

Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council outcomes

**Meeting 31, 27 and 28 June 2024
Branksome Hotel, Sydney**

Members Present	Johann Bell Patrick Linehan Paul Lennon Vicki Lear Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Bill Blair Peter Dugan Matt Tripet Simon Clark	Independent Chair Region 1 Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland (Deputy Chair) Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing A/Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management
Apologies	Ian Puckeridge Grahame Williams OAM Anna Clark Dean Hamilton	Spearfishing Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 5 – South Coast

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chair, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 31st meeting of RFNSW.

b) Register of Interest

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the RFNSW Register of Interests (Risk Register).
- Member Vicki Lear advised the Chair that her husband had commenced casual work on a professional fishing boat.
- Member Mr Tang advised the Wallerawang branch of the Central Acclimatisation Society (which he is a member of) recently submitted an application for funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust to run a Gone Fishing Day event at Wallerawang.

c) 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 30th meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.
- Next meeting is proposed to be held on 18 September 2024.

d) Department organisation change

NOTED:

- On 1 July 2024, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) will be established. Members were provided a presentation on the new organisation structure of the new cluster Department.

Action item: Members to be sent a copy of the new organisation structure.
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2) Eastern Blue Groper management

NOTED:

- DPI advised that the public submissions process on the Eastern Blue Groper rule changes had been completed. Members of the public were able to provide feedback via the Department's website over a two-month period.
- A submissions report is being prepared, which will be submitted to the Minister for consideration.
- At the meeting, members considered a range of options and available management tools for longer-term changes to Eastern Blue Groper fishing rules. Council also recognised the need to boost statewide advisory messages regarding fishing rules.

Action item: Chair to send RFNSW preferred options advice for longer-term changes to Eastern Blue Groper fishing rules to the Minister.
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3) Recreational Fishing Action Plan update

NOTED:

- Members noted progress on development of the Plan. RFNSW member Karl Mathers identified some options for delivery of the Plan in the future.
- The Department reiterated that delivery of programs under the Plan will rely on effective partnerships with local Councils, fishing clubs, fishing organisations, RFNSW and the Department.

4) White Spot management discussion

NOTED

- On 31 May 2024, RFNSW held an out-of-session meeting to consider additional advice on the proposed management options for White Spot disease in NSW, in light of recent detection of the disease in wild prawns off Evans Head and the Richmond River.
- On 24 June 2024, feedback collated from the RFNSW out-of-session meeting was referred to DPI.
- At Meeting 31, members discussed the issues surrounding the management and containment of the disease and the need to boost responsible fishing messaging regarding the risk associated with using imported green prawns as bait.
- Members supported a broader national response to the risks involved with importing green prawns however noted that prohibiting imports is unlikely to be a viable option given the volume and widespread use of these products.
- Members also identified the potential implications associated with the potential spread of white spot into inland waters and any flow on impacts to populations of crayfish and other crustaceans through translocating bait. RFNSW recommended extension of advisory campaigns to address this, including messaging to only use bait in the locality that it has been collected.
- RFNSW requested the Department investigate any available legislative options to regulate the use of bait to minimize the risks for spread of the disease and to boost recreational fishing messaging regarding fishers being advised 'to never use imported prawns as bait.'

5) NSW Harvest Strategy update

NOTED:

- DPI provided an update on the progress being made by the Mulloway and the Line and Trap (which includes Snapper and Yellowtail Kingfish) Harvest Strategy Working Groups on development of the relevant strategies.
- A draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy is nearing completion and will be provided to relevant Fisheries Advisory Councils for consideration and comment followed by a public community consultation process.
- The Chair advised members he had recently written to the Department regarding the benefits of undertaking a peer review of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy prior to the consultation phases of the Strategy being undertaken.

- DPI also provided an update on proposed enhanced data collection for recreational catch of important target species such as Mulloway to inform the implementation of harvest strategies.

