



Department of Fisheries
Government of Western Australia



Logue Brook Dam Position Statement - Recreational Fishing Stakeholders

Western Australia's recreational fishing community is represented by Recfishwest, the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RFAC) and actively supported by the Department of Fisheries (WA).

The state's most popular freshwater fishing area is the southern inland bioregion, where there are two licensed recreational fisheries that target marron (freshwater crayfish) and native and introduced freshwater fish species (primarily rainbow trout, brown trout, redfin perch and freshwater cobbler). These fisheries are a significant tourist attraction for the region, generating valuable income for regional centres and the fishery also supports a number of licensed fishing tour operators.

Over 20,000 marron and freshwater fishing licences are issued each year, contributing to approximately \$500,000 of revenue which is used to support breeding, stocking, research, management and monitoring activities. It should be noted that fishing for marron is an activity that is unique to WA, marron are not found in the wild outside of the State's southwest. In addition, the estimated 15,200 angler days of marroning and 28,000 angler days freshwater angling in regional locations provided a significant economical boost to regional towns in the south-west.

The public water bodies open to recreational activities in the Waroona/Harvey district currently support a significant component of Western Australia's freshwater fishing opportunities. Approximately 70% of the dam component of the recreational marron fishery occurs in Waroona, Harvey, Wellington, Drakes Brook and Logue Brook Dams. These waters also make up over 80% of the southwest's freshwater impoundment angling effort.

Over the past few decades nearby water bodies which were once major components of the recreational fishery such as Samson, Harris and Stirling Dams and the Harvey River upstream of Stirling Dam, have been progressively closed to recreational fishing and brought online as drinking water source areas.

Currently there are few dams where fishing is still permitted. The loss of access to any of the remaining dams open to fishing such as to Logue Brook, Harvey, Wellington Dam or Waroona would not only impact significantly on local tourism but the displacement of effort away from dams could eventually lead to the recreational marron fishery being permanently closed due to the fragile state of river systems in the southwest.

The Department of Water's state-wide policy No. 13 '*Policy and Guidelines of Recreation within Public Drinking Water Source Areas on Crown Land*' stipulates that recreational fishing may be allowed in these areas if the activity has been approved historically and the risk to the resource is accepted following community consultation (Table 2. Compatibility of water based recreational activities). It is important that this option is adopted in order to alleviate the disenfranchisement loss of amenity to freshwater fishers in this state.

Recreational marron and trout fishing has been a compatible activity on Logue Brook Dam since its construction in the 1950's. In addition, the impact on water quality of over 50 years of angling and marroning access on Stirling Dam has been so small as to be incapable of being measured.

The Department of Water acknowledges that the risk from recreational fishing is small, but that it is unacceptable. If the Department of Water were truly concerned about the real risk of any form of contamination, they would be urging real water treatment responses as the risk with and without recreational fishing access is virtually identical (in the order of 1:10,000,000,000 without fishing versus 1.05:10,000,000,000 with this activity). In both cases the risk is small but the impact potentially extremely large. To ignore the wider risk puts anyone who use the public drinking water potentially at an almost identical (but unmanaged) risk.

Every other jurisdiction in Australia allows recreational fishing in some or most drinking water supplies. In other parts of the nation, recreational fishing is permitted in public drinking water dams including Hinze Dam in Queensland (Gold Coast) and Googong Dam in Canberra. In fact, a total of 119,000 hectares (an area of about 35kilometres by 35 kilometers) of water supply dams are open to fishing in NSW and Queensland alone. In these impoundments several strategies have been employed to minimise any adverse impact on water quality. The concept of 'risk management' rather than 'risk avoidance' in public drinking water source areas in Western Australia needs to be considered as a strategy.

Logue Brook Dam would be an ideal location for the trial of a management strategy that allows for the recreational activities such as fishing to co-exist in public drinking water source areas. Logue Brook Dam is readily accessible, already has some public amenities and is a relatively open reservoir where recreational fishing activities could be effectively monitored.

Risk management could include the following measures for recreational activities;

- controlled access within public drinking water source areas;
- restricted access to licence holders only (sign in and sign out basis);
- public amenities and waste collection points below the dam;
- only allowing the use of naturally occurring baits or artificial lures;
- prohibiting the use of petrol powered vessels;
- measures supported by a comprehensive education program;
- ongoing water quality testing, and
- secondary or tertiary water treatment as a safeguard.

Recreational marron fishing is now under real threat from salinisation, which is reducing the distribution from the east and loss of access from dam closures from the west. It is important to protect this uniquely Western Australian activity that is already licensed and well managed or it will disappear forever.

Should the history and good management be ignored and recreational access to Logue Brook Dam is no longer permitted, the recreational freshwater fishing sector must be adequately compensated for water bodies that have already had stock enhancement, via activities such as further stock or habitat enhancement in other dams where fishing will continue to be permitted. We promote the installation of suitable water treatment as a realistic option or construction of a special fishing dam.