

Chair's Summary Meeting 26

The 26th meeting of RFNSW was held on 15 and 16 November 2022 in Port Stephens. It was another highly productive meeting covering a range of recreational fishing issues. It was also the final 'face to face' meeting of the sitting members, with the current term of the Council due to expire on 30 November 2022. I thanked the members for their commitment, progressive thinking and dedication to achieving positive recreational fishing outcomes, and strongly encouraged them all to re-apply for the next Council term. The key outcomes from the meeting are summarised below.

Harvest Strategy update

DPI provided an update on the development and implementation of Harvest Strategies in NSW, including advice that the draft Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy was nearing completion. Council was also advised that the Expression of Interest for membership on the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group had recently closed and assessment of the applications was well underway.

Dr James Findlay, Chair of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group, provided a brief background on the Mulloway fishery, including implementation of the previous recovery program, and the current priority areas for the Working Group to rebuild the stock(s) of this highly-valued species. These priority areas included potential decision rules and trigger points, and the need to improve data on recreational catch of Mulloway. The Council also received an informative update from DPI on a current 12-month Compliance Operation tasked with detecting and deterring the illegal take and sale of Mulloway.

Presentation on improving catch estimates of recreationally caught fish

DPI made a presentation on how the 'real time' catch information system for Eastern Rock Lobster has enabled total allowable commercial catch to be estimated effectively, and helped rebuild the Lobster stock from its previously overfished state. DPI advised that 'real time' reporting of the recreational Mulloway catch also has potential to effectively monitoring changes in abundance over time, and can be used to address the need to improve the recreational catch of Mulloway recognised by the Harvest Strategy Working Group for this species. RFNSW was supportive of the concept of 'real time' reporting for Mulloway (and Lobster) as part of a trial for recreational fishing in NSW. However, Council considered that any real time reporting system in NSW would need to be mandatory (rather than voluntary) to be effective. Council was supportive of DPI developing the proposal for real time reporting in more detail to take account of compliance, stock assessment and implementation requirements.

Recreational Fishing Trust expenditure

Council reviewed advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding the latest Saltwater and Freshwater grant applications, and advice on one application from the Charter Fishing NSW Working Group (CFNSW). Council endorsed the advice provided by the Expenditure Committees and CFNSW and will now pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration.

Freshwater update – Bubble Plume, Fish Screening and Fish Passage Strategy

DPI provided updates on a number of key freshwater projects with significant flow-on benefits for popular native species targeted by recreational fishers. This included an update on the proposed Bubble Plume trial system to mitigate Cold Water Pollution, implementation of the Fish Passage Strategy and the Fish Screening Program. At the meeting, DPI took the opportunity to acknowledge the support of the Council in implementing these essential projects.



Professor Johann Bell (Chair)