

Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW)



Chair's Summary (Meeting 24)

The 24th meeting of RFNSW was held on 17 and 18 May 2022 at the Fullerton Hotel, Sydney. The Council welcomed the Hon. Dugald Saunders, Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW, and the Deputy Director General DPI Fisheries, Mr Sean Sloan, to the meeting. The key outcomes from the meeting are summarised below.

Session with the Hon. Dugald William Saunders, MP, Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW

It was another valuable session with the Minister who joined the meeting via videoconference. The session provided the Council with the opportunity to discuss a number of current and emerging recreational fishing priority issues. The Minister updated the Council on a number of matters, including recent stakeholder engagement in relation to the management of Marine Parks and the proposed opening of the next round of Recreational Fishing Trust funding grants.

Harvest Strategy update

DPI updated Council on the recent progress of Harvest Strategies in NSW. RFNSW was pleased to note the imminent completion of the Lobster Harvest Strategy. DPI commended the contribution of the Working Group members, which included representation from RFNSW. Council was also pleased to hear that the development of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy is progressing well with the Working Group meeting in April and June this year.

Fish for Life update

The Council received an update from DPI following the launch of the Fish for Life advertising campaign in December 2021, which was run over the Christmas and Easter peak fishing periods. DPI advised that it was now developing stage 2 of the campaign, which will involve implementing five modules aligning with the core values of Fish for Life. Members were supportive of the proposed direction of the stage 2 campaign, including the strong focus on engaging the recreational fishing sector and utilising external delivery partners to achieve the outcomes of the Fish for Life program.

Proposal for a yabby trap recycling program

Members discussed the recent report of platypus drownings in an illegal yabby trap in waters near Dorrigo. It was recognised that despite the use of yabby traps now being banned throughout NSW waters, many fishers still possessed traps. Council considered an opera house yabby trap recycling program to promote and support the current rules for targeting and catching yabbies using pyramid nets and lift nets, intended to help conserve platypus, native water rats and other aquatic native wildlife. Council decided to establish a working group consisting of RFNSW members, DPI and other key stakeholder groups, to identify a range of additional responsible yabby fishing initiatives. The working group will report back to Council at the next RFNSW meeting.

Game Fishing Tournaments and Shark Interactions

Following previous community concerns regarding the weigh-in and discarding of large sharks at a Game Fishing tournament in late 2021 at Jervis Bay, DPI advised Council that they had been working with the NSW Game Fishing Association (GFA) to identify options to improve the environmental performance of game fishing tournaments in relation to landed shark catches. This included potentially increasing the minimum weights for the various line classes, which would significantly reduce the number of sharks weighed in at tournaments. The GFA advised that this proposal would be presented at their Annual General Meeting in July and a report would be provided to RFNSW on the outcome.

Out of Session meeting

Following advice from DPI during RFNSW Meeting 24 that an expression of interest process for membership on the Harvest Strategy Working Group for Ocean Trap & Line key species, including Kingfish and Snapper, is proposed to be released over the next 12 weeks, RFNSW met out of session to

discuss options to improve the performance of the NSW Kingfish and Snapper fisheries. Council resolved to replace its former advice made at previous meetings related to potential changes to the bag and size limits for Kingfish and Snapper with its full support for prioritising the development of the Harvest Strategy for Ocean Trap & Line key species. RFNSW noted that the development of the harvest strategy was expected to take 12-18 months from the initial meeting of the Working Group and would involve a science-based approach for the development of management options designed to respond to the status of stocks and the needs of all stakeholders.

The next meeting of RFNSW will be in August 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Johann Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a prominent 'B'.

Professor Johann Bell (Chair)