

Recreational Fishing Havens Report to the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee June 2004

Scope

This report is a data summary of the results of the introduction of Recreational Fishing Havens in NSW. It covers the number and types of commercial fishing entitlements that were purchased in order to implement the havens. Final expenditure on the havens was expected to have occurred by the end of December 2003. Due to possible court action resulting from the compulsory acquisition of entitlements from Botany Bay, and the granting of extensions to a few fishers to claim relocation costs, expenditure figures should only be considered to be representation as at June 2004.

Introduction

In May 2002, 30 areas along the NSW coast became Recreational Fishing Havens. In these areas commercial fishing was either completely closed, or significantly restricted. This initiative led to the closure of 24% of the State's estuarine waters to commercial fishing, including several major lakes and rivers. In order to implement these closures a number of commercial fishing entitlements were bought out using funds from the NSW general angling licence. A \$20 million loan was taken out from NSW Treasury in order to undertake all purchases of commercial fishing entitlements at one time.

A voluntary buy out process was used to purchase a number of commercial fishing entitlements in the areas affected by the establishment of recreational fishing businesses. In Botany Bay 38 fishing businesses with estuary prawn trawl entitlements were voluntarily acquired, and the entitlements held by another 10 prawn trawl businesses were compulsorily acquired, as this fishery ceased to exist with the creation of the Botany Bay haven. In all cases, fishers were offered ex-gratia payment to voluntarily leave the industry. In general this was calculated from the history of the fishing business or in some cases the estimated market value. All entitlements owned by fishers were purchased including boat and net registrations (except where the business has lobster shares).

Fishery Endorsements

A total of 251 fishing businesses were purchased through the buy out process. Table 1 lists the numbers of business surrendered in each of the seven estuary general management (EGMAC) regions. Note that ocean businesses purchased as part of the Womboyn Beach closure on the far south coast have been included in region 7.

Table 1 Numbers of fishing businesses purchased by EGMAC region.

| EGMAC Region | Number of Fishing Businesses |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 18 |
| 2 | 8 |
| 3 | 28 |
| 4 | 68 |
| 5 | 81 |
| 6 | 35 |
| 7 | 13 |

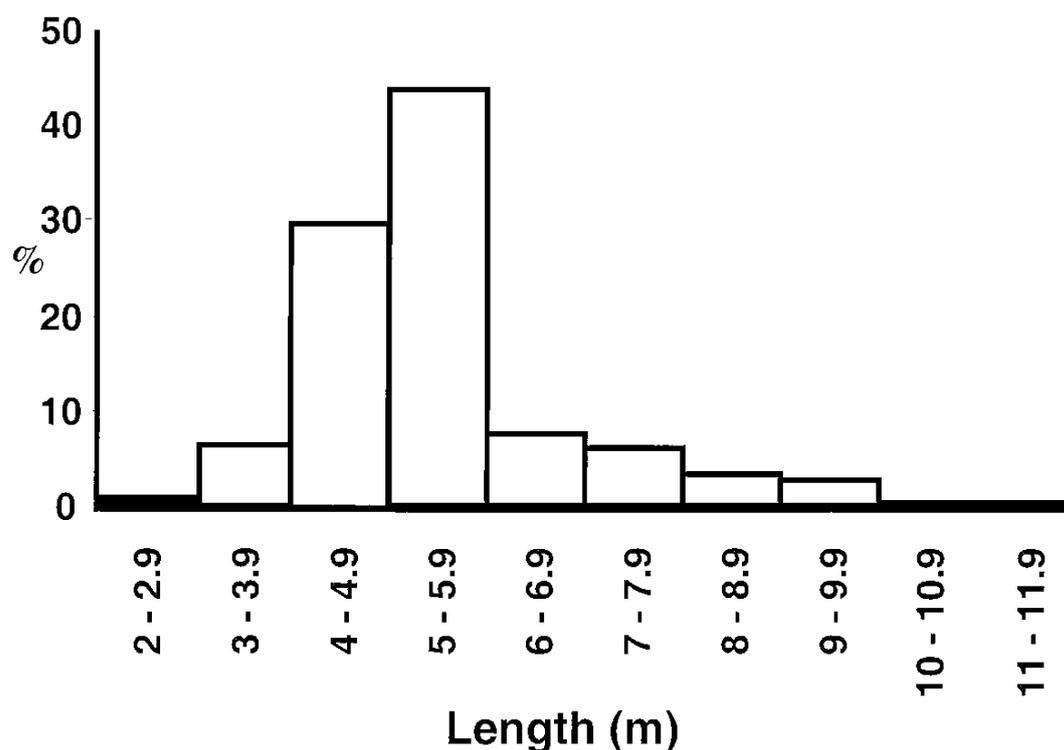
Estuary fishers were targeted under the buy outs as these fishers were affected by the creation of havens (except the Womboyn Beach haven). As such the majority of fishing endorsements surrendered were for estuary fishing methods. Except for lobster or abalone shares, whole fishing business were purchased. This lead to a variety of other endorsements being surrendered as a consequence of the buy out (Table 2). The 48 Botany Bay prawn trawl endorsement bout out covered the entire fleet.

