



# Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee Outcomes, 45<sup>th</sup> meeting St George Rowing Club, Sydney

19 September 2014

## Attendees

Bruce Schumacher (Chair), Max Graham (Region 1) Ron Butler (Region 2), Ron Croker (Region 3), Ian Ward (Region 4), Richard Ping Kee (Region 7)

## 1. Chairs introduction

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

## 2. Apologies

Tom Williams (Region 5), Debbie Lennon (Region 6) Kevin McKinnon (Region 8), Peter Turnell (NSW DPI).

## 3. Confirmation of outcomes from previous RFFTEC meeting

The draft outcomes of the 44<sup>th</sup> RFFTEC meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting. Moved: Ron Croker Seconded: Ron Butler

## 4. Action items from previous meetings

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

## 5. NSW Recreational Fishing Trust Report

The status of the Freshwater Trust was presented. Licence revenue generated for the Recreational Fishing Trusts for the 2013/14 financial year totalled \$15.6 Million. DPI advised that the number of electronic licence sales continues to increase with a corresponding decrease in manual methods, such as licence agents. Three day recreational fishing licence sales were the most popular form of licence in 2013/14 year comprising around 42% of sales.

## 6. Trust funding projects and applications

NSW Fish Habitat Partnership, Working together for healthy fish habitat: DPI advised that the NSW Fish Habitat Partnership has sought a project variation to the proposed funding agreement, which involved access to funds prior to other funding partners' contributions being secured. This would greatly assist with securing funds from those other proposed partners. The Committee supported the project variation conditional on: 1) the Recreational Fishing Trust logo be incorporated into the NSW Fish Habitat Partnership advertising and 2) that securing additional funding from other funding partners be included into the project milestones in the funding agreement.

The committee reviewed new Freshwater and joint Freshwater/Saltwater Trust grant applications. Funding recommendations with respect to each project were forwarded to ACoRF for subsequent recommendations to the Minister for consideration. Meeting recommendations as considered by the Minister are provided in Tables 1 and 2. RFFTEC acknowledged that out of session application review provides challenges with assessment. It was recommended that out of session review be restricted to urgent items only and be facilitated by teleconference, where possible. Moved Ron Croker, Seconded

Richard Ping Kee, Carried.

## 7. Development of a new Recreational Fishing Trust Investment Plan

The current Recreational Fishing Trust Investment Plan expires on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The Minister has endorsed the development of a new investment plan. To assist the development of the new Investment Plan DPI has undertaken a number of review initiatives including:

1. Independent Financial Audit of the Trusts finances and processes
2. RFT Planning Workshop: Feedback to Inform Trust Funding beyond 2012/13 August 2012
3. NSW DPI Recreational Fishing License Fee Survey May 2013.

Outcomes of the survey indicated that on average all trust funded activities (recreational fishing education, aquatic habitat protection and rehabilitation, recreational fishing enhancement programs, research on fish and recreational fishing, fishing access and facilities and enforcement of fishing rules.) were listed as being of major benefit.

4. July 2014 risk audit by the Recreational Management Unit to review Trust projects and programs funded in the previous Investment Plan.

It is proposed that a three year investment plan be developed (for the 2015/16-2017/18 period) in preference to the previous five year plan, to allow for greater flexibility and to better account for emerging priorities.

## 8. Recreational fishing research priorities

The draft freshwater recreational research priorities list for 2014 and beyond was presented at the meeting. The list highlighted freshwater research needed to fill knowledge gaps across a range of areas relevant to recreational fishing, including major freshwater fish species, threats to fishery resources, sustainable and quality recreational fishing and fishery enhancement. The list can be used as a reference tool to guide future Trust research applications. Research priorities identified by committee members since the last meeting were included. Priorities from RFSTEC, ACoRF and MERCMAC will also be collated into a consolidated list for presentation to ACoRF.

*Action item:* DPI to investigate whether a fish survey will be conducted at the proposed new dam site on the Belubula River "The Needles", below Junction Reefs downstream of Carcoar Dam.

