

**Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter  
Management Advisory Committee**

**Outcomes from 14<sup>th</sup> MERCMAC meeting  
Cronulla Fisheries Centre, Tuesday 24 June 2008**

**Attendance**

Patrick Appleton (Chair), Peter Bolic (Region 1 – Far North Coast), Mark Flanagan (Region 2 – Mid North Coast), Jim Booth (Region 3 – Central Coast), Roland Persson (Region 4 – Sydney), Ann Garard (Region 5 - Illawarra), Sanchia Glaskin (Recreational Fishing), Attila Kaszo (Nature Conservation Council) and Nick James (Departmental Nominee).

**Observers**

David Cribb (Commercial Vessel Association of NSW), John Diplock and Nick Hannaford (DPI).

**Apologies**

Brian Beer (Chair), John Stevens (Region 6 – Mid South Coast), Peter Sayre (Region 4 – Sydney) & Shirley Massey (Commercial Fishing).

**Welcome**

DPI welcomed Mr Patrick Appleton and thanked him for chairing the meeting. Mr Appleton welcomed new Committee members, Roland Persson and Attila Kaszo.

**Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting**

The Committee accepted the outcomes as a true and accurate record of discussions from the 13<sup>th</sup> MERCMAC meeting, held 16 October 2007. **Moved:** Sanchia Glaskin. **Seconded:** Ann Garard.

**Carried**

**Business arising from the minutes**

- *Resource allocation*

The Committee requested that a letter be sent from the Chair to the Minister to request that the NSW government continue striped marlin resource allocation negotiations, on behalf of the NSW recreational and charter fishing sectors, with the Commonwealth.

**Action item:** Letter from Chair to Minister requesting the NSW government continue to negotiate striped marlin resource allocation issues on behalf of the NSW recreational and charter fishing sectors with the Commonwealth government.

- *Striped marlin*

The Committee requested that a letter be sent from the Chair to the Minister affirming MERCMAC's strong support for striped marlin to be made a recreational only species.

**Action item:** Letter from Chair to Minister indicating the Committee's support for striped marlin to be made a recreational only species.

- *Compliance*

Members requested information regarding the current status of DPI Fisheries Compliance's OH&S risk management protocols, particularly relating to observers/DPI staff on charter fishing boats.

*Information will be obtained from DPI Compliance staff and forwarded to members.*

- *Seabed mapping issues*

Committee members requested copies of historical information, such as seabed maps, collected by the Fisheries Research Vessel "Kapala".

*Information to be obtained from DPI Research staff and forwarded to members.*

## **Agenda items**

### **1. Recreational Fisheries Management issues**

- *Freshwater charter fishing activities and matters raised by freshwater operators/guides*

The Committee was advised that a freshwater charter fishing boat operator has raised issues relating to current management arrangements for the sector. The primary issue relates to equity, with access restrictions to estuarine/saltwater areas for bona fide freshwater charter fishing boat operators, however, licensed marine and estuarine CFB operators continue to be able to access freshwater areas.

Additionally, land based freshwater guides (Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association members) are seeking a meeting with DPI staff to discuss fisheries related matters, including potential management/registration scheme for freshwater fishing guides in the future. DPI will update the Committee and seek advice on appropriate matters out of session or at the next meeting.

- *5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference*

The 5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference with theme "The Angler in the Environment will be held November 10-13, 2008, at Dania Beach, Florida, USA. DPI advised of a proposal for a MERCMAC representative to possibly attend the conference. If approved, the department will seek nominations/expressions of interest from Committee members to determine the charter fishing industry's representative at the conference.

- *Recreational fishing access to Termeil & Meroo Lakes*

The Committee was advised that the department is negotiating with the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) to provide access to the lakes. The DECC plan of management for the lakes will not be approved until there is joint approval from the Ministers of both departments (DECC and DPI). NSW DPI is continuing to support angler access to the lakes.

### **2. Update on the socio-economic survey of recreational and charter fishing in NSW**

The Recreational Fisheries Management Unit has drafted a project brief for the survey, titled "Phase 1: Scoping Study for a Socio-Economic Survey and Evaluation of Recreational and Charter Boat Fishing in NSW". The brief includes a proposal to appoint a suitably qualified contractor to develop a research design and methodologies for identifying socio-economic values associated with NSW recreational and charter boat fishing.

