

MFAC Chair's Summary

Council met online (via Microsoft Teams) on 21 March 2024. The following were the key matters discussed at the meeting:

1. The Acting Director General, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Sean Sloan and Peter Turnell, Acting Deputy Director General DPI Fisheries, led discussions on several matters including progression of all election commitments, discussion on Blue Groper management changes and harvest strategies.
2. Commercial fishing representative Greg Finn raised concerns about the illegal and unregulated catch in the abalone fishery. He advised access to market, resource remains a key issue for the industry and he will seek a meeting with the Minister. He said there has been unanimous support from 24 shareholders who recognise they cannot continue to invest with confidence in the fishery with the illegal/unregulated catch reported at 50 tonnes. He stated this is not sustainable for the industry.
3. Recreational fishing representative Matt Hansen discussed the Minister for Agriculture's speech in NSW Parliament the previous day on the importance of the recreational fishing sector, how the industry contributes more than \$3.4 billion to the state's economy and provides the equivalent of 14,000 full-time jobs. He noted the comments were well received by the sector and other members of the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW). He also discussed Blue Groper management changes and noted recreational interest in changing bag and size limits.
4. The Aboriginal Fishing Sector Update was provided by the Executive Officer on behalf of Wayne Anderson, Proxy for Aboriginal Cultural Fishing. This included updates on the draft Aboriginal cultural fishing regulation; the EOI process to fill current vacancies for the Aboriginal Fishing Advisory Council (AFAC); a further funding round will be conducted this financial year for the Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund; three proposals have been selected to participate in the program during 2023-25 for the Aboriginal Fisheries Business Development Program; and an update on the two-year trials for Local Management Plans at the Tweed and Hastings, which are due to finish in June 2024.
5. The aquaculture sector update was provided by Mark Bulley who advised the industry is trying to resolve Crown Lands depot sites; the season has been pretty good for NSW oyster farmers; and the oyster conference will be held in August at Port Macquarie.
6. Jo-Anne McCrea provided an update on the Conservation of Aquatic Resources who advised the Annual Sustainable Seafood Awards were celebrated at Sydney's Maritime Museum on Friday 15th March. Two NSW businesses (both located in Wollongong) were awarded prizes; the National Fisheries Advisory Committee (NFAC) was recently reinstated with a smaller membership group; other issues raised by the conservation sector include Blue Groper management changes and Grey nurse fatalities as a result of the Shark Meshing Program.
7. Dr Geoff Allan, DPI White Spot Recovery Coordinator, and Melissa Walker, Policy and Program Manager White Spot, provided an update on White Spot. This included an update on of the White Spot management program, NSW long term surveillance plan and response options. Feedback and comments are being invited on the scenarios and the proposed management options under three scenarios. DPI is engaging with directly affected



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stakeholders, and broader NSW stakeholders and national stakeholders on these management scenarios and invited feedback from MFAC.

Yours sincerely,

Dr James Findlay
Chair
Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Council