



Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council
MINUTES
Meeting 30
26-27 March 2025
(Meet and greet 25 March 2025)
Eden, and teleconference

Members present	Stuart Richey AM	Chair
	Greg Finn	Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Council
	Graeme Byrnes	Estuary General Fishery
	John Jarvis	Southern Fish Trawl Fishery
	Mark Cranstone	Ocean Trap and Line Fishery
	Raymond Saunders	Aboriginal Commercial Fishers
	Stephen Bunney	Abalone Fishery
	Steve Everson	Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery
	Ben McCulloch	Lobster Fishery
	Ryan Morris	Sea Urchin and Turban Shell Fishery
	Patrick Richardson	Ocean Hauling Fishery
	Simon Clark	A/Director, Fisheries Management
Mentee	Paul Aquilina	
Executive Officer	Cherie Kirkman	
NSW DPI staff	Dr Bryan McDonald, Executive Director, Fisheries Darren Hale, Senior Fisheries Manager, Commercial Fisheries Nick Giles, Senior Fisheries Manager, Harvest Strategies. (Via Teams) Carl Bevilacqua, Senior Manager, Aboriginal Economic Development Fisheries (Via Zoom) Shane McGrath Senior Manager, Marine Estate Initiative Lead Sean Sloan, Deputy Secretary Fisheries and Forestry (Via Teams)	
Invited guests	The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales (Via Teams) Mr. John Wilson, Chair, NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc. Mr. Chris Melham, CEO, NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc.	
Apologies	Taylor Henderson, Inland Fishery – Member Jeffrey Hunt, Ocean Trawl Fishery – Member Aimee Cavanagh, Program Leader Business Analytics, Fisheries Services	

25 March 2025 – Meet and greet

CommFish members and DPIRD staff attended a meet-and-greet with fishers. CommFish gained a lot by engaging directly with local fishers and appreciated those who attended, making it the largest meet-and-greet so far. Key issues raised were discussed late on Day 1 of the CommFish meeting.

Day 1 - 26 March 2025

1. Member welcome, introductions, and housekeeping

The Chair welcomed council members, Bryan McDonald (Executive Director, Fisheries), the CommFish mentee, and DPIRD staff. The Aboriginal commercial fishing member acknowledged the traditional owners of the lands on which we met.

2. Review of agenda

CommFish accepted the agenda.

3. Register of interests

The pecuniary interest register was updated prior to the meeting.

4. Confirmation of minutes from meeting 29

The minutes for meeting 29 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Actions from meeting 29

The following actions have been completed: 24.7, 28.2, 29.2, 29.3, 29.5, 29.6, 29.7 and 29.8.2. All other actions are in progress.

6. Correspondence received

Correspondence received concerning the following was considered operational and forwarded to DPIRD for consideration:

- Access to closed waters for harvesting sea urchin in and around Botany Bay and new management arrangements for recreational fishers.
- The new Peak Body.
- Sharing access and management of Blue Mackel and Yellowtail Scad.

7. NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc.

The Chair welcomed Mr John Wilson, Chair NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc. (WHF) and Mr Chris Melham, CEO WHF and invited them to let CommFish know how the association is going. Key points noted by CommFish included:

- Membership has grown to ~150 members and elections are underway for the inaugural WHF board. Members of the board will be announced via media release.
- Once the board has been appointed the board will review its constitution having regard to lessons recently learnt, consider the WHF's budget and priorities for the next 3 years,

and work on its approach to establishing a consolidated WHF position on issues arising.

- Collaboration with the Minister's advisory council (CommFish) is important to the WHF.

It was suggested by CommFish that fishers have joined the WHF for very different reasons and that surveying them to find out why may give the WHF helpful insights.

8. TAC and TAE setting process and Total Allowable Fishing (TAF) Committee recommendations for the Estuary General hauling and meshing sectors

The first five items on the agenda were dedicated to the TAC/TAE setting process and the following recommendations by the TAF Committee in May 2024 concerning meshing and hauling in the Estuary General Fishery:

1. DPI Fisheries needs to address the underlying economic issues in the fishery that has resulted in the effort quotas having very low market value. This was a direct result of initially setting the ITCAL so high in 2017/18 that the market for effort quota units reduced significantly.
2. DPI Fisheries work with industry to review all aspects of the share management arrangements and fee structures for the meshing and hauling sectors and this review should include the design of a scheme to remove a significant proportion of unused fishing effort quota units.
3. DPI Fisheries implement a TACC for Sea mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 fishing period.
4. Implementation of species-specific TACCs to directly limit fishing mortality will allow for some of the other restrictive measures to be removed.

CommFish's preferred approach

CommFish prefers to invest in the recently introduced effort quotas and TAE setting process in the following ways as the primary way forward:

- DPIRD works with CommFish and relevant shareholders to clarify what shareholders in each share class want to achieve and how to achieve it to guide the TAF Committee (or Secretary) when making TAE determinations. The outputs from this work may then be used to inform the future development of harvest strategies for the share classes concerned.
- DPIRD informs the TAF Committee the reasons why effort quotas (and not catch quotas) were introduced for the meshing and hauling sectors under the Commercial Fisheries Business Adjustment Program (the BAP). This, together with the advice above, will assist the TAF Committee (or Secretary) when setting TAEs for the share classes concerned.
- CommFish investigates whether the Commercial Fisheries Economic and Social Indicator Monitoring Program reports include share values to inform current and ongoing consideration of asset (share) values.
- DPIRD works with CommFish on a one-page infographic that shows when, by whom and how fishers' advice (written and verbal) is considered during the TAC/TAE setting process to help fishers see the value in attending stock assessment seminars and TAF Committee meetings and to increase fisher participation.

