

Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter Management Advisory Committee

Outcomes from the 11th meeting - Tuesday 20 February 2006

Apologies

Ms Maria Schreider (Nature Conservation Council), Mr John Stevens (Mid South Coast), Mr Keith Appleby (Far South Coast).

Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting

The Committee accepted the outcomes as a true and accurate record of discussions from the 10th MERCMAC meeting, held 9 November 2006. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Ann Garard.

Carried

Business arising from the minutes

- The Committee noted the Minister's advice to the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing that there would be no buyout opportunities for charter fishing boats (CFBs), as a result of fishing restrictions associated with Marine Parks.
- The Department formally advise operators of the policy to enable filleting (mutilation) of fish on board licensed CFBs.

Action item

The Department write to operators to inform them of the specific guidelines of the policy to enable filleting (mutilation) of fish on board licensed CFBs.

Letter drafted.

Action item

Forward members copies of the Marine Parks, Grey Nurse Shark and Threatened Species presentations for Committee member's information only.

Completed.

1. Recreational Fisheries Management Update

It was confirmed that the request by charter fishing boat operators for exemption from the proposed baitfish bag/possession limits was supported by the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing and Seafood Industry Advisory Council. The Committee was also encouraged to consider submitting a Commonwealth Community Grant application (e.g. offshore artificial reefs), with the possibility of matching funding from the recreational fishing trust if the proposed project would improve recreational fishing. *Information noted. No recommendations.*

2. Get Hooked...it's Fun to Fish – School Fishing Education Program

The Committee was given an overview of the program and advised that there may be opportunities for charter fishing information to be included in the school education kit. *Information noted. No recommendations.*

Action item

The Department to consider future opportunities for charter fishing boat information to be included in educational material, including the recreational fishing DVD and Get Hooked program.

3. NSW Charter Boat Logbook Database Project

James Scandol, Scientific Officer, Wild Fisheries Science and Research, discussed the logbook database upgrade project and preliminary report findings with the Committee. It was confirmed that the recreational catch and effort information provided by operators is vital for resource assessment and should continue to be collected for each trip.

Action item

Distribute copies of the final report to Committee members when finalised.

4. Consideration of issues relating to a proposed pilot Charter Fishing Boat Monitoring (Observer) Program.

DPI is proposing to run a pilot program on board licensed NSW charter fishing boats in the near future to trial the draft consolidated logsheet and assist with the validation of data collection methods by operators.

The Committee agreed that the department should write to all licensed operators to advise of the pilot observer program and request operators to indicate if they wish to be involved in the program. There is no requirement that operators have to take part in the program. Those that do express interest will be chosen on a random basis that is fair and equitable to all operators who applied to take part. Commencement of the project (i.e. notifying industry/seeking expression of interest from operators) is to take place in April 2007. The pilot program may run for up to 12 months.

Action item

The Department write to all CFB operators to advise of the proposed pilot Charter Fishing Boat Monitoring (Observer) Program and ask operators to indicate if they wish to be involved in the program.

Action item

The Department investigate the possibility of a "No Prosecution" clause when observers are on board. The intent of this would be that information recorded by the observer could not be used as evidence in any prosecution matter against the operator in the future.

Motion:

The Committee supports the pilot Charter Fishing Boat Monitoring (Observer) Program. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Peter Bolic. **Carried.**

5. a) Licensing – status of "expired" CFB licences

It was confirmed that the Minister has the authority, under clause 309 of the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* to cancel "expired" licences, however, this option has not been adopted to date. The Department sought the Committee's identification and consideration of options regarding the future status of expired licences and licences placed in abeyance for extended periods of time.

