

**Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council
Minutes
Meeting 21, 17 August 2021
Zoom videoconference**

Members Present	Johann Bell Dave Rae Paul Lennon Grahame Williams OAM Justin Duggan Vicki Lear Jo Starling Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Steven Samuels Ray Tang Ian Puckeridge Vic Levett Matt Tripet Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 1 – Mid and Far North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 5 – South Coast Region 6 – North West Inland Region 7 – South West Inland Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Spear Fishing Charter Fishing Social benefits of recreational fishing Nominee of the Secretary - DPI representative
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1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the 21st meeting of RFNSW via Zoom videoconference.
- The Chair noted that Mr Sean Sloan, Deputy Director-General, DPI Fisheries would be providing an update on a number of key recreational fishing issues later in the meeting.

2) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the Register of Interests provided in the agenda.
- Member Grahame Williams OAM advised he had been reappointed as the Recreational Fishing Charter representative on the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Council until 30 June 2024.

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

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 20th meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting.
- Next meeting is proposed for 23 November 2021.

4) Review of action items from Meeting 20 (May 2021)

NOTED:

- Council noted the action items from the previous meeting.

5) Presentation on Snapper and Kingfish

NOTED:

- In response to Council's request for updates on the status of Snapper and Kingfish stocks, the comprehensive information presented by the relevant expert scientists from DPI provided RFNSW with valuable insights into the cumulative effects of fishing on these two highly-valued species over several decades.
- The information presented included current and historical length-frequency distributions from commercial catches, catch-per-unit-effort indices, changes in fishing power over time, and compliance practices. The presentations indicated that recent recreational catches of both Snapper and Kingfish are rated as sustainable.
- However, discussions following the presentations by members, and by a sub-group within Council, indicated that some uncertainty remains about the future resilience of these two species to continued recreational fishing at the present levels. The uncertainty identified by RFNSW is related to:
 - the steadily-growing population of NSW which can be expected to progressively increase the number of recreational fishers and fishing effort;
 - unpredictable events that increase recreational fishing effort from time to time, as has occurred since the onset of the COVID pandemic;
 - the effects of considerable improvements in fishing technology and social media on catch rates;
 - some knowledge gaps about the spatial stock structure of Snapper and Kingfish in eastern Australia, which raises questions about the origin of the fish caught in NSW; and
 - the effects of climate change on the distribution and abundance of these two species (which are now also being caught regularly in northern Tasmania).
- As a result of this uncertainty, RFNSW members agreed that a precautionary approach is needed to maintain quality recreational fishing for Snapper and Kingfish until Harvest Strategies are developed and implemented for these popular species. Accordingly, Council recommends that the following advice for revisions to the bag limits and legal lengths be provided to the Minister for consideration for a public consultation process:

Snapper

- Reduction in the bag limit from 10 to 5 fish per day

- Increase in the size limit from 30 to 35 cm, with only one fish larger than 70 cm

Kingfish

- Reduction in the bag limit from 5 to 2 fish per day
- Increase in the size limit from 65 to 75 cm, with only one fish larger than 100 cm
- These recommendations are similar to the rules for Snapper in Queensland while the bag limit recommendation for Kingfish would equal the current bag limit for the species in that state. The recommendations are expected to build the resilience of these two species to higher fishing pressure and unpredictable environmental changes. The revised regulations would also create a more robust spawning stock, thereby improving the frequency of successful recruitment. The reductions in bag limits will also reduce the scope for black marketing these species.
- Based on modelling done by DPI scientists, the estimated trade-offs for recreational fishing for Snapper are:
 - By reducing the bag limit from 10 to 5, approximately 10% of the present catch will be left in the water. However, less than 5% of recreational fishing events overall would result in fewer fish being taken home, with only 1% of charter fishing events affected.
 - By increasing the size limit from 30 to 35 cm with only one fish larger than 70 cm, approximately 40% of the present recreational catch will be left in the water. The reduction in the number of fish taken home from charter fishing trips is estimated to be approximately 50%.
- The estimated trade-offs for recreational fishing for Kingfish from the modelling are:
 - By reducing the bag limit from 5 to 2 fish, approximately 20% of the present recreational catch will be left in the water, with less than 10% of recreational fishing events overall resulting in fewer fish being taken home. The reduction in the number of fish retained by charter fishing trips is estimated to be 20%.
 - By increasing the size limit from 65 to 75 cm with only one fish larger than 100 cm, approximately 40% of the present catch is expected to remain in the water. The reduction in the number of Kingfish taken home from charter fishing trips is estimated to be approximately 75–80% (noting that relatively few fish are presently retained by these operations).
- RFNSW also considered the implications for compliance and concluded that there should be no real impediments to have one set of size limits for recreational fishers and different limits for commercial fishers, who face particular demands from the restaurant trade in

relation to preferred sizes and receive premium prices for fish of those sizes.