- CommFish discusses further the CommFish member suggestion to establish an industry-funded bursary program to remove or redistribute hauling and meshing shares on a voluntary basis and in a way that benefits those who contribute to it.
- DPIRD encourages the TAF Committee to acknowledge in its reports key issues raised by fishers in submissions or during meetings so that fishers know they are being heard and that their advice is being considered.

For the first three initiatives above, relevant share classes include all share classes subject to effort quotas – that is, all category 1 hauling, category 2 hauling and meshing share classes in the Estuary General Fishery and ocean trawl prawning in the Ocean Trawl Fishery.

Key reasons to invest in the recently introduced effort quotas and TAE setting process

Key reasons for CommFish preferring to invest in the recently introduced effort quotas and TAE setting process include:

- Some members considered effort quotas to be better than catch quotas because of the increased flexibility they afford fishers and because they cater for the diverse business models that exist.
- The decision to implement effort quotas followed a rigorous, transparent, and inclusive process facilitated by the independent Structural Adjustment Review Committee (SARC) over several years. It also required significant investment by shareholders and Government.
- The effort quotas, including the TAE setting process, are relatively new and yet to mature such that the intended benefits may be realised.
- It is understood that the basis for introducing effort quotas, as set out in the SARC's final report to the NSW Government in 2015, were not presented or discussed with the TAF Committee (and should have been).
- DPIRD and industry working together to tailor objectives for each share class and how to achieve them responds to the TAF Committee observing the absence of formal harvest strategies for the sectors concerned. Developing tailored objectives and how to achieve them is also consistent with the principles of the NSW Harvest Strategy Policy and will lay the foundation for the future development of formal harvest strategies for the sectors concerned.

Key reasons for not supporting TACs for Sea Mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 season

The TAF Committee's report recommends TACs be implemented for Sea Mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 fishing period and suggests that this will allow for other restrictive management controls in place to be removed. The report also suggests consideration of whether the TACs should be implemented as competitive TACs or as individually transferable quotas (ITQs).

CommFish does not support the TAF Committee recommendation to implement TACs for Sea Mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 fishing period.

With respect to Mulloway, CommFish is aware that consideration is being given to new management arrangements to support the effective operation of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy, which is in its final stages of development. CommFish also considers the harvest

strategy development process to be appropriately rigorous, inclusive, and transparent.

With respect to Sea Mullet, there are several reasons why CommFish does not support the TAF recommendation to implement a TAC for the 2026/27 fishing period, including:

- The purpose of the Commercial Fisheries Business Adjustment Program was to link shares to resource access and during that process the independent SARC considered the efficacy of catch quotas in all share classes pursuant to what was known as the ‘hierarchy of share linkage.’ The hierarchy of share linkage required that consideration be given to catch quotas, the strongest form of linkage, before turning to effort quotas followed by managing endorsement numbers using minimum shareholding requirements. In the case of hauling and meshing the SARC recommended, and the Government implemented effort quotas as the preferred management control.
- CommFish also notes that Sea Mullet is shared closely with the Ocean Hauling Fishery and if to be quota managed, it should be quota managed across both fisheries. However, the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* does not provide for the creation and issue of a further class of [quota] share that applies to and is tradable across fisheries.
- CommFish also notes some fishers are still struggling with the past reforms and question the need to re-visit the linking of shares to resource access unless for good reason such as a stock sustainability issue, to support the effective operation of a harvest strategy or because relevant shareholders collectively choose to move to a more progressive management system.

With respect to the TAF Committee recommendation that species-specific TACs will allow for other restrictive measures in place to be removed, this is already being achieved under the Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program (BEP) with several changes to hauling and meshing included in the latest batch of regulatory changes proposed for public consultation. CommFish also notes that Mulloway and Sea Mullet are not the only species taken in hauling and meshing nets and shared with other stakeholders.

CommFish consideration of a scheme to remove unused shares

CommFish considered the TAF Committee recommendation to design a scheme to remove a significant proportion of unused hauling and meshing shares (referred to as “fishing effort quota units”) and recognised two key challenges (a) the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* does not allow the Government to simply cancel unused shares for the reasons suggested by the TAF Committee and (b) the Government including DPIRD has not budgeted for a buyout of shares and additional funding in the foreseeable future is unlikely.

CommFish identified and briefly discussed three strategies that could be used to increase asset (share) values in the hauling and meshing sectors under current arrangements:

- Adjusting TAEs to create demand and stimulate the trading of shares from those who do not need them to those who do.
- Adjusting minimum shareholding requirements to create demand and stimulate the trading of shares from those who do not need them to those who do.
- An industry-funded bursary program to remove or redistribute hauling and meshing shares on a voluntary basis and in a way that benefits those who contribute to it.

It was noted that the SARC experienced similar challenges during the BAP, except that Government funding was available, and pursued strategies like those above.

