

MEETING 4 DRAFT OUTCOMES – NARRANDERA FISHERIES CENTRE

3 MARCH 2017

1. Introduction by chair

The Chair welcomed members to the fourth meeting at the Narrandera Fisheries Centre.

2. Apologies

Paul Lennon, Matt Hansen

3. Register of Interests

The Chair requested that members declare any additions to the Register since the last meeting; there were none.

4. Adoption of the record of the previous meeting

The draft outcomes of Meeting 3 were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

5. Future meeting schedule

Next meeting: 2 June 2017, Sydney

Meeting schedule: Meeting 6 – September 2017, Meeting 7 – December 2017.

6. Progressing the top 10 priority issues

Council members have listed the key issues in their region, sector or field and collectively identified the initial top 10 priorities for action by RFNSW (Appendix 1). Members continue to review progress on each of the 10 issues in the 'live' structured RFNSW work plan, which includes specific actions and responsibilities. A number of issues were identified for further specific action and updates at this meeting.

With regard to the issue of stock assessments of key species (Kingfish, Snapper, Flathead, Tailor), DPI provided a short presentation on the current status of Kingfish and Snapper stocks in NSW, including the current management challenges in these multi-sector fisheries. Council expressed some concerns about stock levels required to maintain good strike rates for recreational fishers and discussed potential future management arrangements to address these concerns.

Action item: DPI to seek data from the Fisheries Research Branch to measure the effectiveness of various management strategies for Kingfish and Snapper to improve stocks and fishing quality, and present available data at the next meeting.

Action item: DPI to present stock status information and identify current barriers to stock improvement for dusky flathead and tailor at the next meeting.

Action item: DPI to seek approval to hold a recreational fishing stakeholder meeting to review progress of the Mulloway recovery program.

7. Presentation on carp control (Matt Barwick, FRDC)

Mr Matt Barwick, National Coordinator of the National Carp Control Plan, provided RFNSW with a presentation on the Plan, which is being developed by the Fisheries Research Development Corporation. Mr Barwick explained Carp can cause damage of up to \$500 million per year by lowering water quality of domestic and irrigation water supplies, damaging wetlands, impacting upon agriculture, commercial and recreational fisheries, regional tourism industries, and harming native fish populations and river health.

Mr Barwick explained the Plan is building on previous work done by CSIRO, NSW DPI and the Invasive Animals Co-Operative Research Centre over the years to assess the cost:benefit of a targeted biological control measure, the carp herpes virus, to control the pest. The next step is to evaluate whether the biological control will deliver the expected benefits. In particular, an assessment is being made about whether the virus will effectively deliver a significant reduction in carp impacts to achieve the goal of a 95% reduction in carp by 2045, at an acceptable cost. It is likely that other methods, such as the daughterless carp technology, would still need to contribute to the overall control program to maximize effectiveness.

Mr Barwick is currently working with a range of state and federal government departments, as well as non-government stakeholders, including researchers, industry and environmental organisations, recreational fishers, Indigenous and community groups, tourism operators and landholders, to develop the Plan. The Plan is expected to be finalised by the end of 2018.

At the request of RFNSW, Mr Barwick also provided his expert opinion on potential controls for redfin. Mr Barwick explained that redfin are a perciform, which is closely related to some native fish in NSW and Australia. Biological control is unlikely to be a viable option and the carp herpes virus had not been known to affect redfin. It is therefore highly likely that control measures for redfin in NSW would need to focus on conventional methods such as prevention of translocation between waterways, restoring fish habitat, native fish stocking, reconnecting waterways, irrigation pumping screens and improving water quality.

