

Some Pointers on Fishing Regulations

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In the last article I wrote for the Honda Marine Newsletter I tried to highlight the low knowledge base amongst anglers regarding the relevant fishery regulations, and that this ignorance combined with active non-compliance is undermining fishery and conservation management. I would like to pick up on this theme and at the same time provide some information on the main fishing regulations.

The first one is that to legally go fishing one must be in possession of a valid recreational angling permit. This permit is available from your local post office and entitles you to catch fish for your own use only and does **not** allow you to sell or trade your catch.

Should you wish to collect your own bait you will also need a bait collecting permit, again it is illegal to sell your bait and as such it is also illegal to buy your bait from informal sellers. There is a separate permit for using a throw net to collect livebait. Furthermore, should you wish to fish from a vessel the skipper of that vessel must be in possession of a recreational fishing permit endorsed for recreational fishing from a vessel.

So once you have the relevant permits you then have the legal right to go fishing – you have the right to be involved in the activity of fishing. However you don't have the right to take whatever you want and this is where the other fishing regulations come into play. Basically there are limits as to where you can fish, the size of fish that can be kept, the total number of fish allowed per day per angler (your bag limit) and for some species there are additional seasonal closures. The regulations for some of the most commonly caught fish species within the Knysna estuary and the most commonly collected bait species is given in Table 1 below. It is important to remember that there is an overall cumulative daily bag limit of 10, irrespective of the species caught provided that this limit does not apply to those species listed with no bag limit and to those with a bag limit exceeding 10. In other words you may not have more than 10 fish per day (made up of different species) with the exception of say mullet which you are allowed to collect 50 per day. In general minimum size limits are there to allow individual fish to reach maturation (i.e. capable of breeding) before they can be kept whilst bag limits are put in place to try and limit the number of sized fish being kept per angler per day. The limits differ between species and are set according to available scientific information regarding growth rates, the status of the fish stock and their susceptibility to over-fishing. By putting these regulations into place we are not trying to negatively impact an anglers fishing experience but instead they are there to try and promote long term angler satisfaction by protecting our fish stocks from over-exploitation.

The regulations are only as good as our ability to control them and the willingness of anglers to abide by them and from the previous article it should be quite obvious that to a large extent the functioning of these regulations is being undermined. What we need to work on now is how to change this. Remember I indicated that in my experience anglers will fall along a continuum between the ethical conscientious conservation orientated angler on the one side and the ignorant “I don't care and will do what I want” on the

other. As such our approach to this issue should be adaptable and utilize a variety of media that would be dictated by this continuum and the socio-economic background of the various anglers. For instance information pamphlets are one media option but the readership could be quite small and obviously calls for a degree of literacy. Relevant, prominent and easily understandable signboards are another option as are public presentations and more focused education drives targeting specific groups or areas (e.g. local fishing forums or schools). Law enforcement has also obviously got a role to play.

There is no one size fits all solution and although we can have drivers and leaders (both organizational and individual) tackling the problem, ultimately we all need to take on the responsibility of becoming a more informed angler and then passing this along to others. Ignorance should not be an excuse but at the same time there is also have the responsibility for relevant authorities to make the information widely available.

The brief regulations that I have highlighted here are only some of the recreational fishing laws and for those who do not have a copy the full 2010/2011 Marine Recreational Activity Information Brochure produced by government is it available at the following website.

<http://www.deat.gov.za/HotIssues/2007/Recreational%20Fishing/MARINE%20RECREAT%20BRO%2020092010.pdf>

Table 1: Daily bag and size limits for some fish and bait species commonly caught and collected within the Knysna estuary.

Fish			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Bag Limit	Size Limit (cm)
Blacktail	<i>Diplodus capensis</i>	5	20
Cape stumpnose	<i>Rhabdosargus holubi</i>	5	20
Elf (shad) closed season from 1 October to 30 November each year	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	4	30
Leervis (garrick)	<i>Lichia amia</i>	2	70
Kob	<i>Argyrosomus japonicus</i>	1	60
Mulletts	Mugilidae spp	50	
Spotted grunter	<i>Pomadasys commersonnii</i>	5	40
White steenbras	<i>Lithognathus lithognathus</i>	1	60
White musselcracker	<i>Sparodon durbanensis</i>	2	60
Bait species			
Mud prawn	<i>Upogebia africana</i>	50	
Bloodworm	<i>Arenicola loveni</i>	5	
Worms including polychaete, wonder and moonshine. Note this does not include bloodworms or musselworms		10	