ACTION: DPI to provide advice on research priority areas for Snapper and Kingfish for Trust Fund expenditure at the next meeting. In particular, in the relation to the need to apply the latest genetic techniques to identify the spatial structure of these species off the eastern coast of Australia, and the locations of spawning areas.

Note: On 26 May 2022, RFNSW resolved to replace the above advice made at this meeting regarding potential changes to the bag and size limits for Kingfish and Snapper with its full support for prioritising the development of the Harvest Strategy for Ocean Trap & Line key species. An expression of interest for membership on the NSW Line & Trap Fishery Harvest Strategy Working Group was advertised by DPI on 24 August 2022.

6) Fish Passage update

NOTED:

- Council welcomed an update from DPI on the excellent progress being made under the NSW Fish Passage Strategy. The achievements of this Strategy, which prioritise the removal of barriers to fish passage to improve survival and reproduction rates of native Australian fish species, was highly commended by Council. RFNSW was also advised that the DPI Fishways Program proposed to develop industry standards for fishway operations and maintenance, policy and guidelines for fishway installation, and a website to promote the Fish Passage Strategy. RFNSW members also identified monitoring of the Brewarrina Weir fishway as a potential priority for the DPI Fishways Program.

7) DPI Fisheries Deputy Director General update

NOTED:

- RFNSW received an update from Mr Sean Sloan on a number of key projects being undertaken by the Department, including updates on the significant progress being made by the various species-based Harvest Strategy Working Groups, the upcoming release of the NSW Mainland Marine Park Network draft Management Plan; progress on the Fisheries and Aquaculture regulatory reform package that RFNSW provided comments on during the community consultation phase earlier this year; and the latest NSW Health advice relating to recreational fishing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACTION: The Chair to arrange a meeting with the Minister to provide opportunity for Council to highlight Council's key priority issues.

8) Expenditure advice from RFSTEC and RFFTEC

NOTED:

- The Council reviewed advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding a number of new Saltwater and Freshwater grant applications made to the Recreational Fishing Trust.
- Council endorsed the advice provided by the Expenditure Committees and will now pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration.

9) Volunteer engagement of recreational fishers

NOTED:

- RFNSW member Matt Hansen presented the excellent work being done by volunteers across

the state to achieve positive fisheries habitat outcomes.

- The presentation outlined a number of case studies highlighting the efforts of different OzFish chapters working on, for example, fish passage, fish habitat remediation (e.g., re-snagging),
- citizen science, and swamp and seagrass restoration throughout NSW.

10) Update on Research Proposal Evaluation sub group

NOTED:

- Member Grahame Williams OAM presented the recommendations from the sub group at its meeting of 28 July 2021 for review of research applications submitted to the Trusts.
- The assessment of the sub group was that only research applications beyond the experience of Expenditure Committee members would need to be considered for further evaluation. The sub group proposed that such applications should be evaluated by expert scientists, with a focus on the proposed Methods and their potential to ensure that the research would be capable of producing the desired information needed to improve the quality of recreational fishing.
- Council agreed with the recommendations and to expenditure of Trust Funds to have relevant research applications reviewed by at least two independent scientists from a pool of experts. The pool of experts should be assembled by DPI based on an EOI process, and remunerated at an attractive level for each application reviewed.
- DPI will now pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration

11) NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy update

NOTED:

- A productive session was held to develop further draft actions and activities for inclusion in the NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy, which Council has been working on during the year. Members acknowledged the draft Strategy has a wide range of actions to help with building a thriving sector and to enrich recreational fishing experiences.
- Council members identified some additional actions to further enhance fishing opportunities for inclusion in the Strategy.

ACTION: RFNSW members to submit any additional actions to further enhance fishing opportunities for inclusion in the Strategy out of session.

