

ESTUARY GENERAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chairperson's Summary

Meeting Held On Thursday 10th August 2006

The Estuary General Management Advisory Committee (EGMAC) met at the North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club on the Thursday, the 10th August 2006.

Two major issues affecting the Estuary General Fishery were discussed at the meeting - the implementation of the Share Management Plans and the creation of Marine Parks in NSW.

1. Share Management Plans:

The Committee was given an update on the development of the Share Management Plan for the Estuary General Fishery. It was noted that the Plan's implementation has been proposed for December 2006, with commencement of Share Management in early 2007. The proposed timeline was tabled at the meeting, and indicated a demanding schedule for the DPI involving MAC and public consultation requirements.

The Committee supported the proposed draft trading rules, which will allow for increased flexibility for fishing business owners and structural adjustment with a cap on the number of fishing businesses and endorsements. Both the indigenous and industry representatives did not support an increase in minimum shareholdings at this stage.

Changes to the current fishing licence arrangements were also tabled at the meeting. The Committee supported the proposed amendments noting that all commercial fishing licences will expire after each financial year and a fishing business card identifying the shareholder's endorsements will be issued to each shareholder. The removal of the owner operator rule for the Estuary General fishery was also fully supported, where fishing business owners may nominate a licensed commercial fisher to operate their business. It was noted that a commercial fisher could only be nominated for one fishing business at a time.

2. The Implementation of Marine Parks in NSW:

Representatives from the Marine Parks Authority provided the Committee with an update on the Bateman's Bay Marine Park. The Committee raised several issues regarding the implementation of Marine Parks in NSW, including that Government reconsider the existing policy on compensation to ensure that the potential impacts on the entire infrastructure relying on the commercial fishing industry are properly assessed. The Committee believed that the Government had seriously underestimated the broader economic and social impacts from the declaration of Marine Parks. Specifically, the Committee was concerned that individual operators who elect not to participate in the buy out, but who are forced to modify or relocate their operations as a result of the declaration of Marine Parks, are not eligible for any compensation. There was a general consensus that the Government be requested to address this aspect of the policy on compensation so that these circumstances can be adequately addressed.

The Committee also believed that the process for determining boundaries of proposed Marine Parks appears to discriminate against commercial fishers, by unfairly restricting them from some areas which are traditional fishing grounds, and which posed no threat to conservation that forms the basis of Marine Parks.

Overall, the Committee was pleased with the tabled draft share management plan contents and looked forward to the implementation of the Plan. Concerns from industry representatives were apparent with relation to the Marine Parks, where the limited areas remaining open to commercial fishing are jeopardising industry viability.

The Committee acknowledged that the implementation of Share Management Plans is the Department's major priority at the moment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Stevens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

**Richard Stevens
Chairperson for EGMAC
Date: 28 August 2006**