

November 2025

Rebuilding Programs for New South Wales Fish Stocks

Consultation Paper

Rebuilding Programs to support recovery of depleted and recovering species

Have your Say

Public consultation is being undertaken to seek feedback on establishing rebuilding programs and specific management actions to support key NSW fish stocks with highly depleted biomass levels.

Submissions addressing the consultation questions can be provided through the Have Your Say website at [Have Your Say - Rebuilding Programs for NSW Fish Stocks](#) up to midnight on 31st January 2026.

If you require assistance, or to provide a longer submission, please contact harveststrategies@dpird.nsw.gov.au

All feedback will be considered along with the following principles:

1. Programs and management actions should be designed to rebuild stock biomass to sustainable levels within biologically appropriate timeframes, in accordance with State and Commonwealth legislation and sustainability guidelines
2. Consistent contributions to reduce fishing mortality should be provided across the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

Why do we need Rebuilding Programs?

Fishing and other factors can significantly reduce fish populations, putting their sustainability at risk. When a species' biomass falls below critical thresholds, it's classified as "depleted". Classification may also change to "recovering" when biomass is still low but there are signs of recovery.

Rebuilding Programs are being developed to reverse these declines and rebuild stock biomass to reduce ongoing management risks and ensure healthy fish populations that can support long term fishing activities.

What species are included?

The programs prioritise species which have substantially depleted biomass, for which New South Wales (NSW) represents a significant portion of the total catch or those considered key commercial or recreational species requiring supporting management actions. These species include Grey Morwong, Silver Trevally, Pearl Perch, and Redfish.

Redfish are currently undergoing a listing decision process under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for a conservation status of Critically Endangered, due to a severe decline in population size caused by fishing. The outcomes of the assessment may change the management approach for this species.

The rebuilding program framework will acknowledge several depleted species primarily managed by other Australian jurisdictions. While NSW harvest of these species is minor, the program will outline actions in place to support the primary jurisdiction's rebuilding efforts. These species are Gemfish, School Shark, Blue Warehou, John Dory and Jackass Morwong. Whilst the East Coast Spanish Mackerel stock is classified as depleted, a new stock assessment has identified biomass is likely to be around sustainable levels, with no NSW actions currently proposed.

What are the objectives of the programs?

The NSW Rebuilding Programs will include strategic and operational objectives to guide management actions:

Strategic objectives:

- Facilitate stock rebuilding through changes to management of fishing mortality consistently across relevant sectors
- Rebuild stock biomass to levels that support ongoing sustainable harvest
- Continuously evaluate management actions and adjust them based on observed effectiveness and stock responses.

Operational objectives:

- Species-specific objectives, primarily focused on rebuilding the stock above 20% of unfished biomass (B_{20}) within a biologically appropriate timeframe. The specific timeframes vary based on the species' generation times. For example, Grey Morwong, will have a rebuilding objective timeframe of 11 years (3 generations).
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How will the programs work in practice?

The programs will employ a multifaceted approach to achieve their objectives, and establish:

Species-specific Actions: These are tailored measures for each focus species and could include adjusting minimum size limits, or implementing or modifying commercial, recreational or charter fishing catch or possession limits. The design of these actions prioritises achieving effective management including reductions in total catch levels while maintaining a consistent approach across fishing sectors.

Data, Monitoring and Assessment: A variety of methods are used to gather and assess information on fish stocks to assess changes in stock health, including collecting commercial and recreational fishing data, undertaking research projects, and performing scientific stock assessments. Examples of data collected to inform stock assessments include commercial and recreational catch, fish lengths and ages, and biological information like growth rates and maturity.

Indicators and Reference Points: Specific indicators, such as biomass derived from stock assessments and total catch levels, will be tracked to measure progress against the rebuilding objectives. Reference points, like the B_{20} target, are pre-determined thresholds against which these indicators are compared. For instance, the rebuilding target for many species is to reach a biomass level that is above 20% of the estimated unfished biomass (B_{20}).

Decision Rules: Clear decision rules will dictate when and how management actions should be reviewed and adjusted based on monitoring results. These rules will include management triggers linked to biomass conditions. For example, a review might be initiated if the stock biomass reaches the rebuilding target, is projected to fall short of the rebuilding target within the set timeframe, or if the average catch over a specified period exceeds a predefined trigger point.

What principles will guide the programs implementation?