It was also noted that care is needed when using such strategies to balance the goal of increasing asset values against the short-term costs to shareholders, and that adjusting slowly over time is one way that this can be achieved.

It was discussed that identifying objectives for a fishery is a key step used to developing harvest strategies (i.e. guides the establishment of rules) and would also assist the Minister's delegates or TAFC in setting TAC/TAEs in the future, i.e. to understand what the fishers, collectively, are primarily trying to achieve.

The following was also discussed:

- The idea to establish an industry-funded bursary program requires more thought by CommFish. Industry buy-in will also be important noting some reluctance to invest, whether by contributing to a bursary or in response to changes to TAC, TAEs or minimum shareholding requirements.
- That DPIRD and CommFish workshop the issues raised by the TAFC and work on a consultation paper to go out to shareholders in the Estuary General Fishery to gain further insight into what their aspirations are for their fishery.

Recommendation 30.1: CommFish recommends that the Government set aside the following TAF Committee recommendations and instead invests in the recently introduced effort quotas and TAE setting processes for EG hauling (category 1 and 2), EG meshing and ocean trawl prawning through Action 30.1 below to inform TAF Committee (or Secretary) fishing determinations from 2026/27. The TAF Committee recommendations to be set aside include:

- Implementing TACs for Sea mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 fishing period (in isolation of the Harvest Strategy development process).
- Reviewing all aspects of the share management arrangements and fee structures for the meshing and hauling sectors.

Action 30.1: To help inform TAF Committee (or Secretary) fishing determinations for EG hauling (category 1 and 2), EG meshing and ocean trawl prawning from 2026/27:

- (a) DPIRD works with CommFish and relevant shareholder to clarify what shareholders in each share class want to achieve and how to achieve it using the TAEs.
- (b) DPIRD informs the TAF Committee the reasons why effort quotas (and not catch quotas) were introduced for the share classes concerned.
- (c) CommFish investigates whether the Commercial Fisheries Economic and Social Indicator Monitoring Program reports include share values to inform current and ongoing consideration of asset (share) values.
- (d) To initiate this process and to provide guidance and options for industry, DPIRD will engage with CommFish to workshop the issues as raised by TAFC and work on a consultation paper to go out to Shareholders in the Estuary General fishery to gain further insight into their aspirations and objectives for the fishery.

Action 30.2: DPIRD works with CommFish on a one-page infographic that shows when, by whom and how fishers' advice (written and verbal) is considered during the TAC/TAE setting process to help fishers see the value in attending stock assessment seminars and TAF Committee meetings and to increase fisher participation.

Action 30.3: CommFish discusses further the CommFish member suggestion to establish an industry-funded bursary program to remove or redistribute hauling and meshing shares on a voluntary basis and in a way that benefits those who contribute to it.

Action 30.4: DPIRD encourages the TAF Committee to acknowledge in its reports key issues raised by fishers in submissions or during meetings so that fishers know they are being heard and that their advice is being considered.

9. EPTF member paper - increased effort in the offshore prawn trawl fishery

The Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery (EPTF) member relayed the concerns of some fishers with the influx of larger "all weather" trawlers into the NSW Ocean Trawl Fishery. Related concerns include the length of some of these boats, the weight of the trawl boards some are using, and the impact these may have on long-term NSW fishers' catches.

It was emphasised that reviewing past changes and taking care with future change is important to ensure the ongoing health of fisheries and industry viability.

DPIRD advised that a review had been undertaken in response to one of the issues raised in the member paper and that the review identified:

- All recent boat nominations forms were supported by AMSA issued survey certificates and that none of the boats are recognised by AMSA as being longer than 20 metres.
- The quota deduction rate for several boats had been incorrectly calculated by DPIRD and that this has since been rectified.

It was resolved that DPIRD would consider the points (or draft recommendations) in the EPTF member paper and report back to CommFish at its next meeting.

Action 30.5: DPIRD to consider the draft recommendations in the EPTF member paper and report back to CommFish at its next meeting.

10. Aboriginal Cultural Fishing Local Management Plans (LMPs)

CommFish was briefed on the success of the LMP trials underway in the Tweed and Hastings regions and asked for its support for the trials to continue.

CommFish supported the trials continuing while noting:

- The trials, which conclude in June, are proposed to be extended for 5 years with two reviews, one mid-term and another after 5 years, to assess the success of the program.
- Several changes are proposed to the catch limits that apply under the LMPs.
- Compliance with the LMPs has been high and is to be applauded.

11. Opportunity to hear from the Executive Director, Fisheries

CommFish had the pleasure of meeting Dr Bryan McDonald, Executive Director Fisheries.

Bryan previously worked for the Northern Territory Department of Agriculture & Fisheries and has held senior roles leading science, marine spatial planning, and fisheries management programs across Australia.

Topics of particular interest to Bryan since starting his new role include helping the Wild Harvest Fishing body establish itself, the ongoing development of harvest strategies, the interface between fisheries management and marine protected areas, and helping the fishing and aquaculture industries respond to the impacts of White Spot.

CommFish appreciated Bryan travelling to Eden to meet with members and looks forward to working closely with Bryan and the fisheries team.

