



Project Banjo
<projectbanjoactiongroup@gmail.com>

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To stingray.consultation@ecodev.vic.gov.
au
cc
bcc
Subject Stingray Fisheries Notice Response

6 attachments



The huge smooth ray found slaughtered earlier this year at Rye Pier.jpg deadbanjo.jpeg



18449356_10209049236813109_2478529803153802230_o.jpg



A scuba diver encounters five dead and mutilated banjo sharks (aka fiddler rays) 4 May 2017 Photo Credit- PT Hirschfield.jpg



Five slaughtered banjo sharks (aka fiddler rays) - four with fatal cranial splits and one that has been stabbed in the head,.jpg



19601223_797947290386849_3948663081533028112_n.jpg



RE: STINGRAY PROTECTION FISHERIES NOTICE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Dear Fisheries Victoria,

As a Coordinator of the Project Banjo action group, I would like to thank you for recognising that there have been significant problems connected to the senseless slaughter of rays including smooth rays, fiddler rays (aka banjo sharks) and other rays in Victoria for which members of our 780+ strong group have provided disturbing photographic and video evidence.

Unfortunately the sorts of incidents documented (involving maimed, mutilated and killed 'unwanted' catch (as per this disturbing compilation of footage: https://youtu.be/5rOXGyUm_fI and attached photo evidence), plus occasional, community-impacting incidents of huge smooth rays being found dismembered under piers where they are resident) have not been isolated or confined to a small number of locations but are indicative of a broader, long standing problem which has largely gone unaddressed until now. Photographic and video evidence has been collected over the years to attest to this problem, and some of those photos have been broadly published in print and online media (as well as screened on tv and discussed on national radio) are attached to this submission for your reference.

In response to the middle ground position that has been put forward in the draft Fisheries Notice (advocating for a reduced bag limit from 5 to 1, a 400 mtr exclusion zone around jetties, piers, break walls etc and a ban on taking rays over 1.5 mtrs), we respectfully request a bag limit of ZERO on rays throughout Victoria.

A ZERO bag limit on rays is well in keeping with public opinion expressed by the vast majority of those consulted in the broader community, including over 28,500 signatures on the Project Banjo 'Stop the Senseless Slaughter of Rays' petition (launched in April 2017), and supported by many individuals and people of influence within the recreational fishing community.

This ZERO TAKE position best recognises the value of these animals alive in their natural environments, yielding benefits to both natural and man-made underwater ecosystems where they perform vital filtration services to maintain habitat health which will benefit all water users. This position also respects and protects the iconic appeal of these animals to locals, tourists and consequently is likely to benefit local businesses in areas where they are prevalent.

There is very little evidence that these animals are sought after as a target species, and arguments that rays are targeted as bait are easily addressed by the prevalence of alternatives. We believe that applying a ZERO bag limit to all species of rays, skates and guitarfish will help to remove any current confusion which may exist regarding the treatment of rays landed as both 'wanted' and 'unwanted' catch, providing clearer guidelines against which more stringent enforcement of existing and future regulations can be delivered.

We do not believe that there is sufficient evidence of a sufficient number of anglers who target rays for eating purposes to justify any exemptions which would allow killing these animals in order to keep such a small percentage of their body weight.

In addition to requesting the Fisheries Notice (which has a 12 month renewable lifespan) be amended to a ZERO bag limit, we request that this TOTAL BAN on taking of rays, skates and guitarfish be advanced to become REGULATION as a matter of priority. We believe that the excellent precedent set regarding the protection of rays in Western Australia based on strong community concerns has set a strong example which Victoria is now well-positioned to follow. Establishing best practice in this area would set an exemplary standard for other states and countries to follow in ways that will benefit all key stakeholders.

Thank you for your concern and dedication to providing resolution to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

PT Hirschfield

Project Banjo / Rays Awareness Coordinator