The NSW Rebuilding program will operate under several core principles:

Strong Action: Where a species is depleted, serious management actions must be implemented that have a high probability of successfully rebuilding the stock to a sustainable level within a defined time period.

Best Available Data: While acknowledging data limitations, the program will rely on the best currently available scientific evidence to inform management actions. Deviations from the established programs are only recommended when supported by strong justification, such as significant new information or a high likelihood of failing to meet the program objectives.

Adaptability: The programs will emphasise the importance of ongoing monitoring and assessment to inform adaptive and precautionary management. Management actions will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to ensure they remain effective in achieving the rebuilding objectives.

Consultation questions – Rebuilding Programs:

1. What is your main area of involvement in fishing or related activities?
2. Rebuilding programs have been developed for key NSW species with stock biomass depleted to low levels. The programs have been designed to support rebuilding stock biomass to above 20% of their original (unfished) levels within a timeframe that's biologically appropriate.

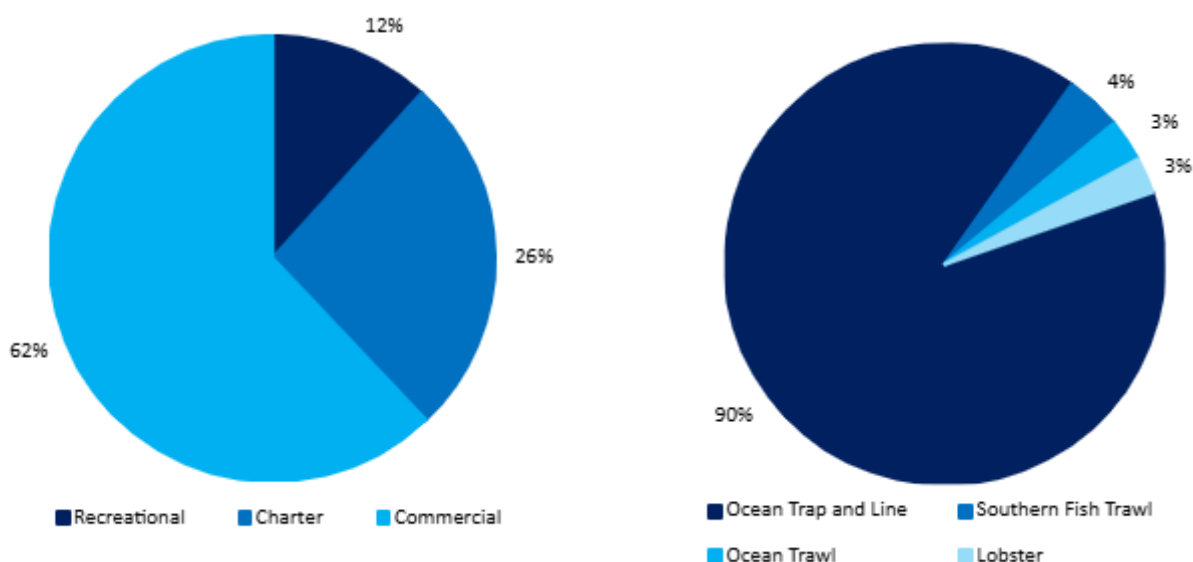
We're interested in constructive feedback on the overall program design and program objectives.

Do you have any suggestions or feedback on how these programs could be improved to better support the recovery of depleted fish stocks to sustainable and healthy levels?

Species summary and proposed management changes

Grey Morwong

Grey Morwong biomass is critically low (estimated at 11%) and NSW is responsible for around 66% of total annual harvest (SAFS 2023), equivalent to a recent annual average of approximately 40 tonnes.



Summary of rebuilding program

Rebuilding objective: To rebuild stock biomass to 20% of unfished levels within 3 generations (11 years) and continue progress biomass to a target of 40% of unfished biomass.

Approach: Targeted rebuilding, with initial management changes to significantly reduce current harvest (fishing mortality).

Estimated reduction in harvest level: 50%

What changes are proposed?

Current and proposed management changes are provided in Table 1. The arrangements will be reviewed within 5 years from commencement against the rebuilding program objectives and progression of biomass towards target levels.