12. Catch up with the Minister and Deputy Secretary Fisheries and Forestry

The Chair welcomed the Minister, thanked her for taking time during her busy schedule to meet with CommFish, and raised the following important matters:

- The overwhelming positive response from industry for the fish receiver fee waiver – with the Minister advising her interest in its success and any good news stories.
- Final testing underway for the White Spot proof of freedom period for the Clarence River and industry appreciation for the Government's support.
- The solid industry attendance at the previous evening's meet and greet and the importance of resolving the future of the Abalone and Southern Fish Trawl fisheries.
- Greg Finn addressed the Minister on the Abalone fishery, he mentioned their previous two conversations regarding her committed undertaking to finding an equitable path forward for the Abalone industry. He also gave an update on the Abalone shares currently being non tradable due to theft and localised serial depletion of the resource which has undermined the integrity of the share management system and impacting domestic markets.
- CommFish's intention to review and report progress under the 2022-2025 NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy and to consider a new strategy.
- The importance of the Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program and the Minister's support to consult the community on a further round of changes to be referred to the Minister soon.

The Minister acknowledged the matters raised and spoke of the whole-of-Government focus on flooding on the north coast following tropical cyclone Alfred. On this, the Chair raised CommFish and the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council's agreement to work together to promote the importance of, and Government investment in, river health.

13. Debrief from the CommFish meet and greet with fishers

Members relayed and discussed the key issues raised by fishers during the previous evenings meet and greet, including:

- The impact that the uncertainty surrounding the Southern Fish Trawl Fishery is having on seafood production and business owners – on this, CommFish recognised that discussions with AFMA are again underway.

- Commercial fishers have lost access to Tilba Tilba Lake – on this, CommFish recognised that DPIRD is in discussions with local council and land holders.
- Boat licences were an asset prior to them being removed – on this, CommFish recognised this was one of many considerations when the decision was made to remove the requirement for boats to be licensed in NSW.
- Management of Yellowtail Kingfish – on this, CommFish recognised that a harvest strategy is being developed and that new commercial and recreational rules may be required so that the harvest strategy can operate effectively.
- Concern over inequitable (unlawful) access to fisheries resources by some fishers and the impact this could have on the social license to operate for other fishers.
- Issues and challenging circumstances in the line (east) sector of the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery including:
 - Challenges taking quota in some years due to weather and sea conditions and no capacity to carry-over unused quota to a following fishing period.
 - Challenging sea conditions and good boats >20m in length that are available but cannot be used under current law. Given catch is quota managed, it was suggested fishers should be allowed to use larger boats even if only in the line (east) sector. This would also enable them to diversify into Commonwealth managed fisheries.
 - Challenges acquiring quota due to many fishers having small holdings – it was discussed that the BEP proposal to remove line (east) shares may help to free-up the market for quota shares.
 - The Commonwealth and NSW TAC for ling have not increased consistently in recent years. The TAC changes between the jurisdiction should be consistent.
 - Competition with Commonwealth fishers taking Hagfish – a developing fishery under permit – for access to historically fished reefs and interaction with lost fishing gear.
- Current law requiring byproduct taken in the School and Gummy Shark sector to be discarded – refer “General business” below for CommFish discussion on this issue.

Action 30.6: DPIRD to contact the two fishers with an interest in Yellowtail Kingfish to explain the harvest strategy development process.

Action 30.7: DPIRD to consider the line (east) issues and maintain contact with CommFish or the fisher (or both) as needed to resolve or close its consideration of the concerns raised.

Day 2 - 27 March 2025 – meeting continued from the 26 March 2025

14. Review of the Fishing Business Transfer Rules

CommFish and shareholders to consider changes to the fishing business transfer rules for the Estuary General, Estuary Prawn Trawl, Ocean Hauling, Ocean Trap & Line and Ocean Trawl (including Southern Fish Trawl) fisheries.

CommFish was asked to consider and provide advice on a draft discussion paper prepared by DPIRD. The purpose of the paper is to seek early ‘policy-level’ feedback from fishers on the fishing business transfer rules and whether any changes should be made.

Resolution 30.1: CommFish supported DPIRD releasing the draft discussion paper subject to amending it to make it clear that it does not propose specific changes – to avoid fishers misinterpreting the purpose of the paper.

15. Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) consultation outcomes

CommFish was briefed on the feedback received from public consultation on the introduction of VMS in the Ocean Trawl (including Southern Fish Trawl), Ocean Trap & Line and Lobster fisheries and the purse seine sector of the Ocean Hauling Fishery by July 2026.

CommFish was also briefed on the trialing of different VMS units and service providers, including the pros and cons of each identified by DPIRD and the fishers using them.

Resolution 30.2: CommFish gave its in-principal support for the implementation of VMS as proposed, subject to ongoing updates and investigation into the following two issues:

- DPIRD investigates whether future operational costs can be shared by others who may benefit directly or indirectly from the introduction of VMS.
- Data security, including the protection of commercial fishers' intellectual property.

16. NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy

Members reviewed and contributed towards a draft progress report prepared by DPIRD and discussed the preparation of the next strategy.

It is proposed that the progress report is sent to the Minister for information once it is finalised, and that a new draft strategy is then prepared.

For the progress report, it was agreed that further positive commentary could be added. For example, and in addition to other points raised, the section on co-management could be expanded to refer to achievements of the Abalone Association NSW (AANSW) including:

- Engagement with Government on the AVG outbreak in Sydney.
- The industry driven development/adoption of a Code of Practice for Abalone and SUTS.
- The development of a national-first Marine Heat Wave Strategy and response plan.