## 9. Integrated perspectives on fish stock enhancement conference

Management of the NSW freshwater fish stocking programs and assessment process since the implementation of the FMS was discussed. The FMS has been an effective tool in enhancing angling opportunities, aiding the recovery of threatened native species, and providing direct research outcomes. Comparisons of NSW fish stocking programs with overseas jurisdictions were also presented.

## 10. Freshwater fish species research

Acoustic tagging research has shown that large movements by Australian Bass and Murray Cod are triggered by increases in river flow, which is important for breeding activity. Australian Bass show distinct seasonal migrations, with some fish travelling 100's of km downstream to the estuary to breed before returning upstream several months later, following completion of spawning activity. Fish tagging research within the Border Rivers has shown relatively slow growth of Murray Cod in highland streams. An FRDC project will see the expansion of Murray Cod research across the Murray Darling Basin, to be rolled out at representative pilot sites in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

## 11. Murrumbidgee River creel survey

Preliminary results of the Murrumbidgee River creel survey (conducted between Berembed and Yanco Weirs in 2013) show that the Murray Cod fishery is productive compared to other similar fisheries and that anglers generally rate the fishery very highly. The results also indicate that regular and active anglers catch more fish per day in summer and boat based fishers generally have a higher mean catch in autumn, spring and summer, regardless of how often they fish.

## 12. 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.

### 13. 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. Preliminary results show that stocking is vital to impoundments where natural recruitment is low, but is less important in rivers where natural recruitment is high. Stocked Golden Perch have similar growth and condition factors to wild fish, which is important for optimal stocking effectiveness. Hatchery-reared Murray Cod may have a slight advantage over wild fish. The coded wire rainbow trout tagging program has been expanded with an additional tagging unit sourced. Fish tagged in 2012 should be present in the Thredbo River trout spawning run this year. Future research priority areas are to conduct an extensive limnological survey of Lakes Jindabyne and Eucumbene and to implement an angler survey, to quantify species composition in the creel, catch rates, angler satisfaction and expectations.

### 14. Next meeting

To be confirmed.

### 15. Meeting closed

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.30 pm.

### 16. Action items

Action items	Group responsible	Status
1. To investigate whether a fish population survey is to be undertaken at the proposed new dam site on the Belubula River known as "The Needles", located downstream of Carcoar Dam	DPI Research Unit	Completed

**Table 1: Freshwater Trust project applications supported by RFFTEC****Platform: Recreational Fishing Education**

Project title and summary	Organisation	2014/15
<p><b><u>Pre proposal</u> - Improving consultation and service delivery for recreational fishers in NSW</b></p> <p>RFA proposes to employ a dedicated paid Executive Officer to pursue and manage key issues for the organisation and engage and negotiate with key stakeholders and government on key recreational fishing issues for the benefit of recreational fishers.</p> <p>RFFTEC provided in principle support for the pre-proposal, subject to the processes outlined below. The committee acknowledged the need for an executive officer (managed by a major recreational fishing organisation/group recognised by government to represent recreational fishers and play a role in broader stakeholder consultation (government and non-government). However, it was important that the executive officer (and associated major recreational fishing organisation/group) be recognised by other stakeholders. It was therefore recognised that the appointment process should be facilitated by a competitive tender process involving rigorous tender specifications and be subject to performance monitoring. A tender panel should involve an independent stakeholder and DPI representatives.</p>	Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW (RFA)	\$119,000 SW \$51,000 FW
<p><b>SUPPORTED Moved:</b> Max Graham, <b>Seconded:</b> Ron Croker <b><u>Carried.</u></b></p>		

**Table 2: Freshwater Trust project applications *not supported* by RFFTEC****Platform: Research on recreational fishing**

Project title and summary	Organisation	2014/15
<b>Bass enhancement above the Lane Cove River Weir</b>	Macquarie University	\$17,715

This project will examine the effectiveness of the new fish ladder on the Lane Cove River weir and identify the local bass spawning grounds.

**NOT SUPPORTED. Moved** Max Graham, **Seconded** Ron Croker. **Carried.** NSW DPI is currently undertaking a review of the Basscatch scientific data collection program. Recreational Fishing Trust funds are currently being used to fund bass acoustic tagging programs within the Shoalhaven and Clarence River systems. DPI representative Cameron Westaway declared a potential conflict of interest and was absent from the meeting during voting.