Members stated that a clear distinction between recreational and charter fishing activities, relating to all aspects of the study (e.g. information collected, analysis of data and reporting), must be a priority of the study.

### **3. Recreational fishing enhancement programs**

Marcus Gregson, Program Manager – Fish Aggregating Devices & Artificial Reefs, provided an overview of current and proposed developments associated with these fisheries enhancement programs, including the proposed expansion of existing estuarine artificial reefs in Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay and St Georges Basin and new estuarine artificial reefs in Lake Conjola and Merimbula Lake; the proposed creation of offshore artificial reefs; and the deployment of new fish aggregating devices off Newcastle and Batemans Bay.

Charter fishers and anglers can now receive email alerts for all FAD related news. DPI will inform subscribers when FADs are reported missing, when they are replaced, and any other relevant information. Simply send an email to fisheries.FADs@dpi.nsw.gov.au with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line and you will be added to this service. Please note that the FAD season closes 30 June. FADs will be re-deployed in October/November 2008.

#### **4. Charter Fishing Trust Fund budget 2008/09 – 2010/11**

DPI provided details of current budget issues, including the status of, and programs funded by, the Charter Fishing Trust Fund (CFTF).

A draft 3 year budget and breakdown of proposed annual expenditure from the Trust for the 2008/09 – 2010/11 financial years was presented to the Committee. The Committee supported the expenditure as proposed in Table 1 (attached).

The Committee was advised that the expenditure recommendations will be forwarded to ACoRF for consideration prior to being submitted to the Minister.

**Action item:** Forward the Charter Trust budget for 2008/09-2010/11 supported by MERCMAC to ACoRF for consideration out of session.

#### **Motion**

DPI to provide information on the current interest rate of the CFTF and to investigate any alternative options. **Moved:** Sanchia Glaskin. **Seconded:** Roland Persson. **Carried.**

**Action item:** DPI to provide details of the current interest rate of the CFTF and advise if any alternative options are available.

- *Update of proposed funding allocation to Recfish Australia in 2007/08*

The Committee previously supported the allocation of \$10,000 from the CFTF, to assist Recfish Australia with its involvement in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal case brought by the Nature Conservation Council against the Federal Minister for the Environment. DPI confirmed that the department provided a grant of \$50,000 as a contribution to the costs incurred by Recfish, therefore, no funding was required from the Trust.

**Table 1: Draft 3 year budget and breakdown of proposed annual expenditure from the Trust for the 2008/09 – 2010/11 financial years.**

Program	Proponent	Ongoing or New	Budget		
			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Charter fishing logbook monitoring program	DPI	Ongoing	\$55,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Charter fishing consultation/ MERCMAC meetings	DPI	Ongoing	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
CFB FMO position	DPI	Ongoing	\$100,744	\$100,744	\$103,766
Fisheries Enhancement program contribution Offshore Artificial Reefs Fish Aggregating Devices	DPI	New	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
MERCMAC representative attendance at 5 <sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference	DPI/MERCMAC	New	\$6,000		
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$261,744</b>	<b>\$240,744</b>	<b>\$243,766</b>

**Recommendation**

The Committee supports the new and ongoing programs for funding from the Charter Fishing Trust Fund in 2008/09 – 2010/11, as outlined above.

**Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Peter Bolic. **Carried**

Note: The Committee's support for these programs was unanimous, except for the Fisheries Enhancement program contribution - Ann Garard abstained and requested the opportunity to discuss this funding proposal with CFB operators in Region 5 prior to formally supporting/not supporting the program. Mrs Garard advised on 13 July 2008 that, based on consultation with a number of Region 5 CFB operators, she did not support the Fisheries Enhancement program contribution proposal.

