

FAQ – How can recreational fishers reduce waste?

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The simple answer to reducing waste when recreational fishing is to kill fewer small fish and avoid gut hooking fish.



Killing small fish keeps the stock size low. Also, there is more yield to be gained from harvesting a mature fish with decent sized fillets than killing a juvenile fish.

Gut hooked fish have very poor survival rates (75 – 90%) so it best to avoid gut hooking in the first instance. In comparison, the mortality rate of lip hooked snapper that had the hook removed immediately was around 5-10% (McKenzie & Holdsworth 1997). [This was part of an official study and only included fish caught in depths between 14 and 20 metres deep.]

Reducing waste

Avoiding gut hooking is the priority.

If fishing for snapper recreational fishers can employ best practice techniques, including:

- Using soft baits or jigs that lip hook fish.
- When bait fishing, using large baits on large hooks, 7/0 or 8/0s.
- Using hooks with a wire appendage designed to reduce the capture and gut hooking of small fish.
- Using circle hooks.
- Fishing actively, by keeping in touch with your bait or jig to avoid gut hooking.
- Moving away from areas holding large numbers of small fish.
- Releasing fish in the water or using wet, cool surfaces when handling fish for release.
- Using new tools like release weights that quickly return fish to a comfortable depth and help avoid predators.
- Quickly killing and chilling in ice or slurry any fish being kept for eating.
- Using the FreeFishHeads.co.nz service to share unwanted heads and frames

We will not achieve abundance if we continue to kill small fish. We need to make sure management changes are reducing this waste, not legitimising it. If fishing in grounds holding high numbers of small fish the solution is to either move on or use appropriate angling techniques.

If we reduce waste caused by recreational fishing productivity will increases as the fishery rebuilds, because the average size of fish is expected to increase.

Education, encouragement and peer pressure is the preferred way to change fishing

habits and culture.

What can you do?

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