



**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council**

Outcomes

**Meeting 34, 9 May 2025
Branksome Hotel, Mascot Sydney**

Members Present	Patrick Linehan (Online) Paul Lennon (Online) Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ian Puckeridge (Online) Matt Tripet Bryan Van Der Walt	Region 1 – Mid & Far North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 - Illawarra Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland (D/ Chair) Spearfishing Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing A/Director Fisheries Management
Apologies	Johann Bell Anna Clark Bill Blair Ray Tang Peter Dugan	Independent Chairperson Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chairperson, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Deputy Chairperson opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 34th meeting of RFNSW.

b) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- Member Karl Mathers declared his involvement in a Charles Sturt University project undertaking additional research relating to the carp virus (Cyprinid herpesvirus 3).
- Members Matt Hansen and Grahame Williams declared a pre-identified Conflict of Interest regarding their association with specific applications in the Recreational Fishing Trust funding round (Item 3). As per protocol, members with a conflict of interest were asked to leave the meeting temporarily while the specified applications were discussed by the council.

c) Agreement on the agenda and adoption of previous meeting record, proposed future meeting schedule

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 33rd meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.
- It was noted by Council and DPIRD that the Chairperson of RFNSW and Chairperson of CommFish are working on the draft communique on water quality to be submitted to the Minister in the near term.
- DPIRD advised that a letter from the Chairperson of RFNSW regarding rock fishing safety was submitted to the Minister in April 2025.

2) Rebuilding Programs

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided a presentation on a number of key species, including four currently classified as depleted, and another as recovering. The presentation outlined options to develop rebuilding programs for each of the species.
- Council provided feedback on various management options and noted that further consultation on these programs will be undertaken with RFNSW, including a future community consultation phase.
- Council considered fin-clipping should be investigated for large, high value species as a potential deterrent to address black marketing.

3) Recreational Fishing Trust Matters

a) Review of recommendations from RFSTEC & RFFTEC regarding trust applications

NOTED:

- The 70th meeting of the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee and the 74th meeting of the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee were held on 8 and 9 April 2025, respectively. The Committees reviewed new Saltwater and Freshwater applications received following an expression of interest from the Minister calling for Trust fund applications.
- Council acknowledged the body of work that was undertaken by the Expenditure Committees in reviewing all the applications.
- RFNSW reviewed the advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding new applications to the Recreational Fishing Trust and made funding recommendations accordingly. Council will now pass this advice onto the Minister for consideration.
- Members requested an update on the Minister's consideration of additional information of five research Trust applications noting a letter had been sent to the Minister from the Chairperson on a range of Recreational Fishing Trust matters.

Action item: DPIRD to confirm the status of the letter sent to the Minister from the Chairperson on a range of Recreational Fishing Trust matters, including the consideration of additional information of five research Trust applications.

b) Update on Recreational Fishing Trust Licence Holder Survey

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the 2024 Recreational Fishing Licence Holder survey and advised a summary report had been completed and submitted to the Minister for consideration.

c) Enhancing Recreational Fishing in NSW Action Plan

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Enhancing Recreational Fishing in NSW Action Plan. DPIRD advised that the updated plan incorporated feedback from the Licence Holder Survey and will now be submitted to the Minister for consideration.
- Members noted that the Plan has undergone several iterations and recommended release of the Plan be progressed as soon as possible.

d) Current status summary of RFT projects

NOTED:

- Council noted the summary of current active Trust projects, which was provided for information.

4) Harvest Strategies

a) Mulloway Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an extensive update on the draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy and the current consultation process. DPIRD encouraged Council members to promote the opportunity for the public to provide feedback via their channels.
- Council acknowledged the continued effort and dedication of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group and looked forward to seeing the outcomes from the consultation.

b) Real time recreational reporting

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the implementation of digital reporting for recreational fishing in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia. RFNSW remained supportive of the need for additional data collection on Mulloway catch but raised the significant challenges for the real-time catch reporting as proposed for Mulloway and outlined in the current consultation paper.

c) Trap and Line Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided a short update on the development of the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy (Snapper and Kingfish), with the current focus on determining reference points and associated decision rules for each species.

5) Spearfishing Issues

a) Crescent Head

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the RFNSW proposal to extend spearfishing access at Crescent Head noting local consultation had been undertaken with various stakeholder organisations. Council requested further updates be provided to RFNSW out of session.

b) Lord Howe Island Marine Park

NOTED:

- DPIRD noted that a community and stakeholder survey was conducted in 2024 to identify community and stakeholder values (environmental, social, cultural and economic) for Lord

Howe Island Marine Park and the perceived threats to these values. The outcomes from this survey will inform the risk assessment for the values of the Marine Park and the preparation of a management plan for the Park.

c) Brunswick River

NOTED:

- RFNSW requested DPIRD to continue investigating options for increasing spearfishing access north of the Brunswick River noting that current spearfishing opportunities in the local area were fairly limited.

d) Mackerel Boulder

NOTED:

- DPIRD confirmed that there have been no changes to the boundary of this seasonal closure and advised that the marker buoys have long anchor lines so their positions can vary slightly depending on conditions. It is recommended that users utilise other sources like the FishSmart app for location references and accuracy, as the buoys are a guide only.

6) Shore-based fishing guides

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an information paper on a desktop update of shore-based fishing guides in NSW undertaken by DPIRD. The Department also outlined the current framework for charter boat licensing in NSW and that DPIRD will continue monitoring of shore based guiding activity and any associated impacts on fisheries resource sustainability.
- Members noted that non-powered vessel and kayak charters are also increasing, particularly in estuarine waters. DPIRD confirmed that kayaks and non-powered vessels must be licensed if they are running fishing charters. DPIRD encouraged Council members to report any suspected illegal charter operations to the Department for investigation.

