing to accompany the Committee on an inspection of some of the lakes, if needed.

Ongoing Participation and National Recognition : RecFish SA and "Kakadu of the South"

RecFish SA would also like to take this opportunity to advise the Committee of its success at the National Recreational Fishing Conference in Hobart on 11 December 2019 where the prestigious Project of the Year award was presented to our organisation by the National Peak Body, Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation. The award recognised the significant and successful efforts by RecFish SA for the Stocking of South Australian Reservoirs in the period 2017-19.

This is relevant as it demonstrates RecFish SA and associated organisations have the knowledge, capacity and expertise to competently manage and implement large and complex projects in South Australia, based on evidence of past successes achieved over a considerable time period to benefit recreational fishers and to promote positive economic and social benefits for the community, provided it has appropriate funding. Therefore, and following the numbering sequence from the initial submission (recommendations 1 – 6), RecFish SA proposes the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That RecFish SA be directly engaged and funded by the Federal Government through its agencies to contribute to the ongoing development of the “Kakadu of the South” through the formation of a Task Force comprising Federal and State Government organisations.

Environmental Water for South East Lakes

It should be noted that although the Final Version of the South East Drainage and Wetlands Strategy 2019 (Reference 5) does not use the term “Kakadu of the South”, RecFish SA continues its use following discussions with community leaders and recreational fishers and their immediate recognition of the term. The Final Version also gives greater recognition to the recreational uses of waterbodies throughout the document.

Though RecFish SA submissions to the South East Water Conservation Drainage Board mention specifically waterbodies that do not currently hold water, eg Greenrise Lake, near Penola, and Leg O Mutton Lake and Brownes Lake, both near Mt Gambier, the final version of the above Strategy (Reference 5) does not mention these water bodies at all.

RecFish SA believes that the empty lakes may be satisfactorily filled using Environmental Water allocations for the long term community benefit, on both social and economic grounds, as noted in the Southern Wimmera report. Environmental water is also used in the Glenelg River, part of which is in the South East of South Australia.

RecFish SA understands that the Greenrise Lake Advisory Committee (Penola based) is currently negotiating for the re-use of appropriately treated wastewater to refill the Lake, demonstrating the strong community interest in utilising an existing empty water body that already has existing infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the Commonwealth Government initially fund the purchase of Environmental Water for the South East Lakes:

- Greenrise Lake, near Penola
- Leg O Mutton Lake, and Brownes Lake, near Mt Gambier

RecFish SA Initiative-Further Openings of SA Reservoirs by the SA Government

Following the success of the RecFish SA Initiative to open South Australian reservoirs to recreational fishing, the South Australian Government has further progressed the RecFish SA initiative to open additional South Australian Reservoirs, including the South Para Reservoir which is one of the largest reservoirs, with a capacity of 44 GL, located near Williamstown in the Barossa Region, as per the recent media release on 7 December 2019,

<https://www.premier.sa.gov.au/news/media-releases/news/south-para-reservoir-open-for-kayaking-and-fishing>

Other Media Releases by the Premier re the opening of Myponga Reservoir to shore-based recreational fishing on 7 December 2019, demonstrate that the Opening Reservoirs policy is bi-partisan, having been launched by the Labor Government following the 2014 State Election with a modest \$400,000, following strong lobbying by RecFish SA. The current Liberal State Government has increased funding for Opening Reservoirs in the 2018-2022 period from \$5M to \$20M and has made Opening Reservoirs a significant community program.

Note that RecFish SA commenced research and negotiations with Federal and State government organisations in 1999, with research during the first 2000/01 National Recreational Fishing & Indigenous Survey showing that over 52% of South Australian residents would like to fish in reservoirs.

The 2018-2022 expansion has meant a general opening of the reservoir reserves for walkers, cycling, mountain biking, kayaking and stocking of recreationally attractive fish, similar to the Wimmera water bodies referred to later in this Supplementary Submission. The opening of reservoirs for a wider range of public usage has been widely supported by the community with over 15,000 visitors in 10 months to Myponga Reservoir, according to recent Media Releases by Minister Speirs.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the Select Committee note the success of the Opening Reservoirs Scheme in South Australia, initiated by RecFish SA and funded by the State Government.