The Committee recommended that the following proposals be considered by the Minister with regards to the future status of relevant charter fishing boat licences:

Motion:

If a licence is expired for more than 90 days the licence holder has 30 days to pay outstanding fees and re-activate the licence or the licence will be cancelled. The operator must then pay annual fees to keep the licence current. **Moved:** Peter Bolic. **Seconded:** Jim Booth. **Carried.**

Motion:

If a licence is in abeyance for greater than 2 years (or 3 years, if extension is formally requested) the licence holder has 30 days to pay outstanding fees and re-activate the licence (no boat attached) or the licence will be cancelled. The operator must then pay annual fees to keep the licence current. **Moved:** David Cribb. **Seconded:** Jim Booth. **Carried.**

5. b) Proposed economic survey for the NSW Charter Fishing Industry

Charter fishing boat operations provide a significant service to the recreational fishing community in NSW. A business and economic survey of the NSW charter fishing industry could be conducted using Charter Fishing Trust funds to identify the value of the industry and determine the economic importance of charter fishing to the State's coastal communities. The study would aim to profile charter fishing businesses in NSW; survey charter fishing boat operators along the entire NSW coast to determine the commercial and economic viability of the industry and its economic value; and estimate the flow on effects and links between charter fishing ports and the adjacent regional economies.

The Department is exploring ways to conduct the study to achieve optimal outcomes. The Committee's views were sought regarding issues to be considered and parameters of the study. It is envisaged that out-of-session consultation will be required to advise members of developments. Final support from the Committee would then be sought to proceed with the study.

Information noted. No recommendations or action items.

5. c) Status of Non-Transferable CFB licences

The Committee was advised on the status of all non-transferable CFB licences. There were 34 non-transferable CFB licences, out of a total of 279, issued during the licence assessment and review process. This equates to 12.2% of all licences in the NSW charter fishing sector. Of the 34 non-transferable licences, only 10 (or 29.4%) are currently issued. Further to discussion of this issue at the previous meeting, the Department sought the Committee's consideration of options regarding the future status of non-transferable charter fishing boat licences in NSW.

Information noted.

Motion:

The Committee recommends that there be no change to the status of non-transferable CFB licences. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Peter Bolic. **Carried.** David Cribb and Peter Sayre opposed the motion.

5. d) CFB focus group

It is proposed to hold a focus group meeting in April/May 2007 to identify and prioritise major issues in the NSW charter fishing sector. The focus group will have input from DPI's Wild Harvest Fisheries (Management and Business Services) and Compliance branches to ensure all issues are considered. Ann Garard was nominated to represent the Committee at the DPI CFB focus group meeting(s).

Information noted. No recommendations.

Out of session

Nil.

Correspondence received

- Letter from Sydney Water re: Desalination project consultation.

Action item

The Chair write to Sydney Water to advise that the Committee nominated Mr David Cribb as the charter fishing boat industry's representative for all consultation on the proposed desalination project.

Completed.

Other Business

- Confirmation from the Deputy Director-General, Agriculture, Fisheries & Regional Relations, that the casual travel rate applies for mileage incurred by Council and Committee members.

Action item

The Chair of MERCMAC write to the Chair of ACoRF to obtain the Council's formal support and request the Minister's consideration of a change to the current casual travel rate for mileage incurred by Committee and Council members to attend meetings.

- Distribution of final Zoning Plans for the Batemans and Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Parks. Tracey MacDonald advised she would attend the next meeting. The Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Park are planned to be implemented in March and Batemans Marine Park in June.

- Introduction of pre-paid envelopes to assist operators with the return of charter fishing boat monitoring program logsheets. The number of envelopes required annually is the no. of (active) operators x 12 months. Pre-paid envelopes to be funded by the Charter Trust - Charter Fishing Monitoring (WBS 197-1).

Action item

The Department to arrange pre-paid envelopes for all (active) operators to help improve the return rate of charter fishing boat monitoring program logsheets.

- The Committee requested a commercial fishing update, including reef mapping issues, at the next MERCMAC and ACoRF meeting.
- Distribution of CFB operator details - for those that have given formal permission on the declaration form - to their regional MERCMAC representative.
- Catch and Effort Working Group – the Committee would like to see the following species considered by the working group: Cobia (introduction of appropriate size limit); Mangrove Jack (introduction of appropriate size limit); Chinaman leatherjacket research and Snapper (increase in size limit from 30cm to 32cm).

Next Meetings – Meeting 12 (02/07) scheduled for Tuesday 31 July 2007. Meeting 13 (03/07) is planned for Tuesday 23 October 2007