## 5. Port meeting consultation

A wide range of issues were thoroughly discussed during these meetings including, for example, future developments within the NSW charter fishing sector, recreational fishing enhancement programs that would benefit charter fishing activities, bag and size limit issues relating to some species, the review of Marine Park zoning arrangements for Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay and associated Marine Park permit and access issues, as well as the charter fishing boat monitoring program. The matters raised and feedback provided by operators will assist the department and the Committee to clarify and address the major issues and concerns of NSW charter fishing boat operators over time. The following issues were considered by the Committee:

### *Fin clipping requirements for high valued species on charter fishing boats*

The Committee questioned the ongoing need for these arrangements on board licensed charter fishing boats.

### **Motion**

The Committee recommends that the current fin clipping requirements for charter fishing operators be removed from legislation. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Peter Bolic. **Carried.**

It was agreed that the Committee's position on this issue should be raised by ACoRF's charter fishing representative at the next ACoRF meeting and proposed joint Seafood Industry Advisory Council/ACoRF meeting, for consideration.

**Action item:** Letter from MERCMAC to ACoRF Chair regarding the Committee's support for the removal of fin clipping requirements for high valued species on licensed CFBs [cl.311 (1)(2)(3) of the Fisheries Management General Regulation 2002] and to request that the issue be raised on behalf of the charter fishing sector for consideration at the next ACoRF meeting and proposed joint SIAC/ACoRF meeting.

### *Request for NSW CFB licence holders to be exempt from having to hold a current NSW recreational fishing fee receipt*

A total exemption from having to possess a recreational fishing fee receipt for licensed CFB operators was not generally supported by the Committee. Some members mentioned that all CFB operators should have to pay for a recreational fishing fee receipt, whilst others would like to see greater flexibility for fishing activities conducted onboard licensed charter fishing boats.

### **Motion**

The Committee recommends that the current exemption certificate arrangements be extended to cover all fishing activities conducted on licensed CFBs at all times. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Roland Persson. **Note:** During discussion regarding this motion, it was agreed that additional consultation should occur and that the issue be considered further at the next meeting. Motion lapsed.

### *Fisheries enhancement programs*

Offshore Artificial Reefs (OARs) and Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs).

An overview of these programs was provided in item 3 and funding issues addressed in item 4.

### *Resource allocation*

The Committee addressed this issue in business arising from the minutes.

### *Compliance*

Operators requested that compliance officers give greater priority/resources to illegal charter fishing activities in NSW, particularly on the far north coast and south coast.

The region 1 representative reported that ongoing compliance efforts on the Far North Coast are becoming more effective, with a recent decrease in allegations of illegal activities, particularly from interstate vessels.

Regarding allegations of unlicensed charter fishing activities at Port Stephens, DPI Compliance has advised that a full investigation is currently underway. Further details will be provided when possible.

Regarding the successful prosecution of an unlicensed charter fishing boat at Bermagui earlier this year, it was requested that DPI liaise with NSW Maritime to determine action that may be taken by NSW Maritime for the use of an unsurveyed passenger vessel.

**Action item:** DPI to discuss possible action that may be taken by NSW Maritime regarding the use of an unsurveyed boat as a passenger vessel, as a result of being prosecuted for conducting unlicensed charter fishing activities.

It was queried where revenue generated by fines from illegal recreational and charter fishing activities go. CFB operators believe the industry should receive compensation by, for example, funds going into the charter fishing trust fund. Revenue generated from all fishing related fines goes to NSW Treasury. ACoRF and RFSTEC have requested on a number of occasions for Treasury to consider compensating the Trusts with revenue generated by these fines, however, there is no capacity to change the current arrangements.

#### **6. Charter Boat Monitoring Program update**

Regarding developments to streamline administration relating to the completion of logbooks, members were advised that a PDF version of the new logsheet will be emailed to applicable operators in the near future. Following completion by each operator, common data fields (e.g. FL/CFB number and port of landing) will be added to the PDF version, which will reduce repetition of data recorded on each logsheet. DPI will continue to consider potential improvements to the program over time.

#### **7. Fisheries Scientific Committee – gemfish determination**

It was confirmed that the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing supports the removal of the recreational boat limit of 10 gemfish per day.