Table 2 Endorsements surrendered.

| Ocean Prawn Trawl | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Inshore | 4 |
| Offshore | 1 |
| Deepwater | - |
| Ocean Fish Trawl | |
| Northern Zone | 1 |
| Southern Zone | - |
| Ocean Trap & Line | |
| Demersal Fish Trap | 17 |
| Line Fishing Western Zone | 32 |
| Line Fishing Eastern Zone | 1 |
| School and Gummy Shark | 1 |
| Spanner Crab North | 2 |
| Spanner Crab South | - |
| Ocean Hauling | |
| Skipper | 19 |
| Crew | 33 |
| Purse Seine | 2 |
| Estuary General | |
| Handlining and Hauling Crew | 211 |
| Meshing | 201 |
| Prawning | 126 |
| Trapping | 60 |
| Eel Trapping | 45 |
| Mud Crab Trapping | 64 |
| Hand Gathering | 10 |
| Hauling Category 1 | 52 |
| Hauling Category 2 | 54 |
| Estuary Prawn Trawl | |
| Botany Bay | 48 |
| Port Jackson | 10 |
| Hawkesbury River | 6 |
| Hunter River | 3 |
| Clarence River | 3 |
| Lake Woollooweyah | 1 |

Licensed Fishing Boats (LFBs)

A total of 468 fishing boat licences were surrendered in association with the buy out. Of these, 399 (85%) were for general purpose¹ boats. This high percentage is expected as the majority of vessels that operate in the estuary general fishery were classified as general purpose boats. Boat lengths ranged from 2.5 to 11m, with an average of 5.5metres. The majority of the boats were 4 to 6m in length (Figure 1).



Figures 1 Length frequency distribution of boat registrations surrendered.

¹ A licensed fishing boat that does not have an associated catch history. General purpose boats are generally operated in fisheries where the fisher rather than the vessel is the principal unit of effort.

Net Registrations

A total of 1,670 net registrations were surrendered through the buy out process. These consisted of:

- 1,201 meshing nets
- 481 hauling nets
- 93 set pocket nets
- 69 trawling nets; and
- 6 unknown nets (illegible – usually due to water damage)

Mesh Nets

A total length of the 1,201 mesh net registrations surrendered was over 535km. The largest proportion of these registrations were for nets 700m or greater in length (Figure 2).

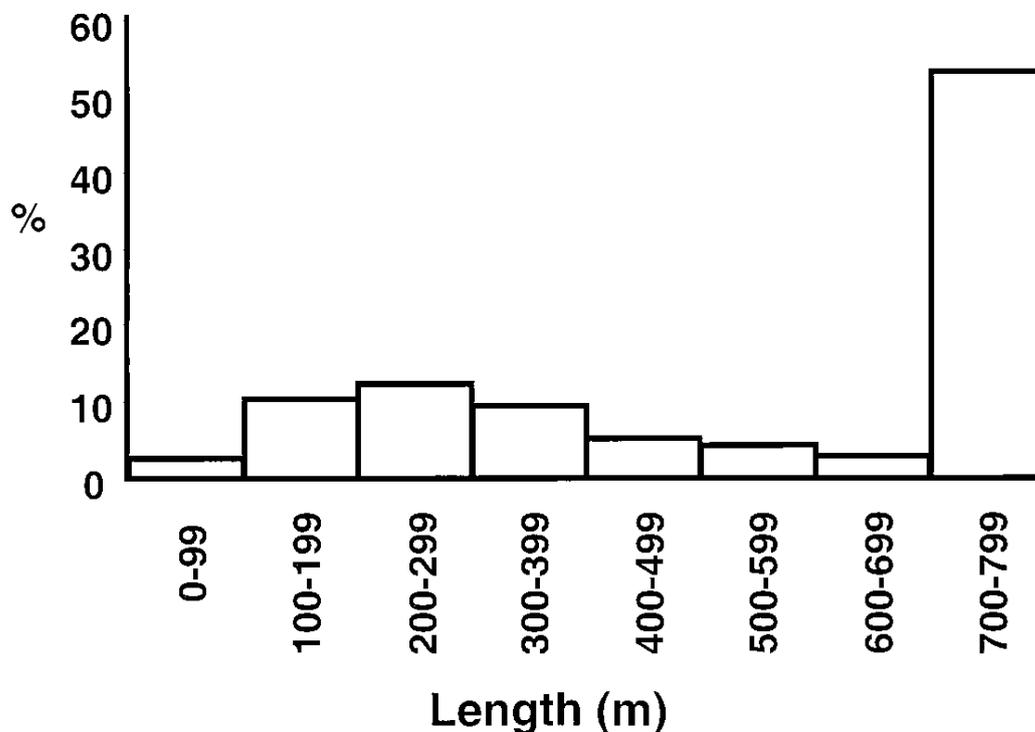


Figure 2 Length frequency distribution of hauling net registrations surrendered.

