

RECREATIONAL FISHING COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME - FISH TAGGING GUIDELINES

Tagging projects can contribute valuable information to fisheries management. If this type of project is to be of value then in a well designed project, the more fish tagged and recaptured the better the results provided the correct recapture data is obtained. However, a poorly designed project can be extremely costly and produce unsubstantiated, ineffective, ambiguous or misleading information.

Tagging is a tool of research, and does not by itself, constitute research. Tagging also will increase the post-release mortality of fish and therefore should not be undertaken frivolously or for no well-defined purpose.

To be effective a tagging project must be linked with other research tools or projects. For this reason it is recommended that during the project development phase close association be maintained with a Fisheries Research agency.

Another factor that is critical to the success of the project is promotion. Encouraging recapture reporting and ensuring correct information will ensure useful information. The project application form must include details of a public awareness campaign and how regular feedback to fishers will be maintained.

It is recommended that you heed the following points when developing your tagging project:

- ◆ Projects must clearly and specifically state the objective for fish tagging and how the results will be obtained and used. It should also include the experimental design showing proper planning with statistical/mathematical advice.
eg tagging to determine growth – the type of fishing gear used may cause a size bias.
eg tagging for movement/migration – if fishing effort is not randomly distributed, misleading information will be obtained.
- ◆ To validate this process a tagging project must be co-signed by either a State or Federal Fisheries Research agency, which must also be aware of these the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme fish tagging guidelines.
- ◆ Depending on the objectives of the tagging program, the milestones of the project should be performance based, not effort based i.e. number of fish tagged rather than number of fish tagging trips undertaken. These milestones should be clearly stated in the application. For this reason, the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme will not fund fishing tackle, boat fuel or boat capital costs directly – these should be a contribution to the project by the applicant.
- ◆ Consideration of different tag types and methods of application must be evident in the application. These will vary from one species to another and according to the objectives of the project eg population density, movement, etc. One of the ways this can be achieved is by a literature search.
- ◆ The cooperation of the commercial sector is important if the fish is a commercial target and the project application should show consideration and consultation if this is an issue.
- ◆ An education process needs to be included in the application. Such topics as handling fish, tagging procedures, recommended catching equipment, etc. will

reduce fish mortality and stress. All of these procedures influence the data and therefore the value of the results.

- ◆ Consideration of a smaller pilot study may add a degree of flexibility and validity to the project. In this way a project can assess possible problems and make changes to suit a larger program down the track.
- ◆ A catch and effort analysis or size frequency analysis should be considered as part of the project to assist with expanding and validating results. Records of water temperature, condition of the fish and other environmental conditions should be included to assist the final analysis.
- ◆ The application must also detail how the collected data is to be stored and accessed in both the short and long-term.
- ◆ The project application must also consider costs of a review and publication of results. This will assist development of other tagging projects in the future.
- ◆ Costs of promotion and publicity of the project need to be included in the budget along with costs and details of a reward for recapture information. The publicity information should be in place before tagging commences.