

**NSW Advisory Council on
Recreational Fishing**

MINUTES

**17th MEETING
22 February, 2001**

**Conference Room, NSW Fisheries Head Office
12 Shirley Road, Wollstonecraft**

**Seventeenth Meeting of the
NSW Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF)**

MINUTES

22.02.01

**Conference Room, NSW Fisheries Head Office
12 Shirley Road, Wollstonecraft**

Attendance

Chair

Bruce Schumacher

Members

Elaine Garvey
Scott Mitchell
Craig Woodfield
Mark Umbers
Lionel Jones
Robert Cooper
Lisa Terry
Tim Simpson
Terry Maloney

Observers

Peter Brodbeck
Mel Brown

NSW Fisheries

Steve Dunn, Director of Fisheries
Paul O'Connor, Deputy Director of Fisheries & Director of Conservation
John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries
Andrew Read, Senior Manager Protected Areas
Graeme White, Senior Manager, Resource Sharing
Claire Braund, Media Liaison Officer
Nick James, Manager Recreational Fisheries
Rebecca Keech, Manager Recreational Fisheries
John Spyrakis, Fisheries Management Officer, Recreational Fisheries

Apologies

Peter Goadby

Agenda Items

1. Director's report
2. Implementation Committee recommendations (Director)
3. Saltwater Trust Fund Budget (Director)
4. General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation (Claire Braund/
Rebecca Keech)
5. Recreational fishing areas (Graeme White)
6. RFFTEC (Bruce Schumacher/John Diplock)
7. Commercial management development (Director)
8. Taking of prohibited size fish at Munmorah Power Station hot water
outlet (Bruce Schumacher/John Diplock)
9. New bag limit for marlin (John Diplock)
10. Aquatic Reserve Proposals/ community consultation paper (Andrew
Read/Paul O'Connor)
11. Mullet regulations (John Diplock)
12. Threatened and protected fish issues (John Diplock)

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes are an accurate reflection of meeting 16 of ACoRF.
Motion carried

Business arising from the minutes

Clarification was sought regarding the intention to regulate fishing competitions. This process has not commenced, and will require considerable stakeholder input, consultation with fishing clubs and the angling community, and careful consideration of all issues.

Other business

It was noted that some items would be discussed out of order, due to the availability of NSW Fisheries staff.

Minutes of the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee and freshwater handout (part of agenda item 6 – provided at end of meeting) to be mailed with draft ACoRF minutes.

Next meeting

It is proposed to hold the next meeting on Thursday 14 June 2001.
Wollstonecraft/Cronulla (preferred venues)

Issue

Director's report

Discussion

NSW Fisheries is progressing many interesting issues at present. These include:

- Port meetings with the commercial fishing industry to consult on future management arrangements, such as environmental assessments; category 2 share management and cost recovery for the six restricted fisheries; and the process for declaring Recreational Fishing Areas. Approximately 1/3 (over 500) of the commercial fishing industry attended the recent port meetings.
- Recreational Fishing Areas (RFAs) – This is a contentious issue with the commercial fishing sector, however, the process is strongly supported by the community and is a highly defensible proposition.
- The Snowy Mountains review is progressing well. It was noted that a consistent stocking strategy is required.
- NSW Fisheries is currently holding discussions with the Sydney Catchment Authority for recreational fishing access to water supply dams, such as Prospect Reservoir. The matter is being looked at as part of the trust expenditure for freshwater fishing. There are public liability issues that must be considered. Concerns were raised regarding a domino effect, where recreational fishing access would open the door to other recreational activity. It was suggested that the use of fuel engines could be restricted at these sights, while possibly allowing shore access and the use of electric motors.
- Cabbage Tree Bay Management Plan – Proposed Marine Reserve (complete no-take zone) at Shelley beach. Extensive local consultation has occurred, however, Manly Council received strong representation from the Angler's Action Group that the proposal had changed since the last round of consultation. 80% of the Manly community (of a total of 100 submissions received) supported the proposal. There are concerns that decisions regarding protected areas are being made in response to public outcry, causing over-regulation, ie based on perceptions, and not detailed information. The proposal restricts recreational/underwater fishing activities in that area. It was suggested that the area should be a Scuba diving area only. NSW Fisheries' bioregional assessments, to identify key habitats and determine appropriate protection levels, will be finalised by mid-2002. The Cabbage Tree Bay area will be considered during this process (see Agenda Item 10).

