

BETTER FISH HEALTH A GOOD CATCH FOR MACKAY

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MACKAY WEDNESDAY 25th May 2016 // From barra to barred javelin – the release today of a benchmark report in Mackay shows keen recreational fishers are set to benefit from healthier fish stock and improved quality and quantity of fish in our waterways.

The report *St Helens to Cape Hillsborough net free zone pre and post declaration surveys* has highlighted the benefits of a responsible attitude to fishing, captured for the first time locally in recent monitoring, data collection and survey activity.

The report is a joint partnership involving Reef Catchments, Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc, and hundreds of volunteers (recreational fishers), assisted through funding under the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc spokesperson, Lance Murray, said while monitoring was in the early phases, results were encouraging.

“Over 2890 volunteer man hours have been invested in fish data collection from the recently declared St Helens – Cape Hillsborough commercial gill net free zone (NFZ),” he said.

“The results are early, but what we are seeing are encouraging figures in some critical areas, including the size of the fish being caught and released, and the amount of legal fish caught and retained.

“Monitoring showed 28 breeder barramundi over 1 metre, including two over 1.2 metres, were caught and released by recreational anglers. This amounts to 22.2 percent of all the barra caught in the February to April survey period.

“I’ve been a recreational fisher in the area for more than 40 years and this is the first we’ve heard of people catching barra that big.

“Early figures are showing that our breeders are being given the chance to breed and that’s what it is all about – replenishing our stock to a state of abundance. This net free zone compliments the Mackay Area Fish Stocking Association’s excellent work over the

years in stocking our impoundments and is the foundation stone of making Mackay the fishing destination of Queensland!”

Reef Catchments spokesperson, Stefanie Wabnik, said Reef Catchments was committed to supporting local groups in Mackay and the Whitsundays to gather real data.

“It’s about having good information behind environmental decision-making.

“Reef Catchments’ priority is to support local community groups to collect and collate data that will contribute to informed decisions. Reef Catchments is thrilled to be part of this process, which will help Mackay’s recreational fishers learn more about stock recovery, and provide the data that is needed to improve the health, quality and quantity of fish in our waterways,” she said.

An electronic copy of the report can be obtained on request from the Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc, contact 4955 0600 or email mrfa@easynet.net.au

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IMAGE: Lance Murray, of Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc, says he is excited to today present important findings from a new fish survey report for the Mackay region.

