

# RECREATIONAL FISHING LINE RECOVERY

## overview of the project

With nearly one million recreational fishers in New South Wales, lost and littered recreational fishing line is a significant environmental issue that harms native wildlife, pollutes marine waters and spoils coastal areas that have high conservation and recreational value. Through this project, OceanWatch Australia successfully engaged the recreational fishing community to find a solution to the problem. They worked directly with fishing clubs, councils and the community to implement specially designed *TAngler* Bins for the disposal of fishing line, and an education strategy to support the introduction of the bins.

The project also included the first Australian trial of recycling commercial fishing nets and lines. The trial showed that while recycling of fishing line is possible, there are still a number of barriers to overcome before this can occur in a cost efficient way. The project has successfully reduced the amount of fishing line entering the environment and has raised awareness amongst councils and the community about the issue of fishing line waste.



Fishing line waste is unsightly and dangerous

## how the project was carried out

The project commenced with a survey of attitudes and behaviour within the recreational fishing community. This assessment identified the barriers and benefits to changing fishers behaviour and then designed a strategy to facilitate the required changes.



TAngler bins

Data was gathered before and after installation of the *TAngler* Bins at a number of identified fishing hotspots to determine the success of the bins in reducing the amount of fishing line entering the coastal environment. Popular fishing locations were determined with the assistance of councils and the Department of Primary Industries, and were classified according to the number of recreational fishing lines counted at the site.

The project was supported by a communication strategy that included promotion of the *TAngler* Bins at community and environmental events, media stories through local newspapers and radio, an information pack for councils, brochures, posters and stickers for distribution through tackle shops, caravan parks and tourist centres.

## outcomes now and in the future

A total of 202 *TAngler* Bins were distributed to 20 councils along the NSW coast. Preliminary evaluation showed 45% of surveyed fishing spots had less discarded fishing line after installation.

Throughout the project OceanWatch Australia have developed many contacts with fishing clubs who have been very supportive of the *TAngler* Bins. A number of clubs have offered support as '*TAngler* Bin guardians' to keep an eye on their local bins, an initiative that OceanWatch Australia would like to pursue further in future phases of the project.

Fifteen tons of commercial fishing net and line was diverted from landfill and recycled into plastic fencing posts during the trial. The

trial indicated that large-scale recycling is possible at a technical level, although only one Australian company is currently willing to deal with the material. Transportation costs were found to be another barrier to further recycling, however OceanWatch Australia hopes that with an integrated State-wide approach to recycling these barriers may be overcome in the future.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The most challenging and time-consuming aspect of the project was the need to work with each council individually to negotiate the installation and maintenance of the *TAngler* Bins. This was difficult because the responsibilities for waste, coastal amenity and environmental management often occur across different sections of council. Due to these complexities, OceanWatch Australia found that a longer timeframe was required to allow councils time to engage with the project, and it was extended for a further six months to accommodate this.

Despite these problems it was found that taking the time to embed the project firmly within council operations was worthwhile in order to extend the value of the project long term. Those council areas that developed the strongest relationships with the project showed greatest improvements in fishing line waste. A number of councils experienced difficulty in adopting the project despite a sincere desire to take part. This occurred where councils sub-contract their waste collection to commercial operators, and re-negotiating contracts to incorporate *TAngler* Bins proved very difficult.

The benefits of this project will increase with time as more recreational fishers become aware of the presence of *TAngler* Bins in their area. OceanWatch Australia are now planning to extend the installation of the bins to coastal National Parks and inland recreational fishing spots which will further reduce the impacts of discarded fishing line on the environment.