Motion: That ACoRF support Manly Council's proposal.

Motion lapsed

Motion: NSW Fisheries support Manly Council's proposal and act independently of ACoRF.

Motion lapsed

- Concerns were expressed regarding the commercial harvest of slimy mackerel stocks off NSW. Outside 3nm is managed by the Commonwealth (AFMA). NSW Fisheries frequently consult and negotiate with AFMA on issues such as the harvest of baitfish. These negotiations are ongoing.
- Can revenue raised from fines associated with environmental damage be recovered and used for remediation/rehabilitation programs (eg. restocking, habitat enhancement)? Revenue from fines cannot be secured for these programs. It was suggested that negotiations should be held with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for funding. Pending the outcome of a current EPA study it is proposed to request funding from the Environmental Trust for rehabilitation purposes.

Recommendation

If a body is found responsible for environmental damage, attempts should be made to get funds from them for remediation programs.

Issue

Aquatic Reserve Proposals/ Public discussion paper.

Background

Background information was provided in a draft document, Aquatic Reserves (Selection Process for Candidate Sites). This document will be available on the NSW Fisheries website, www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au, in the near future.

Discussion

The main objective of this process is to identify important estuary habitats that require protection. Significant community consultation occurs to determine issues and concerns related to aquatic reserves.

Issues discussed include:

- The process used for identifying and declaring aquatic reserves is nationally recognised and has been adopted by government.
- A study of rocky foreshores (not represented in Aquatic Reserves) to identify unique areas has been completed.
- 5 bioregions from Port Stephens to Tathra examined in detail and identified through scientific studies, now to go to community for comment. However, community consultation should not override the need for accurate and detailed scientific information.
- Aquatic Reserves are designed to protect the biodiversity of the area (entire habitat, not just species based). They are one of a range of measures introduced to improve biodiversity.
- Aquatic Reserves are not necessarily no-take areas (eg. IPA model)
- Category 6 (multiple use zones) – buffer zones generally surround more restricted use areas to enhance protection.
- There are 12 Intertidal Protected Areas (excluding Sydney Harbour) ranked according to size (eg. Shelly Beach/Cabbage Tree Bay)
- NSW Fisheries' proposal to protect Cabbage Tree Bay covers a larger area than the proposal by Manly Council, but may not be as restrictive.
- The main aim is to gain stakeholder and community views.
- NSW Fisheries does not fully agree with the process adopted by Manly Council.
- The Murray, Murrumbidgee and Tumut Rivers (below impoundments eg. Burrinjuck) were recently mentioned as endangered communities. 8 species have been listed. Impacts can be mitigated through licensing schemes (eg. for water supply or harvesting silver perch from impoundments). Committee to advise the Minister following the identification and assessment process. It was noted that new legislation provides greater power and an effective tool to implement water reform.

Recommendation

ACoRF supports NSW Fisheries' Aquatic Reserves process and that the management of Cabbage Tree Bay, if selected, be given implementation priority.

Issue
Budget allocations for trust funded programs supported by the General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation Committee and Draft Five Year Budget.

Background
The first General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation Committee meeting was held at Cronulla Fisheries Centre on 22 January 2001. The committee reviewed the progress of the fee's implementation to date and supported the allocation of trust funds to various projects for the 2000/2001 financial year.

The following is a summary of the recommendations made by the implementation committee for trust funded programs on 22 January 2001

Program	Supported budget for 2000/2001
Establishment	\$230,000
Information & Advisory	\$150,000
Administration	\$164,367
Recreational Fishing Areas – Selection	\$583,079
Research & Monitoring	\$65,754
Compliance	\$312,329
Management	\$41,095
Future Programs:	
National Angling Survey (data entry)	\$40,000
Fishcare Volunteer Program	\$60,000
	Total \$1,646,624

The General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation Committee presents these budget allocations for consideration by ACoRF at the next scheduled meeting on 22 February 2001.

The Hon. Eddie Obeid MLC, Minister for Fisheries, has provided a draft budget to the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing under section 238A of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*.

