



Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee Outcomes, 48th meeting St George Rowing Club, Sydney

18 March 2015

Attendees

Bruce Schumacher (Chair), Ron Croker (Region 3), Ian Ward (Region 4), Tom Williams (Region 5), Debbie Lennon (Region 6), Kevin McKinnon (Region 8).

1. Apologies

Max Graham (Region 1), Ron Butler (Region 2), Richard Ping Kee (Region 7), Peter Turnell (NSW DPI).

1. Chairs introduction

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Confirmation of outcomes from previous RFFTEC meetings

The draft outcomes of the 47th RFFTEC meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting. Moved: Kevin McKinnon Seconded: Tom Williams.

3. Action items from previous meetings

The progress of action items from the previous meeting was noted.

4. Recreational Fishing Trust Report

The status of the Freshwater Trust was presented. Licence revenue generated for the 2014/15 financial year totalled \$15.6 million, with \$4.6 million to be allocated to the Freshwater Trust for expenditure on freshwater projects listed under the new 3 year Trust Investment Plan. New Trust project milestone reporting procedures have been implemented and are working well. Reports on project progress are now available to RFFTEC members via Dropbox. The Expression of Interest for membership to the new Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council has been completed and applications are currently being collated.

5. Review of new 2015/16 Trust funding applications

The committee reviewed new Freshwater Trust grant applications. Funding recommendations with respect to each project were forwarded to ACoRF for subsequent recommendations to the Minister for consideration. Meeting recommendations are provided in the attached tables.

6. Community education programs

There are currently 214 Fishcare volunteers operating in NSW. During 2014/15 volunteers committed 7,200 hours or 1,023 days to the Fishcare program. A total of 397 organised events were attended in NSW and 52,000 public contacts were made. A total of 86 events were attended in inland NSW and 10,200 contacts were made. A total of 820 children attended community fishing workshops in western NSW. A total of 87 schools registered for the "Get Hooked, it's fun to fish" program during 2014/15, including 24 schools in inland NSW totalling 1,008 students. The Minister recently launched the new "Get Hooked, it's fun to fish" manual and resources for use in primary schools during 2015/16.

7. Inland native fish production

Inland native fish stocking figures for the 2014/15 season were presented. Capital works recently undertaken at Narrandera to improve pond harvesting procedures were discussed. DPI is working in co-operation with HQAS hatcheries to implement calcein marking techniques for inland native fish species stocked in the Murray Darling Basin, to enable differentiation of wild and hatchery-produced fish. Genetic testing technology is also being introduced amongst HQAS hatcheries and will involve the collection of genetic material from broodstock used in inland native fish breeding / stocking programs.

8. Freshwater fishing access

DPI provided an update on assessment of applications as part of the Crown Roads Disposal Program. Over 14,500 applications have been assessed to ensure the retention of roads leading to waterways or reserves of importance to fishers. The progress of on-line delivery of angler access locations in NSW was also presented. The on-line site, while still under development, has various features that allow anglers to search for fishing locations through a Google map interface. Approximately 2,500 sites have been assessed and 700 of these are currently viewable on the website. The website is smartphone ready and works well on most hand held devices. Upcoming waterway assessments for the website were discussed. Recent improvements to angler access at Thompsons Creek Dam and Lake Oberon were also presented.

9. Macquarie River recreational fishery improvements

The Inland Waterways Rejuvenation (IWR) has recently undertaken re-snagging and riparian weed removal / willow control and native fish stocking at 13 sites along an 80km reach of the Macquarie River near Dubbo and Narromine. Matching funds for the project were provided through the Freshwater Trust and IWR. IWR raised its share of project funds through the running of the Lake Burrendong Fishing Classic. The IWR is proposing to hold an inland fishing summit amongst fishing organisations in future to share information on how to improve financial positions of fishing clubs and on projects that enhance freshwater recreational fishing.

10. Recreational Fisheries Compliance

Compliance activities undertaken throughout NSW over the past 12 months were presented, including information on fishers checked, recreational fishing fee compliance rates, significant apprehensions and advisory education events undertaken. There has been a continued focus on maximising voluntary compliance and creating an effective deterrent by having presence during periods of high fishing activity. Many operations were held over the past financial year including Murray crayfish, fishing competitions, patrolling closed trout spawning streams and Murray cod closed and open seasons. More than 50,000 state wide contacts were made across a range of fisheries programs over this time, with 86% of fishers found to be complying with fisheries legislation.

11. Freshwater fish habitat protection

The aquatic habitat protection unit is responsible for ensuring fish habitat protection requirements are incorporated into development proposals, land use planning and catchment management plans. A total of 300 development assessments took place across 163 different waterways during 2014/15. Examples of riverine developments assessed over this time were presented. Numerous site inspections occurred and many developments were required to implement a range of environmental offsets to ensure mitigation of impacts on Key Fish Habitats. Staff are currently involved in the preparation of MDB Water Resource Plans and are negotiating with State Water in the design of environmental flows on major dams to reduce impacts of cold water pollution on fish breeding. Staff are also involved in fish kill investigations when they arise.

12. Murrumbidgee River and Lake Mulwala creel surveys

Results of the Murrumbidgee River creel survey (conducted between Berembend and Yanco Weirs in 2013) show that the Murray Cod fishery is productive, that anglers generally rate the fishery very highly and that catch and release fishing is very popular. Results of the Lake Mulwala creel survey (conducted between Dec 2015 and Feb 2015) show that almost all boat-based fishers target Murray Cod. A total 87% of Murray Cod released were undersize and 12% harvest-eligible Murray Cod were voluntarily released. The number of Murray Cod caught and released was 12,264 compared with a harvest level of 1,503 fish.