Action 30.8: DPIRD to update the draft NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy Progress Report based on feedback received and following that, commence preparation of a new draft NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy.

17. Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program

CommFish was informed that the following have been added to the package of commercial regulation changes:

- Weighing instead of counting Beachworm and Nipper for quota management purposes.
- For all TAC/TAE determinations, allowing the Minister to decide who makes them.
- Amendments to support the transition to electronic catch and effort reporting.
- New lobster trap marking requirements (i.e., Fishing Business number and "L").

CommFish was also informed and supported DPIRD not pursuing a maximum trap funnel diameter of 320mm (estuarine traps only) to reduce sea turtle impacts. This follows discussions with north coast fishers and is on the basis that commercial fishers do not use

the small rectangular collapsible traps that are of concern.

CommFish also discussed and agreed:

- Two proposals concerning meshing in Merimbula Lake should not be pursued, consistent with past decisions relating to a former Minister's publicly announced position.
- Several proposals concerning prawn set pocket nets should be discussed with RFNSW before time is invested clarifying the proposals.
- Fishers should be allowed to hang Longspined Sea Urchin only immediately below their boat for short periods (overnight) while moored in port. The hanging of all other SUTS species is to be prohibited as originally proposed.

18. SUTS Member Paper – Red Sea Urchin and closed areas

The Sea Urchin and Turbin Shell (SUTS) Fishery member raised interest in access to closed waters to take Red Sea Urchin, which is quota managed. Points raised in support of the request included:

- Sustainability of Red Sea Urchin is achieved using a periodically reviewed TAC which is and a size limit. On this, DPIRD is concerned that the TAC has been set at the current level because of the protection the current closures afford the stock.
- Opening the areas concerned would provide more data to support the fishery-dependent monitoring that currently occurs.
- It is understood the original intent of the closures were two-fold; to support the rotational harvesting of fishing grounds and for use as reference sites.
- If needed to secure access to the waters concerned, industry would be willing to consider a larger size limit for Red Sea Urchin.

Discussion also covered the importance of clearly identifying the data and monitoring required, whether fishery-dependent or fishery-independent, to inform the health of the stock at local and global levels.

A related and pertinent concern is the increasing recreational (and cultural) take occurring. On this, it was agreed that fair and equitable sharing of the resource is important and that complimentary controls could be considered.

Action 30.9: DPIRD to report back to CommFish at its next meeting on the SUTS changes requested including access to Red Sea Urchin in closed waters and new rules (e.g., a size limit) for recreational fishers.

19. Commercial Fisheries Management update.

Members were provided with the following update:

- The draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy will be released for public feedback soon.
- The first online trawl gear workshop has been held and a survey allowing fishers to have early input will be released soon.
- Country of origin labelling is now mandatory and will be enforced by the ACCC.
- The Fit and Proper Person Policy has been sent to the Minister for consideration.

- Meetings with north coast fishers regarding White Spot are proposed for early April.

20. General business

BEP proposal – byproduct in the School and Gummy Shark sector

In response to issues raised during the meet and greet, CommFish resolved to increase the byproduct allowance proposed for the School and Gummy Shark sector to 200kg to account for multi-day trips. This does not require real-time reporting of catch and respects the benefits of consistent take and possession limits for enforcement purposes.

Action 30.10: DPIRD to amend the byproduct allowance proposed (through the business efficiency program) for the School and Gummy Shark sector to 200kg (daily take and possession limit).

Fish receiver fee waiver

In response to concern the two-year fish receiver fee waiver trial does not go far enough – it does not extend to new entrants or existing fishers expanding their post-harvest activities – DPIRD advised that anyone requiring special consideration may write to DPIRD and have their interests considered on a case-by-case basis.

Resolution 30.3: CommFish supports DPIRD giving special consideration to fee waivers for existing fishers expanding their post-harvest activities.

Action 30.11: DPIRD to prepare a Fact Sheet to help registered fisher receivers understand their legal obligations when buying and selling fish and making prescribed records.

BEP proposal – Tailor and the 80/20 rule in the Ocean Hauling Fishery

In response to greater than normal numbers of Tailor and the social licence issues that result when fishers are forced to discard catches on public beaches, fishers seek approval to take Tailor (incidental catches only) up to the limit that applies under the Fisheries Management (Tailor Fishing Closure) Notification 2021 – that is 100 kg per endorsement holder – pending public consultation on the future of the 80/20 rule.

Recommendation 30.2: Government approves as a priority beach haul fishers taking Tailor up to the limit that applies under the Fisheries Management (Tailor Fishing Closure) Notification 2021.

Member paper – Tiger Flathead trip limit in the Southern Fish Trawl (SFT) Fishery

Industry seeks adjustments to the flathead trip limit pending a decision on the future of the SFT Fishery, to reduce the wasteful discarding of Tiger Flathead that sometimes occurs, and to offset diminishing catches in the Commonwealth SESSF:

- Tiger Flathead is increased to 800kg.
- Bluespotted Flathead, which is important to the recreational sector, remains at 200kg

CommFish also discussed the benefits of larger diameter rubbers (or rollers) on fish trawl footropes including reduced habitat impact, bycatch, and wear and tear on fishing gear.