6) Fish for Life program update

NOTED:

- Members received an update on the latest outcomes under the 'Fish For Life' brand, including the progress of the 'Keep It Clean' subprogram.
- This subprogram focuses on raising awareness about the impact of fishing-related litter through an education campaign and engaging recreational fishers in cleanup activities across NSW, in partnership with OzFish. High-quality content (videos and social media tiles) under nine themes have been pushed out through various media channels with 2 million impressions and a reach of 980,000 so far over the past 10 months.
- The content encourages fishers to do the right thing when it comes to litter and the environment.

7) Election commitments

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief update on the steps being taken to fulfil the NSW Government election commitments relating to recreational fishing, including progress of the Peak Body Working Group.
- A second recreational fishers' stakeholder online forum regarding the establishment of a recreational fishing peak body in NSW is currently being facilitated and will include representation from RFNSW.

8) Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) operations on the South Coast NSW

NOTED:

- An action item from Meeting 31 was for the Department to contact the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) for statistics on the current operations of the SPF following concern raised by an RFNSW member regarding perceived localised depletion of bait species and associated impact on game fishing in the South Coast region.
- The Department provided a summary of available information on the AFMA website on the operations of the SPF on the NSW South Coast, noting target species such as Blue Mackerel (East) was not subject to overfishing and biomass was listed as "not overfished".
- The Department undertook to notify members of any subsequent information and advice received from AFMA following the meeting.

9) Freshwater Environments update

a) Update on the Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage

NOTED:

- RFNSW was advised the Ministerial Taskforce on Fish Passage provides strategic advice and direction relating to riverine connectivity, seeking to maximise outcomes for native fish through fish-friendly infrastructure in NSW.
- The Task Force developed the NSW Fish Passage Strategy which is a coordinated 20-year plan to proactively restore unimpeded fish passage to 165 high priority weirs.
- Since then, the Taskforce has broadened its scope to incorporate other key aspects of native fish recovery. Fish-friendly infrastructure under the Taskforce includes:
 - Fish passage/Fishways
 - Diversion Screening
 - Cold Water Pollution mitigation
- In recognition of the expanding remit of the Task Force and its relevance across multiple portfolios, in late 2023, the Minister wrote to both the Minister for Environment and Minister for Water inviting them to have joint oversight of the Task Force - both Ministers agreed.
- As part of this refresh, the Task Force Terms of Reference are being updated to reflect the new joint-Minister approach. This includes updating and confirming Task Force membership, with the following changes made in relation to the RFNSW membership:
 - Existing RFNSW Member Johann Bell confirmed as an Observer
 - Existing observer Karl Mathers confirmed as new RFNSW Task Force Member
- Members commended the freshwater environment work being done in relation to improving fish passage and recommended a presentation on fish passage be provided at a future RFNSW meeting.

b) Cold Water Pollution

NOTED

- Members welcomed an update on cold water pollution (CWP) and bubble plume technology. CWP has been identified by RFNSW as a key management issue that requires effective mitigation in NSW.
- A cornerstone recommendation of the CWP Strategy is to implement a trial of a bubble plume destratification system at Pindari Dam in northern NSW.
- It was noted that DPI is collaborating with WaterNSW to develop final designs for the bubble plume system and is working to secure funding for the trial over the coming months. RFNSW looks forward to further updates on progress of the bubble plume trial.

c) Brief update on Carp Virus additional research and complementary measures, including

NOTED:

- The Department updated the Council on the status of the Australian Government's National Carp Control Plan noting research is currently being undertaken to determine the feasibility of introducing long-term biological control to reduce carp in our waterways.
- Members reiterated their position on Carp noting the significant destructive impact the introduced pest species is having on freshwater environments and reiterated its support for the introduction of localised complementary carp eradication measures that can be undertaken in the short term pending the outcome of the National Carp Control Plan.

Action item: The Chair recommended RFNSW write to the Minister outlining their concerns regarding Carp; support for the introduction of the National Carp Control Plan and the need for complementary on-ground carp eradication measures to assist in the management of Carp in freshwater systems.

d) Update on departmental response to EWAA and Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC) correspondence on the establishment of improved partnership and evidence-based decision making for Murray Crayfish in the Murray and Edward-Wakool system.

