



SOUTHERN FISHERMEN'S ASSOC. INC.

Ethical, Sustainable Harvest

***South
Australian
Lakes and Coorong
Commercial Fishery***

***Code of Conduct
1998***



*South Australian
Lakes and Coorong Commercial Fishery
Code of Practice 1999*

Contents

INTRODUCTION		3
1	The Environment	4
2	Resource Management	5
3	National Parks, Reserves and Private Land	6
4	Enforcement	6
5	Exotic Species	7
6	Relations with Other Commercial Fishers	7
7	Interaction with Recreational Fishers	7
8	Indigenous Heritage	7
9	Assisting Others	8
10	Public Relations	8

Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidance to individual fishers in terms of how the Southern Fishermen's Association considers fishers should generally act and react in various situations. In addition, this document provides industry with an indication of actions by individual fishers that the Southern Fishermen's Association would publicly support.

The Southern Fishermen's Association will not endorse actions outside the Code of Practice unless strong evidence is provided to show that such actions were necessary.



This Code of Practice has been endorsed by the Southern Fishermen's Association. It is in recognition that participants in the Lakes and Coorong Fishing Industry are those who most directly utilise the River Murray and Lakes and Coorong and are often the first to see problems of degradation and pollution and also advise on our valued environment.

As such, we have a responsibility to assure that this resource is well managed and sustained so that it continues to provide for the needs of future generations.

License holders should ensure they are familiar with the contents of this document and other best practice documents as they are made available. They should also ensure that employees are also made aware of their responsibilities and encourage them to read the documents also.

The original Code of Practice document was included as Appendix E in the *Wild Fisheries with a Future – Environmental Management Plan of the Southern Fishermen's Association 1998/99*.

The Code of Practice is revised and extended as required.

1. The Environment

- 1.1** Where a fisher believes he has identified any source of pollution he should assess whether the problem is having an immediate impact and act accordingly.

For example, in the case of an oil spill or chemical spill, he should report the matter to the following as soon as possible; The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Water Resources Section) and Primary Industries SA (Fisheries Compliance Unit). If none of the above is available seek the assistance of Police SA to ensure the relevant authorities are contacted.

Subsequently he should advise the Southern Fishermen's Association and the South Australian Fishing Industry Council of the events that have occurred.

If the problem is not immediate in nature the fisher should either phone or write to the Southern Fishermen's Association, SAFIC and Primary Industries SA, identifying the specific concerns.

For example the absence of fish or the presence of deformed fish in the proximity of some pollution source should be notified to the above.

All such advice provided to the Southern Fishermen's Association will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities for investigation and action. There is no requirement that the fisher providing such advice need identify themselves but this would be extremely useful in allowing issues to be followed up and feedback provided to the fisher concerned.

- 1.2** Fishers accordingly should not discard rubbish originally from land or water, particularly plastics (plastic bags, damaged floats, bait bags etc.)

Pollution is a key issue in regard to the S.F.A. policy position. It degrades the environment from which the Industry's lifeblood stems and it is essential that a totally responsible attitude be adopted.

- 1.3** Where fishers see others discarding rubbish on water or adjacent land they should talk to those doing so with a view to dissuading them.

- 1.4** Where appropriate, fishers should identify those discarding rubbish thoughtlessly and notify the appropriate authority.

- 1.5** The discharge of fuels and chemicals into the environment is illegal and is to be totally abhorred.

- 1.6 At launching sites, fishers should take care to dispose of rubbish thoughtfully.

In many cases Councils may not provide adequate disposal facilities. In such cases fishers should take all rubbish away with them and dispose of such rubbish in an appropriate manner.

- 1.7 Discarding of fish wastes to the system (fish offal and dead fish) may be undertaken in areas where it is unlikely to affect the ecology and the aesthetic amenity of the waterway. Wastes not disposed of in this manner must not be discarded so as to degrade the environment.

2. Resource Management.

- 2.1 Fishers should not seek to take fish wastefully – that is to take fish in excess of market requirements and wherever possible to avoid the taking of non commercial species with the exception of exotic species.

Without compromising the sustainability of the resource the fisher has a responsibility to ensure that the resources he takes from the system are utilised to the optimum extent.

- 2.2 Where fishers are of the belief that particular areas are being fished beyond a sustainable level they should report these concerns to the Southern Fishermen's Association or their representative of the Fisheries Management Committee.

Similarly where resource management practices appear to be inappropriate fishers should report these matters also.

- 2.3 Where illegal activities are observed or relayed to fishers the matters must be reported to local fisheries officers and to Primary Industries SA, FISHWATCH **1800 065 522** as soon as possible.

Particularly fishers should make every effort to assure the apprehension of fish thieves. The illegal taking of fish compromises fisheries management in that catch and effort is not properly identified and can subsequently result in imposts on the fishery.