Recommendation 30.3: Government adjusts the flathead trip limit to 800 kg for Tiger Flathead and 200 kg for all other flathead species combined.

Action 30.12: DPIRD to take to the next online trawl gear workshop increasing the diameter of rubbers (or rollers) on fish trawl nets from four inches (~100 mm) to 7 inches (~180 mm).

Face to face meetings

CommFish discussed the importance of face-to-face meetings and the opportunity to meet with fishers in regional locations, including for the following reasons that cannot be replicated in a virtual setting:

- To gain insight into local issues and to build trust between industry and Government.
- To build trust and understanding through direct interaction, including via non-verbal cues, and a stronger relationship between CommFish members and DPIRD staff.
- To foster increased engagement in discussions – stimulating constructive conversation, broader perspectives, and better advice to Government.

For industry members who miss out on time fishing to represent their industry, it is critical that their time is spent efficiently and effectively and for them there is no better way than to meet in person.

Action 30.13 Chair to raise members' views on the importance of face-to-face meetings with the Executive Director Fisheries.

Access to the Manning River

The Aboriginal commercial fisher member advised his challenges securing access to the lower Manning River for prawning under the current Resource Sharing Policy and put a request to DPIRD to investigate access to waters upstream of the recreational fishing haven. CommFish supported the request and for the Department to investigate.

Action 30.14: DPIRD to investigate the request for access for prawning upstream of the recreational fishing haven in the Manning River.

Mentoring Program

Members discussed the success of the mentoring program and the Minister's interest in diversification on boards and committees. CommFish supports expanding the program.

Action 30.15 DPIRD to contact the recommended person to discuss participation in the mentee program.

21. Observer program and Threatened and Protected Species

Following on from Meeting 29, CommFish discussed how to get fishers to improve their reporting of Threatened and Protected Species (TEPS) interactions and how to get fishers to be more engaging and helpful with the observer program.

CommFish discussed three key initiatives that should assist relating to communication, respect, and influence. Regarding communication and respect, CommFish suggests one or more fact sheets be prepared and published and handed to fishers on a needs-basis that:

- Explain why it is important to monitor and manage TEPS interaction, including the legal drivers (approval to export product) and industry benefits (social licence).
- Explain what data is collected (in the case of observer coverage) and how it is used.

- Dispel the myth that it's illegal to interact with TEPS and that fisheries or activities will be 'closed down' if interactions are reported.
- Remind fishers that not reporting TEPS interactions is an offence and can have greater implications for industry than proactively reporting interactions.
- Explain to fishers what they can expect from an observer, such as:
 - Willingness to receive an induction (relating to safety etc.) when boarding a boat.
 - Appropriate behavior, including simple things like cleanliness and being helpful.
 - Adherence to safety management systems and skipper instructions.
 - Government employed observers are indemnified / covered by insurance.
 - Observers are not compliance officers and information obtained is not used for enforcement purposes.

Regarding respect and influence, CommFish discussed (a) observers working with fishers that are respected in the local area first as this will help with others to come onboard and (b) DPIRD refraining from using fisheries officers to observe fishers' catches because this blurs the line between the roles and responsibilities of officers and observers.

Recommendation 30.4: Observers work with fishers that are respected in the local area first as this will help with others coming onboard.

Recommendation 30.5: DPIRD refrains from using fisheries officers to observe fishers' catches because this blurs the line between the roles and responsibilities of officers and observers.

Action 30.16: DPIRD prepares, publishes and hands-out on a needs basis fact sheets that:

- (a) Educate fishers on the importance of monitoring, reporting and managing TEPS interactions, as per the key points identified by CommFish (meeting 30).
- (b) Explain to fishers what they can expect from an observer, as per the key points identified by CommFish (meeting 30).

22. FishOnline modernisation project

The Program Leader Business Analytics provided the following update for members' information:

- The new applications are ready to be deployed to production. When the applications are in production, they are live for everyone to use.
- Face-to-face sessions with industry in February provided feedback that has resulted in some adjustments to applications.
- To support industry, we are launching a simple application to set up user MFA before the rest of the reporting application goes live.
- DPIRD will host one-on-one support sessions across the state to ensure people are ready.
- Information is available on our [public facing website](#) and we will have an update next week coming via email.
- MFA support sessions dates and the final 'Go Live' date are to be confirmed.

23. Actions to support and protect key depleted fish stocks across NSW fisheries and major harvest sectors

DPIRD initiated discussion on potential management changes for some key depleted fish species harvested in NSW, with potential changes aligned with stock status and harvest levels across fishing sectors. Insight was provided on the Department's current thinking, noting further consultation with CommFish NSW, AFAC, CFNSW and RFNSW will take place prior to any broader consultation or proposal.

Action 30.17: DPIRD to consult further with CommFish on proposed changes if formal feedback or support is required.

24. Closing comments:

The Chair thanked all members for their strong contribution to the success of the meeting. Industry members re-iterated their strong support for the face-to-face format with enough time allocated for careful consideration of all issues.