	Implement	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Revenue estimate	1,500,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000
Expenditure						
Establishment	230,000	0	0	0	0	0
Information and advisory	150,000	0	0	0	0	0
Administration	164,367	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
Recreational fishing areas implementation	583,079	1,097,034	704,261	0	0	0
Research and monitoring	65,754	235,000	235,000	235,000	235,000	235,000
Compliance	312,329	1,120,000	1,120,000	1,120,000	1,120,000	1,120,000
Management	41,095	145,000	145,000	145,000	145,000	145,000
Future programs:						
National Angling Survey (data entry)	40,000	0	0	0	0	0
Fishcare Volunteer	60,000	0	0	0	0	0
Sub total Expenditure	1,646,624	3,197,034	2,804,261	2,100,000	2,100,000	2,100,000
Annual Balance	-146,624	2,802,966	3,195,739	3,900,000	3,900,000	3,900,000
Recurrent Balance	-146,624	2,656,342	5,852,081	9,752,081	13,652,081	17,552,081

Discussion

A formal trust fund approval process has been implemented (same as freshwater). There was some confusion at the Implementation Committee meeting surrounding the undertaking that the administration costs for the general recreational fishing fee will come from the saltwater trust fund, as occurred with the freshwater licence. It was noted that some administration costs associated with the freshwater licence (which was a much simpler scheme than the general licence) were absorbed by NSW Fisheries' budget.

Concerns were raised by the Implementation Committee regarding a lack of sufficiently detailed information to make major budget decisions. NSW Fisheries will advise the Committee as new budgetary information is obtained and will not exceed the budget unless the Committee supports it.

Recreational Fishing Area (RFA) selection process – Consultation and decisions will occur in the next 12-18 months. Nominations are currently being called for RFAs throughout the State. Closures and commercial buy-backs will then take approximately 12 months to complete. The budget allocated for this program is necessary due to the resource intensive nature of identifying areas, including extensive community consultation and the nomination process. The estimated cost of \$2m does not include funds to compensate commercial fishers. Detailed expenditure reports will be provided to the Implementation Committee, as they become available. RFAs to be implemented within 3 years. This is a “rolling” process, ie. Lake Macquarie and Botany Bay first, then region 1 (Far North Coast) and 7 (Far South Coast). The Government nominated Lake Macquarie and Botany Bay, however, they must still be considered through the identified process.

Some concern was expressed at the short timeframe for nominations, as it was thought that some people would not be aware of this process. NSW Fisheries indicated that the port meetings showed that most people are aware of the process and deadline. It was noted that late nominations would be accepted, if possible. It was suggested that the nomination process should be advertised and promoted with the purchase of a recreational licence, to increase awareness and to act as an incentive for people to buy a licence and have a direct input into nominating RFAs. A request was made to consider conducting a second round of submissions.

With respect to the research and monitoring, compliance and management budgets it was noted that the Implementation Committee recommendations were always going to cover existing departmental services. The Trust will get credit for any departmental programs/expenditure relating to the fee. The \$1.5m (to cover existing departmental costs) will come wholly from the Saltwater Trust. Clear identification of the benefits of each program was requested to ensure the benefits are publicly known.

The Gamefish tagging program - The Council was advised that the Government cannot allocate additional funding to this program. It was stated that sponsorship and/or allocations from the Trust Fund might cover this.

Motion: ACoRF to put a proposal to the Implementation Committee for allocation of funds from next year's budget to reinvigorate tagging programs, if no or insufficient sponsorship is confirmed.

Motion carried

Fishcare Volunteer Program – Purely an advisory role only. It was stressed that Volunteers do not possess any enforcement capabilities.

Motion: The Implementation Committee and ACoRF would like the Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee to consider sharing proportional costs of entering general recreational fishing licence data at their next budget meeting.

Motion carried

There was a request that more information and explanations relating to budget expenditure be made available to the public. NSW Fisheries stated that administration costs would increase if further information is provided to all licence holders. It was suggested that details should go to Gold agents with the current fax information.

Recommendation

ACoRF approves the budget as proposed by the Implementation Committee and notes the draft budget provided by the Minister.

Issue

Recreational Fishing Areas (RFAs)

Background

The introduction of a general recreational fishing fee heralds significant changes to the way we manage fisheries in NSW. A component of this change will see the creation of recreational fishing areas.

The purpose of these areas is to improve recreational fishing by changing commercial fishing practices in areas popular with large groups of anglers. High impact commercial fishing methods can be changed or removed, or commercial fishing can be completely stopped in an area under this scheme. Recreational fishing areas may be over small or large areas.