Table 1: Grey Morwong: Current and initial management changes to support stock rebuilding

Sector	Management control	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements	Estimated catch reduction
Commercial	Minimum Size limit	30 cm	No change	-
	Bag/possession limit	-	Ocean Trawl and Southern Fish Trawl: 50 kg Ocean Trap and Line: 10 kg All other commercial: 0 kg	51% combined
Recreational	Minimum Size limit	30 cm	Option 1 (proposed): - Bag/possession limit 2 - Size limit 35 cm	18% recreational/11% charter 38% recreational/charter
	Bag/possession limit	10	Option 2: - Maintain 30 cm size limit - Bag/possession limit 1 - Recreational boat limit 5 - Charter limit 10	- 33% recreational/31% charter Insufficient data to model 24% charter

Consultation questions – Grey Morwong:

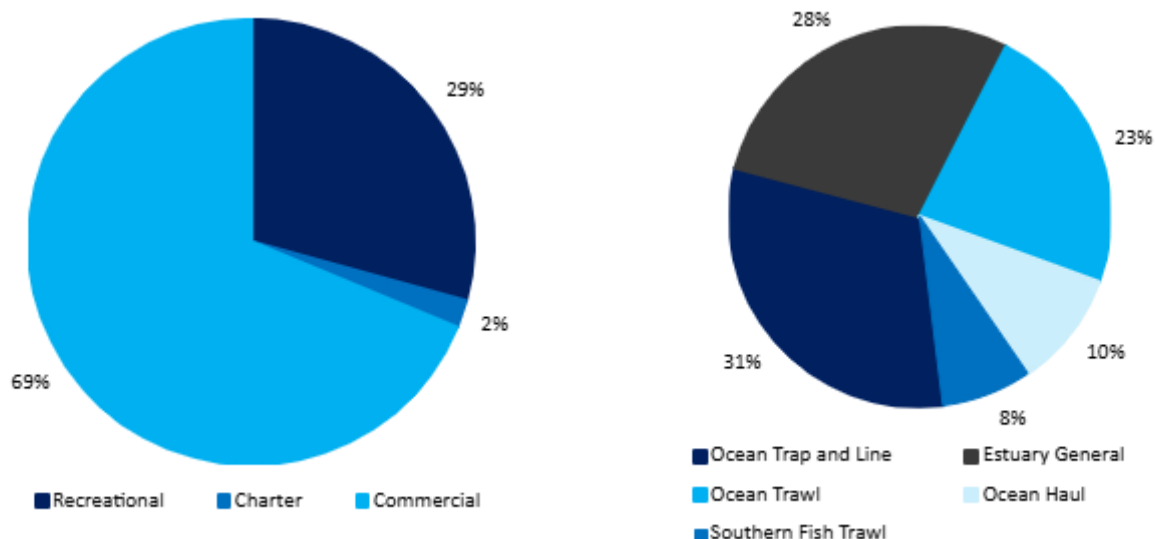
3. The proposed changes for commercial and recreational fishing have been developed to help rebuild Grey Morwong stock biomass to sustainable levels. The goal is to reduce catches across all fishing groups.

Do you have any additional suggestions or feedback on how catch could be managed consistently across fishing sectors to help rebuild Grey Morwong stock biomass to sustainable and healthy levels?

If you have a preferred option for recreational fishing, please let us know.

Silver Trevally

Silver Trevally biomass has likely been below 20% for the last two decades. A Tier 1 assessment suggests there may have been some recent improvement, but the model has considerable uncertainty. NSW is responsible for around 37% of total harvest of the east coast stock ([DPIRD 2023](#)), equivalent to a recent annual average of approximately 58 tonnes.



Summary of rebuilding program

Rebuilding objective: To support progression of stock biomass to 20% of unfished biomass with high probability within 15 years (mean generation time + 10 years).

Approach: Support further rebuilding, with management changes contributing to reduce current harvest (fishing mortality).

Estimated reduction in harvest level: 20%

What changes are proposed?

Current and proposed management changes are provided in Table 2. The arrangements will be reviewed within 5 years from commencement against the rebuilding program objectives and progression of biomass towards target levels.