#### **Motion**

The Committee recommends that the boat limit of 10 gemfish be removed for NSW licensed charter fishing boats. **Moved:** Jim Booth. **Seconded:** Ann Garard. **Carried.**

**Action item:** Letter from Chair to Chair of ACoRF advising that MERCMAC supports the removal of the boat limit of 10 gemfish for licensed charter fishing boats, as a result of the FSC's final determination. The recreational bag limit of 2 per person per day should remain.

**Action item:** Request clarification by the FSC regarding the quote (in point 2 of Criteria – threatening process cl. 340G – page 3) “Recreational fishing vessels are restricted to 10 whole fish in possession on board a vessel per day and similarly a zero take *south* of Barrenjoey Headland.”

#### ***Out of Session items***

Nil.

#### ***Correspondence received***

- *Seabed mapping*

NSW DECC and DPI has received funding from the National Heritage Trust (NHT) to consolidate all estuarine and marine seabed mapping data on the internet to enable public access to information collected. It is likely that the information and maps will be housed on the OzCoasts website hosted by Geoscience Australia by the end of 2008, with possible links to other files (e.g. PDF format) on the DECC and DPI websites. A position to progress all of this is soon to be filled and the person is to be based at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre.

### **Other business**

- *Commercial Vessels Draft Crewing Policy Update (information from NSW Maritime Authority website)*

NSW Maritime is finalising the proposed changes to its crewing requirements for commercial vessels. These changes will be in line with Part D of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels and follow extensive industry consultation. NSW Maritime will be updating its commercial vessel crewing requirements to reflect the National Standard. Should you require further information on these issues, please contact Allan Young on 02 9563 8823.

- *Snapper size limit update*

The Department proposes to seek advice from a joint ACoRF and Seafood Industry Advisory Council (SIAC) meeting regarding the proposed change to the current size limit.

- *Abalone recovery actions*

The Minister has approved an increase in the minimum size of abalone from 11.5cm to 11.7cm across NSW. The increase will take effect from 1 July 2008. The Minister has also approved the renewal of the existing closure in regions 1 and 2 (expire 30 June 2008).

- *Compliance update (next meeting)*

Glenn Tritton & Bradley Harrison, DPI, will discuss current compliance issues at the next meeting.

- *MERCMAC appointments*

The terms of a number of positions expired at the end of February 2008. The NSW Electoral Commission conducted the nomination and election process in January and February 2008 with the following outcomes: Region 2 - Mid North Coast (Mark Flanagan re-elected), Region 4 - Sydney (Roland Persson elected; replaces David Cribb), Region 5 - Illawarra (Ann Garard re-elected), and Region 7 - Far South Coast (Keith Appleby re-elected).

An expression of interest process was undertaken for the Commercial, Recreational and Indigenous Fishing representative positions. Mrs Shirley Massey was re-appointed to the commercial fishing position and Mrs Sanchia Glaskin was re-appointed to the recreational fishing position. No applications were received for the indigenous fishing position – DPI is continuing to seek nomination/s to fill this position.

**Action item:** Update MERCMAC contact list and distribute to members.

- *Status of correspondence relating to casual/official business mileage rate*

A response was sent from the Minister to Bruce Schumacher on 16 August 2007, confirming that the issue is still under consideration by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

- *Government Licensing System (GLS)*

DPI provided the Committee with an overview of the GLS and mentioned that CFB licences may be included in this process in the future.

- *Climate change/global warming information*

CSIRO's ocean research is providing valuable information to understand and sustainably manage our oceans. The oceans also hold one of the keys to understanding climate change and forecasting extreme weather events such as droughts. The top three metres of the ocean hold more heat than the entire atmosphere, making sea surface temperature a vital ingredient in climate prediction.

**Action item:** Distribute copies of Professor Ross Garnaut's climate change review to members.

- *Catch and Effort Working Group (CEWG) meeting*

The next CEWG meeting is scheduled for Friday 8 August 2008. Members were encouraged to advise Ann Garard of species targeted by CFB operators for consideration by the group.

**Action item:** Distribute the current recreational species list to members.

- *Action items*

An action item list from the meeting is attached, for information.

***Next Meeting*** – *Meeting 15 (02/08) is scheduled for Tuesday 14 October 2008.*