Implications of Opening South East Lakes for Recreational Purposes

The opening of the South East Lakes could result in success similar (if not greater) to that experienced in the Metropolitan and Mid North reservoirs, with substantial economic returns and employment gains. This project is consistent with the Limestone Coast Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2015)(Reference 4) which notes that:

- Recreation opportunities (fishing, diving and walking (p 40)
- Marketing and Promotion of iconic locations
- Ecotourism, and
- Tourism at a regional scale

should all be considered.

RecFish SA has previously gained Government approval for unpowered water craft on Lake Bonney SE in 2013 (see attachment 131003 Koutsantonis ... refers) to considerable local publicity, but no facilities have been provided to date. There are many other issues to be analysed and solutions developed which are beyond this Supplementary Submission.

Similar comments also apply to Lake George, with engineering solutions needed for sustained sand clearance, groynes etc. It is understood indicative costs of \$2M for a groyne and associated engineering works at Lake George have been obtained by the Wattle Range Council several years ago.

Opening the regional reservoirs and the initial Artificial Reef in the Upper Gulf St Vincent has demonstrated that additional funding sources may be obtained from Commonwealth Regional Development sources, additional State Government Department sources, individual Councils, international conservation organisations and private philanthropic organisations where projects are environmentally sound and economically appropriate for tourism, environmental restitution etc.

RECOMMENDATION 10

That the Select Committee note the potential for a range of fund sources to enhance and develop the “Kakadu of the South” in the South East Lakes.

Purchase of Grown Out Fish Facility Near Robe, South Australia

On 3 January 2020 (page 23) the Advertiser published an article by the Science writer on “Angling for the Murray”, (attached 200103...), which pointed out that recreationally attractive fish stocks are at low levels but that only small stockings of Murray Cod have occurred, with future modest stocking planned. This approach does not appear to maximise the tourism and participation rates for the community, and may have only minimal impact on specie retention.

The article quotes Ian Fitzgerald, a former RecFish SA Director, that a \$2M per annum stocking of the vulnerable species should be planned and funded in the SA portion of the River Murray. This is a very modest program compared with Victoria, NSW and QLD.

Native fish fry were purchased from interstate suppliers for the reservoirs, but with a much larger stocking program for the South East Lakes and the River Murray, funds could be committed to a Grown Out facility which is currently available near Robe SA and could be quickly available for under \$1M. The Grown Out Fish would have higher survivability and make a direct difference to the South East Lakes and the River Murray fish stock levels, more quickly than smaller fry, and provide South East employment opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 11

That the Federal Government, in conjunction with the South Australian Government, purchase the existing Grown Out Fish Facilities near Robe SA to boost fish numbers in the South East Lakes and the River Murray.

Economic and Social Value of Recreational Water Bodies-Wimmera \$27.527M in 2016/17

A socio- economic study was conducted for the Wimmera Development Association by Street Ryan in the western regions of Victoria in 2016/17 on the benefits of 24 Lakes, Weir Pools and River waterbodies being developed for community use including walking, recreational fishing, and general wellness. It concluded that the annual financial benefit in 2016/17 was \$27.527M.

The significance of the Street Ryan study to the “Kakadu of the South” proposal before the Select Committee is that the Western Victoria region is adjacent to the South East Region of South Australia. The Street Ryan study is of mature, developed waterbodies, but some were empty, whereas the “Kakadu of the

South” requires substantial investment and attitudinal change to move from very basic usage and benefits towards the demonstrated socio-economic values achieved in the Wimmera.

The Street Ryan study also reported that when water bodies that were hubs of their communities went dry during the Millennium drought, communities purchased Environmental Water and filled the empty water bodies to maintain their recreational, social and environmental values.