- 2.4 It is essential that all fishers provide accurate and timely data on their catches. Accordingly the Southern Fishermen's Association endorses the Primary Industries SA policy of requiring all commercial fishers to provide their fish returns to SARDI Aquatic Sciences **by the due date each month.**

The Industry should encourage others including recreational fishers to provide like information.

- 2.5 Fishers are encouraged to actively discuss management policy and to seek to develop appropriate strategies for the Lakes and Coorong Fishery at general meetings of the Southern Fishermen's Association because the management of the Lakes and Coorong Fishery is a co-operative issue.
- 2.6 Fishers should ensure that gear is attended to at regular intervals synonymous with water and weather conditions; particularly long periods of high winds.
- 2.7 Fishers should ensure that all fishing equipment is marked and coloured in accordance with Fisheries regulations.

Floats should be of the spherical polystyrene (foam) type or other acceptable material.

3. National Parks, Reserves and Private Land.

- 3.1 Fishers should observe all restrictions imposed to protect specific areas for the purpose of conservation.

Where such restrictions are seen to be inappropriate these concerns should be raised through the Southern Fishermen's Association or the delegate of the Fisheries Management Committee.

- 3.2 Fishers should obtain a permit from Department of Environment and Natural Resources (National Parks and Wildlife Division) for vehicles to be left on Younghusband Peninsula. Permission should also be obtained from land owners prior to accessing Private Land or Reserves for commercial fishing activities.

4. Enforcement.

- 4.1 Fishers should report any illegal activities to Primary Industries SA (Fisheries Division) or directly to FISHWATCH on the toll free No **1800 065 522**
- 4.2 Under the Fisheries Act fishers should comply with all reasonable directions of fisheries officers. The S.F.A. supports this requirement.
- 4.3 Fishers should assist fisheries officers wherever possible in the apprehension of "fish thieves" and in the observation of management arrangements such as policing of boundaries, counting of fishing devices, buoy marking, net lengths and mesh sizes.

Where any of the directions of an officer place fishers in undue danger then there is no expectation that the fisher must supply this support. Where a fisher wishes to remain anonymous in regard to supporting the actions of enforcement then he should provide the relevant information to the S.F.A. or FISHWATCH 1800 065 522.

- 4.4 Fishermen should provide all reasonable assistance to any enforcement officer in difficulty.

5. Exotic Species.

- 5.1 All species of fish taken by fishers which are classified exotic under the fisheries Act must not be returned to the Lakes and Coorong system or discarded on adjacent land.

Exotic species not kept or used as bait should be disposed of in an acceptable manner.

- 5.2 Any unidentified or unusual species taken by fishers should be retained and SARDI Aquatic Science Centre SA notified so as a positive identification can be made.

6. Relations with other Commercial Fishers.

- 6.1 If conflict does arise between fishers particularly in terms of resource utilisation they should be referred through the Southern Fishermen's Association.

Industry does not wish to see a preponderance of regulations being established by Primary Industries SA. It is clearly preferable to establish flexible arrangements within the Lakes and Coorong Fishing Industry. The regulations we have in regards to this are adequate and if we adhere to them there should not be conflict.

7. Interaction with Recreational Fishers.

- 7.1 All adversarial situations should be avoided and issues of concern should be taken to the S.F.A. for consideration and where necessary be forwarded to the Fisheries Management Committee. The industry has many areas of common concern such as pollution, resource management, etc. It is desirable that a cooperative attitude be maintained wherever possible.

The resources of the Lakes and Coorong system are to be shared with the community at large.

Recreational fishers do not have priority over commercial fishermen and vice versa. Similarly the abuse of the resource by recreational fishers through the taking of fish for commercial purposes and undersized fish should not tolerated. (The topic of "fish thieves" is dealt with earlier).

- 7.2 Commercial gear should be set in such a manner and concentration as to minimise recreational concern and/or interaction.

8. Indigenous Heritage

- 8.1 Fishers should show respect for indigenous heritage by ensuring that any artefacts, graves or other sites are left undisturbed.

9. Assisting Others

9.1 Fishers are to render assistance to others in distress when able to do so.

Such assistance should only be given where requested, and:

- *It is safe to do so and does not pose undue risk to either party*
- *The assistance requested is reasonable and within the skills and experience of the fisher*
- *The type of assistance requested is appropriate under the prevailing circumstances*

If the request falls outside of these guidelines it is best to refer the incident to an appropriate organisation or third party.

If there is immediate danger to someone's life or safety, it may only be appropriate to assist those persons from immediate danger. Personal property is the responsibility of the owner.

10. Interaction with the Public

10.1 Fishers should act in a way as to be courteous and considerate to other users of the waterways.

10.2 Fishers should ensure that their vehicles and trailers are removed from public boat ramps and landings to allow access by others.

10.3 Fishers should ensure that fishing gear is not left at public boat ramps and landings.

10.4 Fishers should co-operate with requests to shift or remove gear during sailing events eg. Goolwa –Meningie Yacht Race.

Fishers should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times; this will assist to raise the perception of the industry in the eyes of the public.