

**1. Do you know to what extent these poachers consume the seafood they take, supply local markets, or support the tourist sport fishing industry?**

- Most of this type of fishing is for personal consumption. The majority of poaching that is the focus of GBRMPA (and our research) is perpetrated by recreational fishers rather than commercial fisherman.
- Some (unknown) number of poachers will supply local seafood retailers and restaurants with high value fish product – Red Emperor, Coral Trout etc. The sale and number of fish taken in general are a Qld Fishery legislative responsibility. GBRMPA are responsible for activity in a zone (eg fishing in a no-take zone) Qld are responsible for what comes out (bag limits, sale etc).
- The GBR Marine Park is a Commonwealth MPA that sits over state waters and jurisdictions which adds to the complexity of managing problems such as illegal fishing.

**2. Two related questions. First, are there repeat poaching offenders? Second, if so, do these people have records for other crimes (i.e., is this type of crime very specific to fishing or is it an indicator of more general criminal behavior)?**

- The recorded repeat offender rate related to recreational fishers is very low – single digits, which likely relates to the low rates of detection. Specifically in our study looking at 226 poaching incidents over 8 years there was only 1 instance of an offender being recorded twice. However, there was also 16 offences traced to other individuals residing at the same residential address of previous offenders.
- This is likely more to do with the very low likelihood of being detected especially for poachers really trying not to get caught. Fishing at night for example is a really good way of avoiding detection.
- The actual practice of repeatedly engaging in undetected illegal fishing is probably quite high. Individuals who fish a lot in these areas and have good local knowledge, some are individuals previously employed in the fishing industry.
- Higher rates of repeat offending are recorded in commercial poaching.

**3. Do we know what the offenders are using to conceal the fish through the local ports to avoid detection?**

- The Queensland coastline is extremely large and the majority of boat ramps are not monitored on a regular basis. This means that avoiding detection is extremely easy. Especially if individuals use low traffic boat ramps in remote areas.
- Some vessels also contain secret compartments.
- Boat ramp inspections of bag limits is not a regular thing.

**4. I wondered how people generally view this type of breach? Do the public mostly see it as acceptable or normal behaviour, as 'folk crimes' that are not particularly serious, or as something that really needs to be tackled?**

- It's a mixed bag – folk crime yes for a large section of the community especially long time local residents.
- There is perhaps a greater understanding among stakeholders and those invested in the tourism economy in these areas as their livelihoods are reliant on the health and longevity of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Localised, targeted education campaigns may be useful for increasing awareness in local communities about the environmental impacts of the offences.

5. **Do the boat owners ever lose their license because of repeated offenses? That might be a way to cut down on the incidents.**
  - Recreational fishers are fined for breaches but vessels or licenses are never seized by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Qld Fisheries (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries) are in control of regulating commercial fishing and on occasion get involved in very high volume serious offences.
  - Commercial vessels can be seized under the GBRMPA Act but none have ever been successfully forfeited through court action.
  
6. **Are we aware of the extent of damage this form of poaching is causing, such as a decrease of biodiversity in the area?**
  - Yes, it has a significant impact. For example there is more biomass (sharks, fish etc) in Pink Zone (no entry/no-take) than in Green Zone (entry but no-take) which have more biomass than in other areas open to fishing. The difference between Green Zones and open fishing zones can be 8 fold for some target species. That is, the controlled zoning (no-take zones) have been established for the express purpose of ensuring the ongoing diversity of the ecosystem in the Great Barrier Reef which is not replicated anywhere else in the world.
  - Other damage from poaching can be anchor damage to corals and discarded fishing line (massive amounts) which cause coral disease.
  - Increased technology such as spot lock electric motors, sounders, GPS and electric reels are also having an impact on the intensity of fishing and the number of fish taken. Overfishing has led to a scarcity and near extinction of some species.
  - The impacts of illegal fishing are an additional stress on the ecosystem already under significant pressure from climate change – eg coral bleaching caused by warmer water and damage from severe weather events (floods and cyclones).
  
7. **Are we potentially seeing an increase in these recreational activities due to an increased amount of free time during COVID-19 lockdowns?**
  - Yes – during the first lock down in Qld, fishing was one of the allowable activities and there was a surge of recreational fishing. As a result of increased activity there was also an increase of detections in no-take zones.
  
8. **Do we know if local poachers are aware of the damages you discussed and the future impacts on the fishing trade overall?**
  - It goes back to the question on folk crime. Recreational fishing in the GBR is a very popular (almost cultural) leisure activity. Most people fish legally most of the time and may take the opportunity to fish in a no take zone if they perceive a low risk.
  - Individually the damage is not great but cumulatively it is, particularly in the high-risk areas like Green Island identified in our research.
  
9. **Is the poaching involves particular protected areas, particular species, size of fish, or all three?**
  - Yes, risk is associated with proximity to access points/boat ramps and population centres – that is areas where individuals undertake legitimate activities.
  - There are target species depending on the location of the no-take zone ie reef fish where there is reef and pelagics in deeper water.