



MEDIA RELEASE 14/03/06

For Immediate Release

Bateman’s Bay Marine Park- Public meetings this week

The Marine Park Authority (MPA) is conducting limited focus group meetings on the States South Coast to determine the draft-zoning plan for the Bateman’s Bay Marine Park. This will see up to 20% of its area off limits to recreational angling through the implementation of sanctuary zones.

Fisheries Ministers MacDonalld has advised that the Labor Party must deliver these Marine Parks during current term of office (in place by December 2006) which has sparked the flurry of activity in the Marine Parks Authority.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance strongly believes that the process must be delayed, be fully transparent to the NSW public, as haste will no doubt lead to more conflict between user groups. Historically this has taken 2 years of consultation, not 8 months.

Mr. Malcolm Poole, Chairman of the Recreational Fishing Alliance stated today “The MPA has allocated **ONLY** 2 hours of ‘face to face’ consultation, in 4 country towns on normal workdays making it impossible for the 440,000 fee-paying anglers to provide input into a workable plan”.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW has outlined an alternative ‘peoples’ model. This complimentary process includes initially limiting sanctuary zones, includes the government fully funding thorough independent research with compelling evidence from the science to support the values of each zone, as well as providing wider community consultation through involving all those socially and economically effected by such decisions.

➤ **Access for all.** The Marine Parks Act allows for ecologically sustainable use of public fish resources and provides public enjoyment for all from marine parks. Fisheries management of the recreational sector is constantly being reviewed, and with no impacts on sedentary recreational fish species and no recreational species under threat of collapse, the ecologically use of fish within marine parks should be allowed to continue. The targeting of pelagic and migratory fish stocks is sustainable under the current regulations. Critical Habitat Zones are already in operation and Habitat Protection Zones are used extensively within marine parks.

➤ **Wider community consultation.** Socio economic impacts of marine protected areas and the displacement/shift of effort are all consequences that need to be thoroughly investigated through wider research and community consultation. Local knowledge and state based sector expertise must be drawn upon when determining no take zones and evaluating socio-economic impacts of all user groups effected.

➤ **Rotating no-takes zones.** The Legislation is rigid in terms of no-takes zones, a far greater benefit would be gained from no-takes zones that would be rotated, allowing for the recovery of certain degraded areas. These no take, regeneration zones could also exceed the prescribed 20% paper model that the Government has announced. The rotating zones would utilise artificial reef systems and fishing closures to regenerate the area. The rotating no-take zones would rely on additional, relevant research to determine the degree of rejuvenation before rotating and targeting another area to rebuild.

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The Marine Parks Authority (MPA) is hosting focus group meetings to start drawing up the draft-zoning plan. People who attend the meetings will be able to draw their own versions of the draft-zoning plan, which will be considered by the MPA and the newly formed advisory committee.

Recreational fishers, conservation groups, commercial fishers and commercial operators will each be allocated 2 hours in each location for the focus group meetings.

The Dates and Location for each meeting are:

- Wednesday 15th March –Bateman's Bay-Coach house Marina Resort
- Thursday 16th March – Narooma-Sports and Services Club
- Friday 17th March – Bermagui-Country Club
- Monday 20th March – Ulladulla-Anglican Hall

Times for each meeting are:

- Recreational fishers – 9:00 am
- Conservation groups – 11:15 am
- Commercial fishers – 2:00 pm
- Commercial operators – 4:00 pm

Meetings will be organised separately for indigenous groups.

Ends

**Authorised by Malcolm Poole, Chairman Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW.
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