

Feedback Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Draft Temperate East Network)

Background

Lord Howe Island is a small NSW isolated Island community located 320nm off the NSW coast due east of Port Macquarie. All of the State & Commonwealth waters surrounding are within the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. Lord Howe Island is pristine & World Heritage listed.

Lord Howe Island's major industry is tourism. The Island has a 400 tourist beds. Services include numerous accommodation establishments, restaurants & tour providers. There are approximately 7 recreational & commercial fishing operators. Visitors to the Island have a very high expectation of a quality recreational fishing opportunity.

The majority of Island visitors expect to have a meal containing highly sort after Lord Howe Island Kingfish or other local fish species. The freshest of local fish is one of the few unique commodities that is not imported to the island at great expense. Freight & fuel costs are extremely high on the Island.

We, David & Glenys Gardiner are tour operators, restaurateurs & commercial fish providers to the Island. This is our only income. I have been fishing these waters since 1974 (42yrs) in various capacities. I have operated 4 commercial vessels at Lord Howe Island. I was employed by NSW Fisheries for 12 years amidst, completing my service as a Senior Compliance Officer of the Fisheries Investigation Unit in early 2002. Glenys has served as a Administration Officer with NSW Fisheries for approximately 10 years & Chair of the Lord Howe Island Tourism Association for 2 years in recent times.

An informal shark export fishery existed on the Island in the 80's & early 90's prior to the implementation of the Lord Howe Island Marine Park. Total annual fish catches on the Island are estimated at approximately 25/30 tonne. The majority of this being Kingfish. The export of fish from Lord Howe is not permitted. Small scale commercial fishing for local consumption has been a historical part of Island life & a very important part of Island's economy & heritage.

Issue

The past 5 years there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of Galapagos shark taking fish from the lines of Lord Howe Island Fishers. Catches this year have reached an all time low, with very few fish landed, particularly Kingfish.

This action by sharks poses a serious threat to the sustainability of the Lord Howe Island kingfish fishery. In addition the income & future of recreation charter fishing operators & local fish suppliers is at serious risk. The continuity of fish supply to local restaurants is being seriously disrupted.

Sharks are easily able to take fish from lines prior to them being retrieved. Sharks have learnt to associate the noise and vibrations of boats/fish with a quick easy feed in all locations.

Sharks are causing many other issues including breaking gear, taking hooks, sinkers & terminal tackle. They pose a serious safety risk to fishers while on lines alongside boats. Items such as sinkers & lines are catapulted towards fishers on a regular basis.

Shark numbers have increased substantially with regular sightings. Larger, more threatening sharks are frequenting popular beach going & snorkelling locations. All ocean waters within the Lord Howe Marine Park are under threat.

This action by Galapagos sharks are a serious threat to many aspects of Lord Howe Island tourism. It is timely that the LHIMP (Draft Temperate East Network Management Plan 2017) has been released.

I think the plan should give consideration to the following:

- Installation of a number of FAD's within the Commonwealth Marine Park. This will assist to attract a number of different species. They will attract fish closer to the surface, diversify species caught & make them less likely to be eaten by sharks. It will also allow different fishing methods e.g. Surface popping & trolling & minimise the losses of fishing gear within the marine park.
- Look outside the box & trial other types of fishing gear with the view of diversifying catch species, reducing the incidence of sharks taking catches & providing efficient fish supply to local Island restaurants/consumers. e.g. Bottom set & pelagic fish traps. These methods should only be permitted to catch fish for Island consumption.

In addition to the issue of Galapagos sharks, I make the following feedback.

- I do have concern re the discharge of ballast water within the Commonwealth Marine Park. I do have concerns re introducing exotic marine pests within the Marine Park.
- I believe there should be no mining, including exploration. The same goes for the construction and operation pipelines within the Commonwealth Marine Park. I do have concerns re possible release of mining pollution including sediment into the CMP. Should such an event happen it has the potential of severely damaging the ecosystem within the Marine Park along with our unique & highly valuable tourism industry.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate in contacting me by email at [**greenback@fishlordhowe.com.au**](mailto:greenback@fishlordhowe.com.au).

Yours sincerely

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