

Commercial fishing myths in the Great Sandy Marine Park (GSMP).

Background

Over decades numerous statements have been made, including by various ministers, regarding previous imposts on the Commercial Fishing Sector as justification for not affecting that industry during the development of the GSMP. Any proposal to change the status of commercial fishing in this area will certainly affect the local operators but to date **there has been no real effect on them from any recent legislation.**

Statewide position

Restrictions on apparatus have existed for 30 years and apart from modifications for ESD purposes the gear has not changed substantially. However technology has increased at a rate of 2-3% per year. From the introduction of monofilament nets through high powered outboards, powered net hauling devices, GPS, fish finders and radar to name a few.

The Commercial industry over the past few years has benefited through some major restructures & “one off payments” that have consolidated the Industry & made the remaining fishers more viable. This has occurred in the following sectors as listed –

- trawl sector (excluding beam trawl) has been rationalized with approx 200 fewer boats with direct reallocation of days effort. Many of the operators were compensated & others that had effort units sold them. Recently the GBRMPA bought out further units as a result of the “RAP” process. Trawl operators have also been given the right to **legally take & sell various levels of bycatch**, which was illegal up to 5 years ago.
- Coral reef line fishery has been rationalized with the removal of 1300 under utilized or latent licenses. Remain fishers have **received generous allocations** for both coral reef fish & Spanish mackerel with most of the TAC’s not being taken this season.
- Rocky reef fishery has **not had any changes** or restrictions placed on it except for size limits on snapper, pearl perch etc.
- Spanner crabs have been managed for 5 years now & **are stable** with operators well regulated & viable.
- Mud crabs & sandcrabs have **not been restricted** in any form commercially except for a limit on sandcrabs take by trawlers.
- Miscellaneous fisheries regulations have been introduced on -
 - tailor fishers were given a TAC equivalent to the **second highest catch** recorded & are having difficulty reaching that level since its introduction. The closure of Fraser Island affected a small number of fishers that were on a “sunset clause” & **would not have had their licenses renewed anyway.**
 - Netting of spotty mackerel has been banned for a range of reasons but commercial fishers **can still line fish** for a far superior product bringing a much higher price.
- Inshore net fishery – this has had the recent multimillion dollar buy back as well as the compensation paid by the C/W during the dugong protection plan & the recent declaration of the State Marine Parks where again the C/W **purchased additional effort** out of state waters as well as the GBRMPA areas.

Great Sandy Marine Park & Great Sandy Strait- current position

Apart from some minor flow on effects from statewide legislation there have been **very few constraints** on any commercial fisher working in the specific area of the Park & even less in the Great Sandy Straits.

- 99% of the reef fishing is done outside the park limits **& has had no effect.**
- most if not all spanner crabbing is done externally **& has had no effect**
- mud & sand crabbing **has not had any restrictions** placed on them in the area
- There is a minor affect on trawling in very marginal areas but **the reduction in numbers previously has more than compensated** for this. There have been no changes at all in the Great Sandy Strait
- Although spotty mackerel netting was supposed to stop the fishermen are **still allowed to line fish** them. Spotty mackerel were never netted regularly in Great Sandy Strait. Recent changes have again allowed net fishers to take large amounts (50 per person) of spotted mackerel throughout Qld.
- There have been some very questionable Green zones created in the GSMP including inland from tree lines and other "on land" green zones. Most of the Yellow Conservation Zones have had a special designation put over them allowing continued netting. The only place in Australia where this has happened and without ecological justification.
- There has been **no other restriction** on netting operations in the Great Sandy Marine Park or Great Sandy Strait.

Summary –

The position put forward by the commercial sector is a general one for Queensland & in fact the fishers in the GSRMP area & especially the Great Sandy Straits have had virtually no changes to their fisheries that would warrant -

- *unrestricted retention of their current operations,*
- *the need for consolidation of regulation effects or*
- *special consideration over other users.*

Recreational Fishing Restrictions in GSRMP

All the recreational fishing restrictions that apply in Queensland apply in this area also. Further restrictions will only remove incentives to go fishing or take up the pastime.

Restrictions applying already -

- size limits on all fish
- bag limits on all reef fish including a collective total limit as well as mud crabs, spanner crabs, flathead, tailor, all mackerels
- apparatus limits – crab pots, bait nets & lines
- beach closures to vehicles on Fraser & the mainland beaches that **do not apply to commercial fishers &** closed waters at wolf rock, Indian Head.

Many of the above have been **additional reductions** in the past 2 years on higher limits that were already in place when none applied to the Commercial sector.

Recreational fishers have already been penalized by major closures **without any compensation or enhancement of our fisheries** to counteract our loss. Every time there is a change we loose substantial access to the fishery whereas the commercial sector gets concessions, compensation & very little actual reduction.

Recreational fishers have become the sacrificial lamb for Government policies.

2005

[2014 - nothing has changed]