NOTED:

- An update was provided noting the Department had recently met with EWAA representatives regarding fish stocking events.
- The Department advised it was awaiting the status classification of Murray Crayfish under the *EPBC Act* which was due to be released shortly and undertook to contact EWAA once advice is received. The Department would be keen to work with EWAA and DLALC on potential citizen science events and other partnership projects to boost recovery of Murray Crayfish in the Murray and Edward-Wakool systems.

10) Recreational Fishing Trust and Licensing matters

NOTED:

- The Department advised RFNSW of non-government websites offering to purchase recreational fishing licenses on the public's behalf with an additional service charge. The Department is committed to ensuring fishers across NSW do not pay any additional administration or service fees when purchasing their fishing licences and is considering legislative change to make aspects of third-party services unlawful.
- The Department provided a brief update on the current Recreational Fishing Trust funding round.
- The Department provided a summary of current active Trust projects. This summary will be provided at each meeting for the information of members.

11) Update on the Environmental Assessment of Recreational Fishing (EA)

NOTED:

- The Department provided an update on the key project objectives which will deliver an EA of the recreational fishery including 3 separate components – 1) environmental, 2) social and economic and 3) cultural fishing in relation to recreational fishing activities; as well as a Recreational Fishing Management Strategy (RFMS).
- A brief overview of the assessment process to identify key threats using a risk-based approach was provided.
- The cultural fishing assessment is currently underway.
- The Department also provided a brief update on associated responsible fishing projects

that including advisory and social campaigns aimed at reducing bycatch and bycatch impacts; and reducing fishing litter, marine debris and pollution.

- The DPI responsible fishing webpage has also been updated with new content added.

12) Proposed adjustment to the Manning River Recreational Fishing Haven (RFH) western boundary

NOTED:

- The Department advised the GPS coordinates used in the description of the western boundary of the Manning River RFH coordinates were recorded in 2006 and needed to be updated slightly following enhancements in GPS technology over time.
- The text description of the RFH boundary line in the Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2019 remains accurate, however Fisheries Compliance Officers and commercial fishers also rely on GPS coordinates points to assist with enforcement and commercial fishery operations, respectively.
- It is proposed to amend the description of the RFH boundary with updated GPS coordinates in the Regulation to align more accurately with the current text description.
- RFNSW supported the proposed update of GPS coordinates to the Manning River RFH western boundary.

13) Freshwater Fishing and Stocking

a) Correspondence from the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc re stocking of Brown Trout in Wentworth Falls Lake

NOTED

- RFNSW was advised the Minister replied to correspondence from the Society regarding concerns about stocking of Brown Trout into Wentworth Falls Lake. Council was supportive of continued dialogue between the Department, the Society and the trout fishing sector (namely the Central Acclimatisation Society and the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers) on this issue.

b) Trout Stocking and threatened species update

NOTED

- In order to ensure the Department's long-running freshwater fish stocking programs continue to sustainably deliver socio-economic benefits while complying with relevant State and/or Commonwealth legislation, the Department has committed to a targeted review of relevant aspects of the Freshwater Fish Stocking Fisheries Management Strategy.
- A scope of works is being developed which will be followed by a procurement process to appoint a suitably qualified external supplier to undertake the review.

14) Incoming correspondence

1) Letter from A/D-DG, DPI Fisheries re disbanding of the Business Efficiency Program Working Group

Noted.

2) Letter from A/D-DG, DPI Fisheries re Renewal of Port Stephens prawn closure

Noted.

15) General Business

NOTED:

- Member Paul Lennon advised RFNSW that there had been a perceived increase in the number of land-based guides in recent years. Currently, land-based are not required to be licensed. Mr Lennon queried whether formalisation of the management of guides needed to be considered to enable catch data recording and analysis of any associated impacts on sustainability of fisheries resources.
- DPI advised that it would compile existing available information on land-based guides in NSW for presentation to RFNSW at the next meeting.

Meeting closed.