



**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council**

Outcomes

**Meeting 35, Friday 26 September 2025
Online - Teams**

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

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chairperson, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Chairperson opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 35th meeting of RFNSW.

b) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang declared that his fishing organisation, the Wallerawang Acclimatisation Society, had been successful in receiving a Gone Fishing Day grant.

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 34th 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 11 December 2025.

2) Rebuilding Programs for four key recreational fish species

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the development of 'Rebuilding Programs' for four key species, including three currently classified as 'depleted' and another as 'recovering'. Feedback provided by RFNSW at the previous meeting, as well as from CommFish and the Charter Fishing NSW Working Group, had been incorporated into the proposed Programs.
- DPIRD also highlighted that an additional year of data has been included in the programs to support the accuracy of the stock assessments for the species.
- Council learned about the revised management arrangements, which aim to rebuild the stocks of these species to sustainable levels, and the next phase of the program involving community consultation.

3) Harvest Strategy Updates

a) Mulloway Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the public consultation phase of the draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy. The consultation period was extended to allow more stakeholders time to provide feedback on the management options for the harvest of Mulloway.
- Once the submission period closes, a report will be prepared which will be provided to the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group for consideration.

- Council acknowledged the extensive effort and dedication of the Working Group and looked forward to seeing the outcomes from the public consultation.

b) Trap and Line Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Trap and Line Harvest Strategy and advised that the development of a draft strategy is progressing well. DPIRD advised that updated stock assessments are being prepared for both Snapper and Kingfish and will be considered by the Working Group.
- Council noted the Victorian Fisheries Authority proposal to change the Victorian recreational Kingfish bag limit.

4) Recreational Fishing Trust Matters

- DPIRD advised that the next funding round is expected to open soon. RFNSW discussed scheduling of Trust rounds and considered it essential there be at least one general round covering all funding platforms, noting there may be other targeted rounds undertaken during the year as well. This will ensure that a wide range of projects will be eligible for funding each year across the various platforms, including essential fisheries research.
- Members requested an update on the Minister's consideration of additional information for some Trust applications. DPIRD advised these Trust applications were still under consideration.

Action Item: RFNSW to write to the Minister regarding the applications that are still under consideration.

- DPIRD advised the expression of interest for membership on the Recreational Fishing Trust Advisory Council was currently open until 16 October. The new Council will assess Trust applications and provide advice directly to the Minister. It was noted that RFNSW will meet with the new Council at least once annually to confirm priority areas for funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts.
- RFNSW was advised Gone Fishing Day 2025 will be held on Sunday 19 October. DPIRD will be running five events across the State, with support from Fishcare Volunteers. DPIRD also advised a total of 40 fishing clubs and organisations have also received fishing packages with gear to use at their local events, while another 49 clubs and organisations are receiving grants of up to \$2000 to help run their events.
- RFNSW queried whether people involved with Gone Fishing Day events are required to have Working with Children checks. DPIRD advised all staff and Fishcare Volunteers participating in Fishcare activities, including Gone Fishing Day, are required to have a current check in place.
- Council noted the summary of current active Trust projects, which was provided for information.

- Council also noted and supported the Charter Fishing Trust Investment Plan 2025/26 - 2027/28.

5) Session with Deputy Secretary Fisheries and Forestry

NOTED:

- Council welcomed the opportunity to meet with Ms Tara Black, who was recently appointed as DPIRD Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry.
- Ms Black provided a brief outline of current government priorities, which included the establishment of a recreational fishing peak body in NSW and establishment of the Recreational Fishing Trust Advisory Council.
- Ms Black advised she recently had the opportunity to visit the Dutton Trout Hatchery at Ebor, which she acknowledged was an excellent facility.
- Council took the opportunity to discuss some issues, including progress on the recreational fishing action plan and other relevant plans which RFNSW has contributed to, the Recreational Fishing Trust applications that are still under consideration, as well as acknowledgement of extensive stocking activities across NSW, including long distances travelled by staff to stocking locations.

6) Marine Estate Management Strategy Water Quality Presentation

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided a presentation on current projects aiming to improve water quality of estuarine and marine fish habitats in NSW under the Marine Estate Management Strategy, including: coastal wetland rehabilitation, riverbank stabilisation and vegetation improvements, sediment management, oyster reef restoration, and ongoing water quality monitoring and research programs.
- Council appreciated the presentation and undertook to incorporate relevant details into the final draft of the Communique in collaboration with CommFish. The Communique outlines a plan to address the important need to improve water quality in our estuaries and rivers for consideration by the Minister. The Communique emphasises the urgent need to improve water quality to restore fish nursery habitats, boost fish stocks, and deliver better environmental outcomes for other fauna, including listed birds.
- It was noted that poor water quality was the highest ranked threat to the NSW marine estate in the 2017 Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment.

7) Update and Discussion on the Recreational Fishing Peak Body

a) Peak Body and RFNSW

NOTED:

- Council was advised DPIRD has been working with key fishing representatives to develop their vision for a recreational fishing peak body. A stakeholder forum was held in November 2023 and DPIRD subsequently held seven meetings with a smaller Working Group to develop a draft model for the proposed recreational fishing peak body.
- Public consultation on the proposed draft model commenced on 6 August and closes on 1 October 2025. Subject to the outcomes of the consultation and development of the final model, it is likely the Chair and board members will be selected through a public EOI process, conducted by an independent party.
- DPIRD reiterated that RFNSW's advice to the Minister on key policy and fisheries management issues will remain a priority and that the recreational fishing peak body will complement RFNSW's work.

b) Update on future EOI process for RFNSW

NOTED:

- DPIRD advised members that positions on RFNSW will expire in early 2026. It is expected that a call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be advertised for relevant positions. Current members are encouraged to re-apply where applicable.