7) Depredation presentation and opportunities for recreational fishers to be involved in mitigation research

NOTED:

- DPIRD Fisheries staff, commercial fishing stakeholders and recreational fishing stakeholders attended a workshop on shark depredation in Coffs Harbour on 1 April 2025.
- Council received a presentation from Dr Jonathan Mitchell, Senior Fisheries Researcher, Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- The presentation examined the Australia wide issue of shark depredation and potential mitigation methods in Australian Line fisheries.
- Council noted shark depredation is becoming more frequent in NSW waters, particularly on the

north coast and can have significant socio-economic and ecological impacts including loss of gear and additional target species mortality.

- RFNSW members provided input on various mitigation methods which are being tested as part of the research project. Members noted that any potential mitigation methods need to be affordable for recreational fishers to ensure widespread uptake.

8) Fish Stocking & Enhancement Operations Update

a) Snowy Hydro 2.0 project presentation

NOTED:

- Members received a presentation from Snowy Hydro, which outlined the significant progress on the Snowy Hydro 2.0 project and the associated Recreational Fishing Management Plan, which aims to mitigate risks to the trout fishery at Tantangara Reservoir and Lake Eucumbene. It was noted the Plan includes proposed increased production works at Gaden Trout Hatchery.

b) FMS review update

NOTED:

- DPIRD outlined progress on the review of the Freshwater Fish Stocking Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS). A supplier has been selected to complete the review after a tender evaluation process and is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.
- DPIRD advised that any recommendations resulting from the review will be considered and the FMS updated as required. RFNSW will be updated on the review in future meetings and will be consulted on any potential changes to the FMS.

c) Trout and Murray Cod Action Plans

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Trout and Murray Cod Enhancement Action Plans, noting that both plans are currently under consideration.
- Council requested that DPIRD progress the release of the Plans as soon as possible, noting the anticipated benefits of the various associated initiatives to boost recreational fishing opportunities.

d) Trout heat resistance project

NOTED:

- At the request of Council, DPIRD provided information on trout thermal resilience research that is being completed by CSIRO. The research is only preliminary but has the potential to inform breeding programs in NSW.

e) Catch and release in the Monaro Region

NOTED:

- The Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) has written to RFNSW to request consideration of 'catch and release only' restrictions on waterways which it considers have been impacted by recent changes in stocking sites following the listing of the Roundsnout Galaxias as endangered under Commonwealth environmental legislation.
- Council members suggested potential localised closures in warmer months to minimise heat stress on impacted populations.
- DPIRD advised that despite the listing of the endangered galaxid species, the number of trout stocked annually in the Monaro has not changed. It was noted that due to the legislative requirements associated with changing fishing rules, DPIRD aims to avoid implementing one-off or ad hoc changes.
- Information regarding statistics on fishing pressure, current take, environmental factors and compliance capacity would require consideration as part of any review of trout fishing rules.
- DPIRD will consult further with MAS and will provide an update at the future meetings.

Action item: The Chairperson to send a letter of response to MAS.

f) Tiger Trout Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on preliminary Tiger Trout research. Preliminary results indicate good growth profiles for this hybrid species (albeit not significantly different to growth rates for other salmonids including Rainbow trout and Brown Trout) and returns to the fishery appear to be favourable.
- A report on the findings is anticipated to be completed towards the end of the year.

g) Marine Stocking Program

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Marine Stocking Program and gave a summary of Mulloway and Dusky Flathead stockings that have been completed since 2021. The update also included insights into future stocking opportunities and program priorities.
- Council acknowledged how positively perceived the Marine Stocking is by the general fishing community, as the species stocked are incredibly popular. It was recommended that DPIRD should investigate opportunities to expand the program to further expand the recreational fishing opportunities.

9) Update on recent blackwater fish kill events

NOTED:

- As requested by Council, DPIRD provided information on the recent blackwater fish kill events that occurred due to the rain events associated with ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Investigations were completed in line with the DPIRD Protocol for Investigating and Reporting Fish Kills. DPIRD acknowledged the management and on-ground support provided by other agencies, local councils, OzFish volunteers and community members.
- Blackwater events result from floodplain organic matter decomposing and depleting oxygen levels.
- Council re-affirmed its commitment to supporting any programs or site-specific projects that actively contribute to improved water quality and habitat improvement, particularly in estuaries where fish kills are more commonly reported.

10) Member Feedback on Update Papers

a) Update Papers

NOTED:

- Council acknowledged the informative update papers and requested additional papers be provided as part of the future agendas as needed.
- Council re-affirmed its ongoing support for the continuation of the Tweed and Birpai Barray (Hastings) Aboriginal and Cultural Fishing Local Management Plans.

b) Peak Body for recreational fishing

NOTED:

- DPIRD gave a brief update on the proposed establishment of a Recreational Fishing Peak Body, which is a government election commitment.
- It was noted a draft model and governance arrangement for a recreational fishing peak body has been developed using a Recreational Fishing Stakeholder online forum (with 40 attendees from diverse backgrounds) and subsequent meetings of a smaller Peak Body Working Group over the past year.

11) Development of an Environmental Assessment for Recreational Fishing.

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on progress of the Recreational Fishing Environmental Assessment. DPIRD noted that the environmental assessment, the social and economic assessment and the cultural assessment have been completed.
- The next step includes the development of the Recreational Fishing Management Strategy.
- Council appreciated the extensive work that has been undertaken in this space and looked forward to future updates.

12) General Business

NOTED:

- Council noted incoming correspondence on a range of issues related to RFNSW, with none requiring further follow-up action.

Meeting closed.