Haul Nets

Of the 481 hauling net registrations, 277 were prawn haul and 199 were fish haul nets. Due to inconsistent completion of net registration, it was unknown the exact nature of the remaining haul nets registrations. The largest proportion of the surrendered registrations were for nets under 300m in length (Figure 3). The net registrations surrendered included 19 haul nets 1km or greater in length.

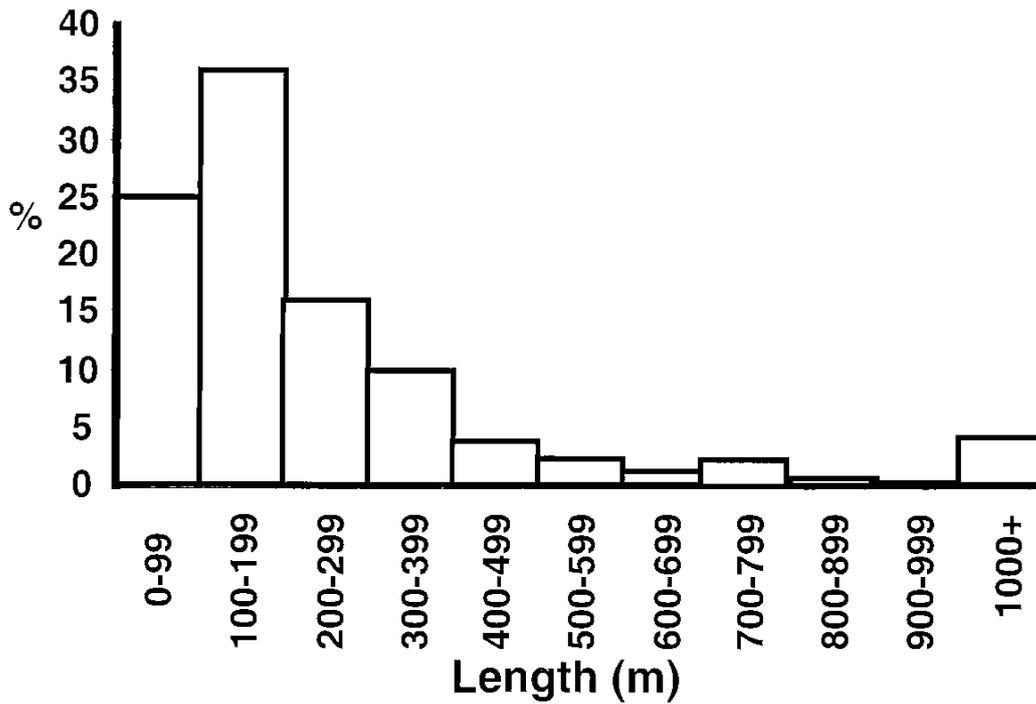


Figure 3 Length frequency distribution of hauling net registrations surrendered.

Expenditure

The purchase of fishing entitlements, accelerated depreciation and relocations and retraining (RRD) claims, and the signage for the havens had a budget of \$20 million. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the expenditure for the buy outs and RRD claims by estuary general region. It must be noted that although the process is mostly complete, the incomplete resolution of the compulsory acquisition of fishing entitlements and the completion of some final RRD claims, means that the final expenditure is not available at this time.

Table 3 Buy out expenditure by EGMAC region.

| EGMAC Region | Offers | RRD | Total |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | \$ 1,841,000 | \$ 91,000 | \$ 1,932,000 |
| 2 | \$ 441,000 | \$ 58,000 | \$ 499,000 |
| 3 | \$ 2,084,000 | \$ 169,000 | \$ 2,253,000 |
| 4 | \$ 5,293,000 | \$ 375,000 | \$ 5,668,000 |
| 5 | \$ 3,861,000 | \$ 266,000 | \$ 4,127,000 |
| 6 | \$ 2,984,000 | \$ 214,000 | \$ 3,198,000 |
| 7 | \$ 816,000 | \$ 53,000 | \$ 869,000 |
| Total | \$ 17,320,000 | \$ 1,226,000 | \$ 18,546,000 |