25. The meeting closed 5:30pm, with the next meeting yet to be determined.

Appendix A – Current Actions list for Meeting 30

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
8.17	Meeting 10: Action has been amended to: NSW DPI to work through on-ground examples with a working group comprised of fishers and members to gain a solution. NSW DPI to approve record of possession form and distribute to fishers for use.	Council NSW DPI	Meeting 10: Chair advised that this action is back on the agenda for today. Action 8.17 to be updated Meeting 11: Working with compliance. Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In progress Meeting 29: Consideration given for this action to be resolved as part of the General Regulation review. Meeting 30: In Progress	In Progress
19.3	NSW DPI to investigate the sending of links to industry members.	NSW DPI	Meeting 26: NSW DPI is working to improve the website once completed will revisit request and liaise with OH member. Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In progress Commercial Mgt team are reviewing website. Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
21.3	NSW DPI to proceed with public consultation on the implementation of a mud crab tagging program and to seek feedback on a tagging management framework. If after public consultation it is viewed that tagging is to be implemented, NSW DPI is to seek approval for funding from the Commercial Fishing Trust fund. NSW DPI is to consider any potential future income going back into the Commercial Fishing Trust fund.	NSW DPI	Meeting 26: In progress Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In progress Meeting 29: Update at today's meeting Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress
21.10	DPI to pilot co-management with Clarence School Prawn Committee.	NSW DPI	Meeting 26: Still in progress 5.8 prawn count (size limit) program - wrap into working group under CommFish Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In progress–waiting on adoption of co-management policy. Meeting 29: Co-management policy being redrafted. Meeting 30: In Progress	In Progress
22.4	DPI to provide further updates, including before the EA and RFMS are finalised.	NSW DPI	Meeting 25: Update presented at meeting. Meeting 26: Still in progress Meeting 27: In progress, EO provided a short update at the meeting. Meeting 28: To be discussed at today's meeting. Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
24.7	NSW DPI to review fishing business transfer rules and advise if changes are required.	NSW DPI	Meeting 26: Still in progress Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In Progress –Will be reviewed as part of the general regulation review. Meeting 29: NSW DPIRD to present paper next meeting. Meeting 30: Discussed at today's meeting.	Completed
26.11	NSW DPI to discuss with the Inland member the proposal for research to reduce bycatch (traps already have a 90 mm ring) and its link with the 48-hour rule.	NSW DPI	Meeting 27: In progress Meeting 28: In progress–pending further investment. Meeting 29: Resource allocated to investigate further. Meeting 30: In Progress	In Progress
27.5	CommFish supported the process tabled by DPI to pursue further consultation with prawn endorsed fishing business owners in region 4.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 28: In progress–Pending consultation. Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress
27.6	DPI to keep CommFish and Inland member updated with DPI strategies with respect to managing European Carp in the Menindee Lakes system as appropriate.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 28: In progress–ongoing. Meeting 29: Presentation at today's meeting –ongoing action Meeting 30: Ongoing action	In Progress
27.9	Item 3-NSW DPI to liaise with relevant proponents and deliver a revised proposal for further consideration by CommFish. Refer to Appendix B	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 28: In progress. Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress
27.12	NSW DPI to continue this research and issues permits as needed to support it.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 28: In progress Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
28.2	CommFish members are to review the investment plan further prior to making any recommendation.	Council	Meeting 29: Pending further discussion Meeting 30: Completed see action 29.8	Completed
28.3	The Department to publish the reports on the website once approved.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 29: In progress Meeting 30: Pending publication	In Progress
28.7	The Department to arrange time on the RFNSW agenda to deliver the commercial access to estuarine species presentation	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 29: EO has reached out to RFNSW EO. This topic will be added to the next joint meeting in 2025 Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress
28.10	The Department to: Consider a further update on the BEP to industry.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 29: BEP update to members today Meeting 30: In progress	In Progress
29.1	DPIRD is to consider further the proposal relating to entrance funnels in estuary fish traps (issue 1 above) and report back to CommFish for discussion. DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss further the TAC and TAE determination matter (issue 2 above) before any changes to regulation are made.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: On the agenda for discussion In Progress	In Progress
29.2	DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss further the outcomes from the observer program.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: Discussed at today's meeting.	Completed
29.3	DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss the TAFC's 2024 determinations and recommendations for estuary general meshing and hauling.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: Discussed at today's meeting.	Completed
29.4	DPIRD and the Estuary Prawn Trawl member are to maintain contact concerning a meeting with Clarence fishers early next year, and in the meantime consider how industry may respond including if a further positive detection occurs.	NSW DPIRD EPT Member	Meeting 30: March meeting held with fishers in Ballina and Maclean. Awaiting results	In Progress

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
29.5	DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss this issue.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: Discussed at today's meeting.	Completed
29.6	DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss this issue.	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: Discussed at today's meeting.	Completed
29.7	RFNSW and CommFish to consider a joint communique to the Minister on this important matter.	RFNSW CommFish	Meeting 30: The CommFish Chair included this in the Chair summary to the Minister.	Completed
29.8	DPIRD is to ensure opportunity for CommFish to discuss these issues	NSW DPIRD	Meeting 30: The Commercial fishing trust Investment Plan deferred. Fishing business transfer rules on agenda for discussion.	In Progress Completed
30.1	To help inform TAF Committee (or Secretary) fishing determinations for EG hauling (category 1 and 2), EG meshing and ocean trawl prawning from 2026/27: a. DPIRD works with CommFish and relevant shareholder to clarify what shareholders in each share class want to achieve and how to achieve it using the TAEs. b. DPIRD informs the TAF Committee the reasons why effort quotas (and not catch quotas) were introduced for the share classes concerned. c. CommFish requests DPIRD to investigate whether the Commercial Fisheries Economic and Social Indicator Monitoring Program reports include share values to inform current and ongoing consideration of asset (share) values. d. To initiate this process and to provide guidance and options for industry, DPIRD will engage with CommFish to workshop the issues as raised by TAFC and work on a consultation paper to go out to Shareholders in the Estuary General fishery to gain further insight into their aspirations and objectives for the fishery.	NSW DPIRD NSW DPIRD NSW DPIRD NSW DPIRD		