8) Fish Stocking and Enhancement Operations Update

a) Freshwater Stocking Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the progress of stocked fish for the current season, as well as highlighting outcomes and achievements of the previous completed season.
- Council was also advised that the Grafton Fisheries Centre is now playing a key role in the recovery of threatened species with the hatchery producing Eastern Freshwater Cod and a range of small-bodied native fish species. The Grafton facility ongrows Australian Bass larvae provided by the Port Stephens Fisheries Institute to be stocked into northern impoundments, including Clarrie Hall Dam and Toonumbar Dam.

Action Item: DPIRD to provide an update on the freshwater fish stocking trucks.

b) Freshwater stocking FMS Review Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD gave an update on the progress on the review of the Freshwater Fish Stocking Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS), with a focus on taking account of recent threatened species listings. The review aims to ensure the stocking program continues to operate sustainably and responsibly, while delivering the benefits associated with large-scale statewide fish stocking activities. The review is expected to be finalised by the end of 2025.
- Council will be briefed on the outcomes once they are available and will be consulted regarding any proposed changes to the FMS.

c) Update on Re-opening of Dutton Hatchery and Gaden Hatchery Enhancements

NOTED:

- DPIRD gave an update on the progress on the Gaden 2.0 Hatchery upgrades, using Snowy 2.0 funding. Site preparations have been completed with Public Works to run the proposed tender process.
- It is anticipated that the construction will begin in early 2026, with the works completed by mid-year 2026.
- DPIRD also gave an update on the Dutton Hatchery and advised that the hatchery has now re-opened for visitors. Recruitment for hatchery support resources has recently been completed.

9) Freshwater Fisheries Management Update

a) Trout Cod and Murray Cod Action Plans

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Trout and Murray Cod Recreational Fishing Enhancement Action Plans. The Murray Cod action plan is expected to go out for public consultation in the near future. It is proposed for the Trout Recreational Fishing Enhancement Action Plan to go out for public consultation once the FMS review has been completed to account for potential outcomes associated with the review.
- Council requested that DPIRD progress the release of the Plans, noting the anticipated benefits of the various associated initiatives to boost recreational fishing opportunities.

b) Catch and Release in the Monaro Region

NOTED:

- DPIRD advised it is still consulting with the Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) regarding the management of trout in local waters, particularly the MacLaughlin River.
- DPIRD is not currently considering formal spatial or management regulation changes for this

fishery. Some specific trout stocking locations have changed due to threatened species being recorded in certain locations, consistent with the requirements of the Freshwater Stocking FMS. DPIRD noted these changes have not impacted on the overall numbers of trout stocked across the broader NSW trout fishery.

- DPIRD understands local trout organisations (including the MAS) will be encouraging anglers to voluntarily practice catch & release in key fisheries such as the MacLaughlin River.

Action Item: DPIRD to continue working with MAS regarding catch and release signage, including responsibilities for installation and associated costs.

10) Recreational Fishing Monitoring Program Update

NOTED:

- Council received an update on the Recreational Fishing Monitoring Program (RFMP) from Dr Julian Hughes, DPIRD. These recreational fishing surveys provide quality data to compare catches over time and assess trends in recreational fishery performance on a state-wide basis.
- The presentation outlined key outcomes and results from the 2023/24 survey period. The team advised that the 2023/24 survey results will be published shortly, and that the 2025/26 survey is currently underway.
- The RFMP team also advised that a boat ramp survey will be incorporated into the 2025/26 surveys to further support the results and to make the sampling more robust. The boat ramp surveys will begin in late 2025.

11) Member Feedback on Update Papers

a) Update Papers

NOTED:

- Council noted the Update Papers provided with the agenda and recommended DPIRD to promote key outcomes that were outlined in the Research Angler Program and Game Fish Tagging Program Papers.
- Council noted the Update Paper on management of white spot in NSW and the significant work that has been completed by the Biosecurity and Fisheries Management teams to manage the virus and associated impacts on the Clarence and Richmond fisheries. It was noted that proof of freedom may not be technically viable now with the recent detections earlier in the year. The council had no concerns regarding zoning or any further comment regarding market access.
- Council reiterated the importance of advisory campaigns for recreational fishers, particularly focused on messaging to never use prawns intended for human consumption as bait.

12) General Business

a) Discussion about bag and size limit signage

NOTED:

- DPIRD facilitated a discussion about how existing saltwater bag and size limit signage around the State could be improved. One potential option is an alternative design incorporating a QR code which directs the reader to the relevant webpage of fishing rules. This will alleviate updates having to be made to the large number of signs along the coast, which is resource intensive.
- Council noted some fishers may experience technical limitations as well as black spots in mobile coverage. It was suggested a localised trial of a new sign format be undertaken to test the effectiveness prior to any broader roll-out.

b) Correspondence

NOTED:

- Council noted the incoming correspondence, with no follow-up action required.

Meeting closed.