Table 2: Silver Trevally: Current and initial management changes to support stock rebuilding

Sector	Management control	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements	Estimated catch reduction
Commercial	Minimum Size limit	30 cm	No change	-
	Bag/possession limit	Ocean Trawl Total Allowable Catch	Southern Fish Trawl and Ocean Hauling: 300 kg Estuary General: 70 kg Ocean Trap and Line: 40 kg All other commercial: 0 kg	22% combined (Excluding Ocean Trawl) The Ocean Trawl TAC was reduced by 55% between 2020/21 and 2023/24

Sector	Management control	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements	Estimated catch reduction
Recreational	Minimum Size limit Bag/possession limit	30 cm 10	Option 1 (proposed):	
			• Maintain 30 cm size limit	-
			• Bag/possession limit 1	21% recreational/22% charter
			Option 2:	
			• Size limit 33 cm	23% recreational/charter
			• Bag/possession limit 5	<1% recreational/1% charter
			Option 3:	
			• Maintain 30 cm size limit	-
			• Bag/possession limit 2	7% recreational/7% charter
			• Boat limit 2	Insufficient data to model
			• Charter boat limit 10	13% charter

Consultation questions – Silver Trevally:

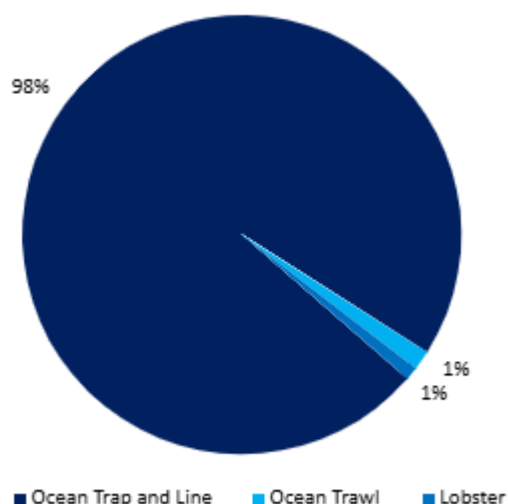
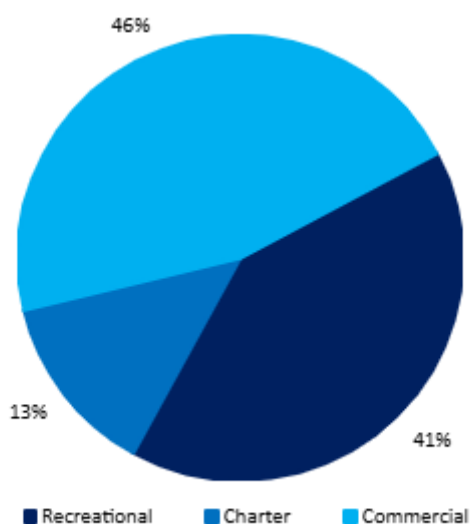
4. The proposed changes for commercial and recreational fishing have been developed to help rebuild Silver Trevally stock biomass to sustainable levels. The goal is to reduce catches across all fishing groups.

Do you have any additional suggestions or feedback on how catch could be managed consistently across fishing sectors to help rebuild Silver Trevally stock biomass to sustainable and healthy levels?

If you have a preferred option for recreational fishing, please let us know.

Pearl Perch

Pearl Perch is primarily taken in Queensland (especially historically). The 2017 stock assessment suggested that the biomass was likely at or below 20% and fishing mortality exceeded a sustainable level, leading Queensland to implement new catch controls including a seasonal spawning closure, size limit increase to 38cm, and reduction in the recreational possession limit. The biomass estimate from the most recent 2022 stock assessment is around 22%, with high uncertainty. NSW is responsible for around 35% of total harvest of the east coast stock ([SAFS 2023](#)), equivalent to a recent annual average of approximately 18 tonnes.



Summary of rebuilding program

Rebuilding objective: To assist rebuilding of the Eastern Australia Pearl Perch stock above 20% of unfished spawning biomass within approximately 15.5 years (mean generation time + 10 years).

Approach: Support rebuilding, with management changes to reduce harvest (fishing mortality) and promote recruitment (spawning capacity).

Estimated reduction in harvest level: 22%

What changes are proposed?

Current and proposed management changes are provided in Table 3. The arrangements will be reviewed within 5 years from commencement against the rebuilding program objectives and progression of biomass towards target levels.