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
30.2	DPIRD works with CommFish on a one-page infographic that shows when, by whom and how fishers' advice (written and verbal) is considered during the TAC/TAE setting process to help fishers see the value in attending stock assessment seminars and TAF Committee meetings and to increase fisher participation.	NSW DPIRD and CommFish		
30.3	CommFish discusses further the CommFish member suggestion to establish an industry-funded bursary program to remove or redistribute hauling and meshing shares on a voluntary basis and in a way that benefits those who contribute to it.	EG member and CommFish		
30.4	DPIRD encourages the TAF Committee to acknowledge in its reports key issues raised by fishers in submissions or during meetings so that fishers know they are being heard and that their advice is being considered.	NSW DPIRD		
30.5	DPIRD to consider the draft recommendations in the EPTF member paper and report back to CommFish at its next meeting.	NSW DPIRD		
30.6	DPIRD to contact the two fishers with an interest in Yellowtail Kingfish to explain the harvest strategy development process.	NSW DPIRD		
30.7	DPIRD to consider the line (east) issues and maintain contact with CommFish or the fisher (or both) as needed to resolve or close its consideration of the concerns raised.	NSW DPIRD		
30.8	DPIRD to update the draft NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy Progress Report based on feedback received and following that, commence preparation of a new draft NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy.	NSW DPIRD		
30.9	DPIRD to report back to CommFish at its next meeting on the SUTS changes requested including access to Red Sea Urchin in closed waters and new rules (e.g., a size limit) for recreational fishers.	NSW DPIRD		
30.10	DPIRD to amend the byproduct allowance proposed (through the business efficiency program) for the School and Gummy Shark sector to 200kg (daily take and possession limit).	NSW DPIRD		

No.	Action	Whom	Comment	Status
30.11	DPIRD to prepare a Fact Sheet to help registered fisher receivers understand their legal obligations when buying and selling fish and making prescribed records	NSW DPIRD		
30.12	DPIRD to take to the next online trawl gear workshop increasing the diameter of rubbers (or rollers) on fish trawl nets from four inches (~100 mm) to 7 inches (~180 mm).	NSW DPIRD		
30.13	Chair to raise members' views on the importance of face-to-face meetings with the Executive Director Fisheries.	CommFish Chair		
30.14	DPIRD to investigate the request for access for prawning upstream of the recreational fishing haven in the Manning River.	NSW DPIRD		
30.15	DPIRD to contact the recommended person to discuss participation in the mentee program.	NSW DPIRD		
30.16	DPIRD prepares, publishes and hands-out on a needs basis fact sheets that: Educate fishers on the importance of monitoring, reporting and managing TEPS interactions, as per the key points identified by CommFish (meeting 30). Explain to fishers what they can expect from an observer, as per the key points identified by CommFish (meeting 30).	NSW DPIRD		
30.17	DPIRD to consult further with CommFish on proposed changes if formal feedback or support is required	NSW DPIRD		

Appendix B – Recommendations for Meeting 30

No.	Recommendation
30.1	CommFish recommends that the Government set aside the following TAF Committee recommendations and instead invests in the recently introduced effort quotas and TAE setting processes for EG hauling (category 1 and 2), EG meshing and ocean trawl prawning through Action 30.1 below to inform TAF Committee (or Secretary) fishing determinations from 2026/27. The TAF Committee recommendations to be set aside include: • Implementing TACs for Sea mullet and Mulloway for the 2026/27 fishing period (in isolation of the Harvest Strategy development process). • Reviewing all aspects of the share management arrangements and fee structures for the meshing and hauling sectors.
30.2	Government approves as a priority beach haul fishers taking Tailor up to the limit that applies under the Fisheries Management (Tailor Fishing Closure) Notification 2021.
30.3	Government adjusts the flathead trip limit to 800 kg for Tiger Flathead and 200 kg for all other flathead species combined.
30.4	Observers work with fishers that are respected in the local area first as this will help with others coming onboard.
30.5	DPIRD refrains from using fisheries officers to observe fishers' catches because this blurs the line between the roles and responsibilities of officers and observers.

Appendix C – Resolutions for Meeting 30

No.	Resolution
30.1	CommFish supported DPIRD releasing the draft discussion paper subject to amending it to make it clear that it does not propose specific changes – to avoid fishers misinterpreting the purpose of the paper.
30.2	CommFish gave its in-principal support for the implementation of VMS as proposed, subject to ongoing updates and investigation into the following two issues: • DPIRD investigates whether future operational costs can be shared by others who may benefit directly or indirectly from the introduction of VMS. • Data security, including the protection of commercial fishers' intellectual property.
30.3	CommFish supports DPIRD giving special consideration to fee waivers for existing fishers expanding their post-harvest activities.