Commercial fishers whose entitlements are acquired as part of this process will be offered fair compensation. This compensation will come from the *Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust* which is funded by the general recreational fishing fee.

A community selection process for recreational fishing areas was outlined in Parliament by the Minister for Fisheries, the Hon. Eddie Obeid MLC. There are two components to the budget for recreational fishing areas.

- The first is the cost of running the selection process, including the preparation of issues papers (for eight regions, and Lake Macquarie and Botany Bay), consultation with the community and the Fisheries Resource Conservation and Assessment Council, the preparation of community consultation reports and the implementation of the commercial licence buy-backs.
- The second is the actual costs of buy-outs, which will be the subject of separate submissions to the expenditure committee on a case by case basis.

A budget has been prepared for the selection process for the first year. More detailed estimates for year two and three will be provided to the expenditure committee once established. The program will be fully acquitted on an actual cost basis and any unused funds will be returned to the Trust.

Botany Bay and Lake Macquarie have been nominated by the Government and will be the first areas to be considered as recreational fishing areas. Nominations are being sought from the community for other areas to be considered as potential recreational fishing areas. The nomination period commenced on 24 January and will end on 7 March 2001. Nominations will then be collated and presented to the Implementation Committee in the week beginning 13 March 2001 for consideration at the next meeting on 26 March.

Discussion

The declaration of recreational fishing areas is designed to improve the overall quality of the area and requires an adjustment of commercial fishing activities, with fair compensation to displaced commercial fishers. It is an open and transparent process with full public and stakeholder participation.

Update on RFA process:

- 23000 forms were sent out as part of the consultation process, in addition to the NSW Fisheries website.
- 785 nominations received to date, covering most NSW coastal areas.
- 879 telephone enquiries (RFA '1300' number only)
- Independent chair to prepare report on community consultation results for consideration by the Fisheries Resource Conservation Assessment Council (FRCAC).

The inclusion of an additional step in the process, to provide ACoRF with an opportunity to consider issues and check the budget prior to final approval by the Minister, was suggested.

Close liaison should occur between the Resource Sharing and OOC Branches of NSW Fisheries to identify any overlaps between the RFA and Aquatic Reserve programs.

Commercial fishing data is available on NSW Fisheries' website. Clarification was sought regarding the status of ocean hauling as part of the RFA process, as this method targets fish immediately after they leave the estuary to spawn.

An issue paper outlining specific proposals will be prepared. Once an area has been nominated it will be presented to the Implementation Committee for consideration. The Committee will be provided with all available information (including maps, closure information, reference material and detailed budgetary estimations) to assist the prioritisation of RFAs.

Recommendation

ACoRF support the RFA budget until the end of June 2001.

Issue

General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation.

Background

Numerous staff members from various branches of NSW Fisheries are working together towards the implementation of the general recreational fishing fee. Managers of contributing sections meet regularly to discuss arising issues and update progress on a project timeline.

The General Recreational Fishing Fee Action Plan is a document listing tasks to be carried out for the implementation of the fee, assigning a staff member to be responsible for each task and a timeframe for completion. When updates are complete the latest version of the plan is distributed to those involved so everyone is aware of progress.

NSW Fisheries is currently on schedule for the successful implementation of the general recreational fishing fee. The major tasks being undertaken include:

- Preparation of licence books
- IT facilities (database, Internet licence sales and website preparation)
- Telephone service (credit card licence sales)
- Agent preparation (existing and new agents)
- Exemption certificates
- Tweed concession
- Legislation
- Compliance
- Education and advisory
- Promotions and advertising

Discussion

Recent tasks:

- Development of Regulations
- Licence books prepared and being distributed to Agents
- Advertising is currently appearing in fishing magazines
- Development of the Compliance strategy is underway

Overview of the project plan

- 3 month 'advisory' period, starting 23 March 2001.
- 50 of the 65 applications received to become new agents have requested Gold agent status.
- Tweed concession will remain until Queensland introduce an equivalent scheme.
- Concern regarding size of licence – may move to credit card sized licence over time.
- Data from licence sales will be entered on appropriate database for surveys of angler catches.
- Promotion/advertising strategy - commenced prior to Christmas with key messages regarding major issues; Rex Hunt poster – "There's no catch without one" will be widely distributed; major coastal radio/newspaper/magazine

advertising program (commencing late February); inland radio campaign (8 – 22 March); and Gold agent fisher promotions: 4 prize draws throughout the year (5 boat and outboard motor packages; 40 tackle packages) and educational packages (brochures, posters, stickers etc) to agents for distribution.