The RecFish SA submission to the South East Water Conservation and Drainage Board (SEWCDB) in July 2019 highlighted water bodies that were currently dry or had been dry for decades. These were Leg O Mutton Lake and Browne’s Lake, near Mt Gambier, and Greenrise Lake near Penola.

While an Economic Study of the Benefits of developing the South East Lakes has not been done, the Wimmera Study clearly demonstrates the potential economic benefits for the South East of South Australia with additional economic growth potential as the South East Lakes are much bigger and distributed over the whole of the South East of South Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 12

That a key Term of Reference for the Task Force include developing the Economic and Social Benefits of the “Kakadu of the South” concept.

Climate Change Recognised and Conservation implications for Fish Stocking Options

The South East Natural Resources Management Board (SE NRM) and the South East Water Conservation Board (SEWCDB) released the final version of the South East Drainage and Wetlands Strategy 2019 in early December 2019. (Reference 5 and attached)

Under the heading, “A Changing Climate” at page 20, the Strategy states:

“Refuge sites for threatened species, including fish, will become less viable, alternative sites, and adaptive options should be investigated now”.

Thus, the stocking option for various lakes could provide conservation options for fish. Further, the Strategy also says:

“Freshwater fish will be restricted to a few core refuge sites as wetlands become less permanent.”

This conservation effort becomes more pressing following the recent effects of drought.

RECOMMENDATION 13

As South Australian Government and Regional Bodies have recognised climate change developments, conservation of fish and aquatic animals have been identified as a need and this proposal provides positive opportunities to implement these elements, so should be strongly considered for implementation by the Task Force.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

(From the Initial Submission on 11 November 2019 and this Supplementary Submission)

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That a detailed assessment of the recreational benefits of Lake Bonney SE be undertaken, including:

- Fish Passage
- Stocking of recreationally attractive fish
- Boating Facilities
- Caravanning facilities

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That plans be developed to enable ongoing marine access through the Lake George Outlet and associated channels.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Lakes that hold water be assessed for maximizing their tourist contribution to the SE, as part of the Trail.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

4.1 That the Lakes that do not hold water currently be assessed for maximizing their tourist contribution to the SE, as part of the Trail.

4.2 That the Lakes water requirements be assessed and water allocation changes made.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Morella Basin, Tilley Swamp, South East Estuaries and Creeks be evaluated for their contribution to the RecFish SA proposal.

RECOMMENDATION 6

That a South East Lakes Body be set up as a One Stop Shop to work with the State, Local Government and Local Organisations to plan, implement and Administer the South East Lakes to maximise the opportunities and economic contribution from recreational activities, including primarily recreational fishing.

The information derived from reports received after the RecFish SA 11 November 2019 submission has influenced the thrust and firmed up the recommendations in this later submission.

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Please contact Ian Fitzgerald on [REDACTED] or email on [REDACTED]
or myself on [REDACTED] and at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Mick Wilson
Chair

REFERENCES:

1. 200103 Advertiser Angling for the Murray, page 23
2. Scott, Anthony. "Historical Evidence of native fish in the Murray-Darling Basin at the time of European settlement-from the diaries of the first explorers". CRC for Freshwater Ecology. 56pp. Explorers, Mitchell, Sturt, Oxley etc.
3. Street Ryan, for the Wimmera Development Association, "Wimmera Southern Mallee: Socio-Economic Value of Recreational Water, July 2017". 59pp.
4. URPS_Limestone Coast (2015) Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan, for Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast, Limestone Coast Local Government Association, and South East Natural Resources Management Board. Published April 2016. 88pp.
5. South East Natural Resources Management & South East Water Conservation & Drainage Board. "South East Drainage & Wetlands Strategy 2019". 74pp.
6. Environmental Protection Authority March 2013 "Lake Bonney SE Community Aspirational Environment Values" 55pp.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 200103 Advertiser Angling for the Murray, page 23.
2. 131003 Koutsantonis Lake Bonney SE Reopens to Kayaks-Government Media Release crediting RecFish SA.
3. South East Natural Resources Management & South East Water Conservation & Drainage Board. "South East Drainage & Wetlands Strategy 2019". 74pp.