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Fishing group calls for SA seal cull



AAP

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AAP © A South Australian fishing group has called for NZ fur seals to be culled in Australian waters.

A fishing group says there could be a case to cull New Zealand fur seals in a sustainable way in South Australian waters.

The Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association, in the Coorong region near the Murray mouth, has written to the South Australian Research and Development Institute asking for a study of increased seal numbers and the impact on fish stocks.

Association chairman Roger Edwards on Wednesday told ABC radio that if the study revealed there was a problem, there was a need to look at a "commercial solution".

"They're certainly eating fish, as seals do, they're interfering with fishing nets and so forth in the Coorong," he said.

"Numbers are increasing, so there is a problem."

Asked if a solution could be to kill the seals and process them for their skins, oil and meat, Mr Edwards said harvesting was a possibly, but only if it was

done "within a sustainable population".

But SA Environment Minister Paul Caica told ABC radio that seals - which despite their name are native to South Australia - are a protected species, so culling was not an option.

"They were hunted to the point of extinction, they are making a comeback, they're part of the national environment," he said.

"We have no intention of undertaking a cull but we'll continue to work with commercial fishing sectors to look at measures that can be done.

"But we do know that a lot of the measures that have been put in place elsewhere haven't worked.

"So we will keep monitoring the situation."

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