Recommendation

For information.

Issue

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC)

Background

The Recreational Freshwater Licence Expenditure Committee met on 15 February 2001 to discuss the progress of current freshwater fishing programs funded by the Freshwater Trust.

RFLEC confirmed that the title of the Committee would be changed to RFFTEC, in line with the establishment of the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFSTEC).

A summary of Freshwater Trust funded programs for this financial year were distributed at the meeting.

The RFFTEC budget meeting is scheduled for May 2001.

RFLEC asked ACoRF to investigate the possibility of reimbursing the freshwater trust with money accrued from fines collected by those Fisheries Officers funded by the trust.

Discussion

Revenue raised from fisheries related offences goes into Consolidated Revenue and is not refunded to NSW Fisheries.

Recommendation

Noted.

Issue

Commercial management development

Background

Following a year of extensive consultation there will be some important changes happening in commercial fisheries. The *Fisheries Management Act* has been changed in a number of ways that impact on commercial fishing.

A commercial fisheries information paper was provided. This document appears on the NSW Fisheries website, www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au.

The paper provides an overview of the current situation regarding:

1. Fisheries management strategies and environmental assessment,
2. Restructuring commercial fisheries, and
3. Management charges.

Discussion

An update of these issues was provided to members for information.

Recommendation

Noted.

Issue

Taking of prohibited size fish at Munmorah Power Station hot water outlet, San Remo.

Background

Since mid June 2000 the Central Coast District Office has received numerous complaints concerning prohibited size fish being taken from the outlet, predominantly at night. This coincided with a noticeable increase in the flow of warm water from the outlet. During the winter of 1998/99 the amount of warm water coming from the outlet was minimal and few compliance problems were experienced. Inquiries with Delta Power revealed that the station is projected to operate on two units for the next 15 to 20 years.

In July 1997 the recreational fishing closure (from 1 May to 31 August each year) covering the outlet, which had existed since the 1980's, was removed. The closure regarding the use of commercial nets remained. The reasons for removing the closure were:

- a decrease in the volume of illegal fishing activity; and
- to permit local anglers to target luderick in the daytime.

Nine inspections have been carried out at the Power Station in the last four weeks. Numerous offenders have been found in possession of large quantities of prohibited size yellowfin bream, eg. quantities of 55 and 80 fish. Nineteen reportable offences have been detected with six breaches, five penalty notices, eight written cautions and numerous verbal cautions given. The range of offences includes prohibited size fish, bag limits, failing to state name and address, false information and threatening a Fisheries Officer. Police assistance has been required on four of the nine inspections.

Fisheries officers are currently patrolling the outlet a minimum of twice a week. Local fishers have indicated that they would support a nighttime closure of the outlet during the colder months.

Discussion

Fisheries Officers have been threatened and local residents and anglers are not comfortable entering this area at night. Concern was expressed that the area would be closed to some legitimate fishers, and may not facilitate the removal of undesirable/unethical anglers. NSW Fisheries indicated that the nighttime closure would allow more effective compliance and physical restrictions on entry to be imposed.

Motion: That a total fishing closure be introduced to the area.

Motion lapsed.

Recommendation

ACoRF support the introduction of a nighttime recreational fishing closure (6pm-6am), from 1 May to 31 August each year beginning 2001, to be reviewed in 6 months.

Issue

Request by Bermagui Big Game Anglers Club to change the new bag limit for marlin.

Background

The Bermagui Big Game Anglers Club has expressed concern over the new bag limit for marlin. The Club believes that the current bag limit allows the black marketing of marlin and propose that a bag limit of one marlin per boat per day should be introduced.

NSW Fisheries reviews the saltwater recreational fishing regulations every five years. This allows regular modifications to be made to ensure that the bag and size limit regulations protect fish stocks and ensure equitable distribution of fisheries resources amongst users.

A review committee, comprising of representatives from the Minister's advisory councils on recreational fishing, commercial fishing and fisheries research as well as representatives from various recreational associations was established to consider the saltwater recreational regulations and prepare a discussion paper on the proposed changes for public consultation.