12) Hand-hauled prawn nets

NOTED:

- RFNSW considered further advice from fisheries compliance relating to the use and impacts of recreational hand-hauled prawn nets in NSW South Coast Lakes, following discussion on this issue at the previous meeting.
- Council members reiterated that only a small proportion of recreational fishers use hand-hauled nets in NSW, with the majority using scoop nets, and that the use of these nets would be expected to have relatively low impact on fish habitat.
- Council agreed that no further action is required in relation to this matter.

13) Fishing for tiger sharks in NSW

NOTED:

- The Minister has requested RFNSW to review correspondence relating to fishing for tiger sharks at game fishing tournaments in NSW.
- Member Grahame Williams OAM advised members that two tiger sharks were captured during the Botany Bay Game Fishing Club tournament earlier in the year and a further three sharks were tagged and released.
- It was noted that in NSW there are strict bag limits on the taking of sharks, with 1 tiger shark permitted per person per day. Tiger sharks are not listed as threatened or

endangered under various international and Australian conservation conventions and legislation, nor is the tiger shark listed as endangered in NSW waters.

- Mr Williams OAM further advised that all affiliated game fishing clubs must operate under the Game Fishing Association Australia (GFAA) Code of Practice.
- Council agreed that no further action is required in relation to this matter.

14) Correspondence

a) Letter concerning a request to permit spearfishing in Lord Howe Island Marine Park

NOTED:

- The Chair noted that the matter was already being considered by RFNSW and that a letter had recently been sent to the Minister seeking consideration of permitting limited spearfishing in the waters of Lord Howe Island Marine Park.

b) Email concerning beach netting in Tweed region

NOTED:

- RFNSW reviewed the correspondence and requested DPI write to Mr Stenner to provide advice about the fishing controls that apply to the ocean-hauling fishery in NSW.

c) Letter from Deputy Director General DPI Fisheries re crab trapping in Clarence River

NOTED:

- RFNSW noted the correspondence on this issue.

15) Social media training

NOTED:

- DPI provided members with a refresher training presentation on the use of social media, including useful tips on social media etiquette.

16) Enhancing recreational fishing communications opportunities

NOTED:

- DPI provided a presentation to Council about existing and new communication channels and methods promoting recreational fishing and initiatives from the Recreational Fishing Trusts.
- Members noted the presentation and explored opportunities to enhance communication to grass-roots fishers, including partnership media opportunities between DPI and various recreational fishing groups working around the state on key recreational fishing projects.

ACTION: DPI to provide an update on the status of the Fish for Life campaign and its proposed launch.

17) Update on the Network Management Plan process for mainland marine parks

NOTED:

- The Council received an update on the upcoming community consultation proposed for the NSW Mainland Marine Park Network Draft Management Plan. This represents a new approach to marine park management in NSW.
- RFNSW members were encouraged to get involved and to comment on the draft plan from a recreational fishing perspective when on public exhibition.

18) General Business

a) Macquarie Perch recovery initiatives

NOTED:

- At the meeting, members considered the Minister's response to Council's previous correspondence regarding further opportunities to boost recovery of the Macquarie Perch.
- While it was acknowledged a range of programs are underway to enhance the long-term viability of Macquarie Perch, Council was very keen to explore further pathways for additional initiatives.

ACTION: A sub group of relevant members of RFNSW to meet out of session prior to the next meeting to discuss further initiatives to aid the recovery of Macquarie Perch. Relevant staff from the DPI Threatened Species team to provide relevant expert subject matter information, as needed. For discussion at the next meeting.

b) Fishing access

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang advised he had been approached by a landholder seeking clarification on the rights of a landholder in relation to freshwater fishers accessing rivers and creek beds and frontage.

ACTION: Ray Tang to refer details of the above issue to the DPI Freshwater Access Manager to facilitate feedback to the community member.

c) Proposed Energy Australia Lake Lyell pumped hydro proposal

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang Lake Lyell shared a video with the Council on a proposal for Pumped hydro potential at Lake Lyell.
- Ray Tang sought advice from DPI and relevant freshwater RFNSW members on fish screening technology that could be considered by Energy Australia during the initial concept design of the hydro station. Further advice from DPI subject matter experts will be sought on this issue.

Meeting closed