Table 3: Pearl Perch: Current and initial management changes to support stock rebuilding

Sector	Management control	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements	Estimated catch reduction
Commercial	Minimum Size limit	30 cm	38 cm	23% commercial
Recreational	Minimum Size limit	30 cm	38 cm	17% recreational
	Bag/possession limit	5	Bag/possession limit: 4	4% recreational

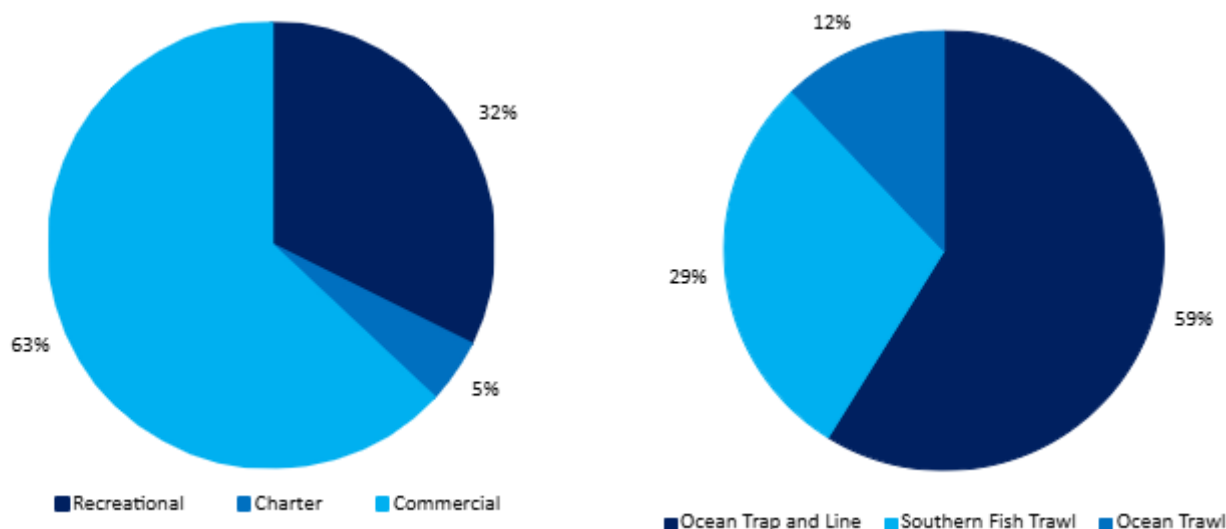
Consultation questions – Pearl Perch:

5. The proposed changes for commercial and recreational fishing have been developed to help rebuild Pearl Perch stocks to sustainable levels. The goal is to reduce catches across all fishing groups.

Do you have any additional suggestions or feedback on how catch could be managed consistently across fishing sectors to help rebuild Pearl Perch stock biomass to sustainable and healthy levels?

Redfish

Redfish biomass is critically low (estimated at 4% or less) and the species is being considered for listing as Critically Endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The outcomes of the listing process may affect the final arrangements for this species. NSW takes around 29% of the catch ([SAFS 2023](#)), equivalent to a recent annual average of approximately 11 tonnes.



Summary of rebuilding program

Rebuilding objective: To assist rebuilding the South Eastern Australian Redfish biological stock above 20% of unfished biomass (B_{20}) or proxy by 2042¹.

Approach: Support rebuilding, with management changes to reduce harvest (fishing mortality) and promote recruitment (spawning capacity).

Estimated reduction in harvest level: 30%

¹ Consistent with the Redfish (*Centroberyx affinis*) Stock Rebuilding Strategy 2016-2021, pending outcomes of assessment on EPBC Act listing.

What changes are proposed?

Current and proposed management changes are provided in Table 4. The arrangements will be reviewed within 5 years from commencement against the rebuilding program objectives and progression of biomass towards target levels.

Table 4: Redfish: Current and initial management changes to support stock rebuilding

Sector	Management control	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements	Estimated catch reduction
Commercial	Minimum Size limit	-	25 cm	33-95% commercial (high uncertainty due to limited data)
	Bag/possession limit	Trip limits for Otter trawl net (fish) in Ocean Trawl & Southern Fish Trawl:	Ocean Trawl, Southern Fish Trawl and Ocean Trap and Line: 40 kg	31% combined
		100kg south of Barrenjoey Head 250 kg north of Barrenjoey Head (1 November – 30 June) 1000 kg north of Barrenjoey Head (1 July – 31 October)	All other commercial: 0 kg	
Recreational	Minimum Size limit	-	25 cm	14% recreational/charter
	Bag/possession limit	20	Bag/possession limit: 1	23% recreational/charter based on charter proxy data

Consultation questions – Redfish:

6. The proposed changes for commercial and recreational fishing have been developed to help rebuild Redfish stock biomass to sustainable levels. The goal is to reduce catches across all fishing groups.

Do you have any additional suggestions or feedback on how catch could be managed consistently across fishing sectors to help rebuild Redfish stock biomass to sustainable and healthy levels?