The committee considered the responses from the public and subsequently made 16 recommendations that included a range of conservation bag limits for specific species. A bag limit of 2 for each marlin species received overwhelming majority support in response to the review. The new bag and size limits took effect from 1 November 2000.

Discussion

NSW Fisheries suggested that bag and size limits should not be reviewed at this stage, as there is a scheduled process - the saltwater review was only just completed and new advisory material has been distributed. It was suggested that NSW Fisheries write to Bermagui Big Game Angling Club to advise that it is difficult to change the bag limit at this stage, but assure them the issue will be considered during the next review.

Motion: To support the Bermagui Big Game Angling club proposal to introduce a boat limit of 1 marlin per boat per day.

Motion lapsed.

As a change to advisory material is required to include the 2nd increase of snapper and flathead size limits, that may be an appropriate time to reconsider the marlin bag limit.

Recommendation

NSW Fisheries to forward issue to the NSWGFA to obtain the views of the broader gamefishing fraternity.

Issue

NSWFCA proposing changes to Mullet regulations

Background

Since November 1 2000, sand mullet (*Myxus elongatus*) have a maximum daily bag limit of 20 but no size limit. However, they are not listed as baitfish and are not part of the 20 (less than 15cm) poddy mullet allowed for live bait, as this refers specifically to sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*).

Regularly members of the NSW Fishing Clubs' Association (NSWFCA) catch 20 sand mullet (a limit set by the NSWFCA many years ago) over 25cm in a session while also having in their possession small live sand mullet specifically for bait. This renders them liable to prosecution for exceeding the bag limit for this species. NSWFCA believes that it was never the intention of NSW Fisheries to restrict the use of sand mullet for bait, but the regulations currently preclude this.

NSWFCA is asking to have mullet re-classified and recommend the following changes to the regulations:

1. mullet all – less than 15cm (for live bait), 20 per day
2. sea mullet – above 30cm - exclusively or in combination with mullet other, 20 per day
3. sand mullet or mullet other – above 25cm – exclusively or in combination with sea mullet, 20 per day

NSWFCA is also proposing that the words 'live' and 'poddy' be deleted, as poddy is a slang term for the young of an animal.

Discussion

Retention of the word 'live' was supported, as was the need to prevent targeting of undersized fish.

Motion: The reference to poddy mullet for live bait should refer to mullet of any species.

Motion carried.

Recommendation

ACoRF recommends a change to the regulation to provide a bag limit of 20 for live mullet (all species) less than 15cm.

Issue

Threatened and protected fish issues

Background

A member of the Minister's Advisory Council on Fisheries Conservation (ACFC), Tim Anderson has asked that targeting of blue groper by charter operators for point scoring purposes in fishing competitions, as well as the incidental capture of black cod, be put on the agenda for the next ACFC meeting. It is requested that ACoRF hold preliminary discussions about these issues.

1. Tim Anderson has received information that some charter operators are targeting blue groper and that some fishing competitions have allowed blue groper to be weighed in as an unominated species. Blue groper is the State fish, they are protected from spearfishing and commercial fishing, and individual large blue groper is highly valued by divers and gain icon status in many local areas. Comments on the issue of blue groper being put under targeted harvesting pressure, and possible management responses are sought.
2. It has been noticed by dive operators at South West Rocks that black cod have been killed at Fishrock (South West Rocks), possibly through being caught and released. Comments on if and what protective measures may be taken are to be discussed.

Discussion

Have these activities been witnessed by NSW Fisheries Officers? No, several people and some charter operators have reported it. It must be stressed that these activities are not illegal, but it should be investigated to see if there is a potential problem. Blue groper is a semi-protected species (protected from spearfishing at present). It is also an icon species – how can we better protect it?

ACoRF should forward the issue to the NSW Charter Boat Associations (CBOA and CVA) and the Charter Boat Industry Review Group (CBIRG) for consideration. Further, NSW Fisheries should write to charter boat licence holders to request no targeting of groper. The Committee does not want this issue to result in a total closure to anglers. At present, this practice is limited to some charter fishing operations and fishing competitions.

Motion: That NSW Fisheries develop options, including the protection of groper in the State, to address the concerns raised.

Motion lost.

Recommendation

That NSW Fisheries consider options and develop a way of protecting blue groper from over exploitation by charter operators.

Meeting closed 3:50pm