13. Murray Cod and Golden Perch size limits

Sampling of Murray Cod and Golden Perch in the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers has taken place to quantify population sizes. The results show that the length and age for Murray Cod and Golden Perch at

maturity are closely linked. Future research to assess change to the population structure of Murray Cod as a result of the new size slot limit is planned.

14. Effectiveness of stocking research

Ageing and assessment of calcein marked fish stocked within Burrinjuck and Copeton Dams and the Murray and Murrumbidgee River has been completed. Results show the percentage of marked fish caught in impoundments was higher than those retrieved from rivers, with almost all fish retrieved from Copeton Dam being marked. The results were used as the basis for removing the Murray Cod closed season from Copeton Dam and indicate that stocking is vital to impoundments where natural recruitment is low, but is less important in rivers where natural recruitment is high. Effectiveness of stocking research is continuing at Blowering Dam.

15. Trout monitoring

Many Brown Trout are currently undertaking their annual spawning migration within the Thredbo and Eucumbene river systems. Rainbow Trout have started to run in the Thredbo River and have also been detected within Gang Gang and Big Tolbar Creeks, tributaries of the Eucumbene River. Planned future trout research includes a limnological assessment of Snowy Lakes planned early in 2016 (DPI and La Trobe University collaboration); a creel survey of anglers in Lake Eucumbene to commence in October 2015 and an expansion of the existing monitoring program (return spawners, age structure, stocked fish identification).

16. Fishing event management

The program works with fishing clubs and fishing event organisers to promote best practice recreational fishing and competition management techniques. This includes provision of catch and release packs, (including gloves, circle hooks, pliers, DVD's, release weights and C&R advisory information) to competition managers to promote new gear types to anglers. New catch and release mats have been developed to assist in the measurement of large Snapper and Murray Cod for photo validation. Examples of tournaments that have moved from harvest based competitions to catch and release formats in recent times were discussed. A video clip promoting the use of release weights to return fish retrieved from deep water to reduce the effects of barotrauma was shown. New instructional videos on fish handling, releasing fish and use of circle hooks are planned in future.

17. General business

Debbie Lennon circulated a report to the Chair & committee members on the outcomes of the National Recreational Fishing Conference. Ron Croker queried the effectiveness of bass stocking within Pejar Dam as it did not appear that bass were being caught at the dam since stocking commenced. Cameron Westaway advised that it can take many years for bass to show up in angler catches in higher altitude dams due to slower growth rates experienced, however its worth continuing to stock these areas as fishing results can be favourable in the longer term (it took 7 years for bass to be caught in Lake Lyell after stocking, also located high in the catchment). Ron Croker queried the status of viral technology to control the proliferation of carp. Cameron Westaway advised that research staff are investigating biological control methods for carp, however it is a complex and meticulous process requiring validation with stringent guidelines including Federal approval. Kevin McKinnon advised that South West Anglers Association recently met with the Minister to discuss funding opportunities from the Recreational Fishing Trust. Tom Williams queried whether any excess trout broodstock could be released at Carcoar Dam. Cameron Westaway advised that Carcoar Dam is on the list for future broodstock releases if available.

18. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 26 November 2015 in Sydney. The purpose of the meeting will be to consider technical panel recommendations in relation to freshwater habitat grant applications submitted during the 2015/16 funding round.

19. Meeting closed

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

20. Action items

| Action items | Group responsible | Status |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------|
| That DPI staff attend a future South West Anglers meeting to discuss Rec Trust program funding | Recreational Fisheries Management | Underway |
| That DPI investigate the feasibility and requirements for stocking Estuary Perch and Jungle Perch in southern and northern NSW impoundments | Recreational Fisheries Management | Underway |

Table 1: New Trust Project Applications supported by RFFTEC**Platform: Recreational fishing education**

| Project | Organisation | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---|--------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| NSW Fishing Day 2015 – Go fishing in NSW | NSW DPI | \$85,000 SW | \$0 | \$0 |
| | | \$40,000 FW | | |

To conduct the inaugural Annual NSW Fishing Day on 5 December 2015 in six locations throughout NSW to recognise and promote the importance of fishing to the community, particularly in regional NSW. The project ultimately aims to encourage people to go fishing, especially new entrants to the sport. Ultimately the aim is to increase participation in recreational fishing.

Bryan van der Walt and Dee Payne declared a potential COI and left the room during discussion and voting. Supported – Moved Kevin McKinnon, Seconded Debbie Lennon. Condition – RFFTEC recommended that payment of the fishing fee should not be a requirement on the fishing day, in order to encourage new anglers and families to try out fishing and to maximise enjoyment of the fishing day event.

Table 2: New Trust Project Applications not supported by RFFTEC**Platform: Fishing access and facilities**

| Project | Organisation | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---|---|---------|---------|---------|
| <p>European Wasp Wardens Initiative</p> <p>To improve access and amenity to the Lake Eucumbene fishery by engaging trout accommodation providers to manage European wasps around the foreshores of Lake Eucumbene. Not supported – Moved Debbie Lennon, Seconded Ron Croker. The committee considered that the proposal benefited commercial accommodation providers. It was noted that the issue of fishing access to Lake Eucumbene foreshores will be discussed at the upcoming Snowy Lakes Trout Strategy Meeting.</p> | Anglers Reach and Old Adaminaby Progress and Preservation Association | \$9,450 | \$0 | \$0 |