8. Fish habitat protection

a) Update on the recent cold water release from Burrendong Dam and future protocols

RFNSW previously expressed concerns about a cold water release from Burrendong Dam in late 2016 and had requested a re-visitation of the communication protocols between Water NSW and DPI Fisheries to inform future decision-making on releases from Water NSW impoundments, including maintaining thermal pollution curtains. Mr Craig Copeland, DPI Program Leader Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation, advised Council that two meetings had recently been held with Water NSW regarding the issue and resources had been allocated to commence development of a future Cold Water Pollution Mitigation Strategy. Mr Copeland highlighted that cold water mitigation is difficult to manage and various factors, such as algae, compound the difficulties associated with operation of the current prevention facilities. Cold water mitigation trials have occurred at Tallowa Dam and are occurring at other impoundments. DPI is continuing to work closely with Water NSW on the issue.

b) Fish associated impacts of Macquarie River Orange pipeline

Mr Copeland advised that baseline monitoring of the pipeline is ongoing, noting that high water levels in the Macquarie River have been experienced since the pipeline was built. Monitoring will continue, including when river levels eventually fall. The local DPI conservation manager will continue to work closely with Water NSW on the issue and results of pre-use monitoring will be provided to RFNSW when completed.

c) Burrendong Dam safety upgrade offsets

In response to Council's concerns regarding status of the Burrendong Dam safety upgrade environmental offsets, Mr Copeland advised that progress on the Macquarie River offset projects was now being made. In addition, the Gwydir and Lachlan catchment offset projects were now also being initiated. It is proposed to construct three fishways in each of these catchments. This has been agreed to by Water NSW and the matter is currently before IPART (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) to ensure Water NSW have the capital funds to carry out these works. Negotiations are also currently underway with the Commonwealth Government on development of the Murray Darling Basin Plan and the associated Northern Basin Toolkit, which includes fishways on all priority catchments, cold water prevention, habitat rehabilitation in rivers and stocking of threatened species.

Action item: DPI to send a summary of the proposed priorities in the draft Northern Basin Toolkit.

9. Strengthening the social licence for recreational fishing In NSW

Jo Starling led the Council in a workshop session to initiate development of a strategy to strengthen the social licence for recreational fishing In NSW. Ms Starling advised RFNSW about the important need for any industry to have a social licence to operate and elaborated on the current community perception of the social licence for recreational fishing. The session identified current and potential issues that can erode our social licence and highlighted the importance of considering the views of all water-user groups that may be exposed to recreational fishing and have an opinion about the sport. At the next meeting, Ms Starling will continue the process required to identify the main issue to be included in a strategy to strengthen the social licence for recreational fishing with a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to gain further insights on needs and priorities for the proposed strategy, including identifying some relevant case studies.

Action item: Jo Starling to lead the Council in a second workshop session during meeting 5 to undertake a social licence SWOT analysis.

10. Presentation and tour of Narrandera Fisheries Centre research and hatchery facilities

Martin Asmus, Institute Director, Narrandera Fisheries Centre, provided a presentation on freshwater research programs currently underway at the Institute. Council undertook a tour of the research facilities, the fish hatchery and the growout and broodstock ponds at the site. RFNSW members were shown the spawning and incubation process for rearing native fingerlings, and the broodstock currently being held on the site.

11. Research sub-group update on the process of improving scientific and technical research advice to the expenditure committees

At meeting 3, RFNSW supported establishment of a Research sub-group to develop a process for independent peer review of Trust research applications and broad strategic research priorities. The sub group met on 20 February via teleconference. The chair provided a report to Council on the sub group's progress. The chair advised RFNSW members about the advantages of having a peer-review process, including:

- a) Enable the Expenditure Committees, RFNSW and DPI to demonstrate that best practice has been used when accounting for how trust funds have been used.
- b) Create the opportunity to make an application for the Australian Competitive Grants Register (ACRG). For Category 1 schemes in the ACRG, universities typically receive an additional 20% of the project value, half of which flows to the scientists. Therefore, admission to the ACRG adds value for RFNSW to those grants awarded to Australian universities.
- c) Attract more scientists, and hopefully the best scientists, to help DPI build the knowledge base needed for improved management of the State's fisheries resources (because of the advantages to university scientists in applying for Category 1 schemes in the ACRG).

It was noted that the expenditure committees would retain their current role of assessing the flow of project benefits to recreational fishing for all projects, including research.

Action item: The chair to update RFSTEC and RFFTEC on progress of the research sub group via teleconference.

12. Recreational Fishing Trust issues

- a) Talmalmo access road: Survey of legal access project

There was further consideration and discussion to progress review of the above Recreational Fishing Trust project application. The project aims to formally identify the location of an important unidentified Crown road by having the road surveyed, signposted and a new gate installed allowing anglers access to the Murray River. This road leads anglers to an area of over 500 m of public river frontage.

13. NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment Draft Report

DPI advised that the Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA) has released the NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment Draft Report (draft statewide TARA report) and is seeking community feedback. MEMA has invited the community to consider the evidence used to determine the risk levels and provide any evidence that can better inform the draft statewide TARA.

MEMA has developed an interactive tool to help the community navigate, interrogate and provide feedback to inform the findings of the draft statewide TARA. A variety of reports and supporting material, including three videos, have also been developed to help the community to further understand the draft statewide TARA.

The community feedback will inform the final statewide TARA, which is a key input to the Marine Estate Management Strategy and the new marine park management plans. Submissions through the TARA interactive tool can be made until 31 March 2017. RFNSW recommended a sub group be set up to review the draft statewide TARA report and provide any comments, which can then be forwarded to the Minister for information.

Action item: DPI to facilitate a sub group meeting to review the draft statewide TARA report and provide any comments.

14. Development of NSW trout strategy

At meeting 3, Council member Steve Samuels presented a proposal for development of a NSW trout strategy to address declining trout fisheries due to pest species such as redfin and climate change. RFNSW supported development of a NSW trout strategy by a RFNSW sub group.

NSW DPI supports the development of a trout strategy and remains committed to maintaining a quality trout fishery, noting the challenges of the translocation of pests, e.g., redfin, and climate change. Council established a sub group comprising of Steve Samuels, Ray Tang, Karl Mathers, Vicki Lear, Cameron Westaway and Peter Turnell to oversee development of the strategy.

Action item: DPI to facilitate a trout strategy sub group meeting.

15. General business

a) Council review of Drying Lakes Policy

DPI advised Council that the NSW Inland Restricted Fishery was closed to the taking of native finfish in 2001. A previous 'Drying Lakes Policy' allowed limited commercial harvest of native finfish in circumstances where there was an imminent and high certainty of particular lakes completely drying, resulting in the fish perishing.

DPI is reviewing the policy to address issues with previous periods of implementation, and to account for changing circumstances and initial consultation has been conducted with inland commercial fishers. Key stakeholder groups are now being consulted on policy options prior to review finalisation. Council's preferred option was option 3, i.e., that fishing access to native finfish (Golden Perch and Bony Bream only) in drying lakes should not be available at this stage.

b) Establishment of a recreational fishing and diving museum in NSW

The Chair of RFSTEC previously wrote to the RFNSW Chair outlining a proposal from Melven Brown to establish a recreational fishing and diving museum in NSW. Mr Brown presented a range of spearfishing and diving memorabilia at a previous RFSTEC meeting and has been advocating for a museum to be set up to showcase the sport. Council noted the setting up of a viable museum is a very complex task and advised the best option may be to engage a specialist consultant to develop a strategy to progress the issue.

Action item: The chair to write to RFSTEC to provide the above advice.

c) Business cards and Council shirts

Council members raised the need for specific RFNSW business cards and shirts to enable formal identification at meetings that members may be involved in.

Action item: Members to provide their requirements for RFNSW business cards and shirts.

d) Letter of appreciation to Matt Barwick

Action item: Council requested a letter of appreciation be sent to Matt Barwick, National Coordinator of the National Carp Control Plan, acknowledging his presentation at this meeting and his work on progress of the Plan, and the Murray Darling Basin Plan more broadly.

e) General correspondence

Two letters from Mr Adam Martin, President, Tomakin Fishing Club, relating to various policy and Recreational Fishing Trust issues were received just prior to the meeting.

Action item: Stan Konstantaras offered to liaise with Mr Martin, noting the Tomakin Fishing Club is affiliated to the Recreational Fishing Alliance, on the various issues raised in the club's letters and report back to RFNSW on any outstanding issues.

f) Hookah permit application in lobster fishery

Council member, Matt Poulton advised that the Lobster Working Group was reviewing renewal of a hookah permit application on the far south coast in the lobster commercial fishery. RFNSW was not supportive of the permit application, noting the potential impact of this gear on harvest of nesting lobsters.

g) Inland access website

DPI provided a short presentation on development of the DPI Inland access website, which is intended to provide information on inland fishing access points and guide fishers on how to get there. RFNSW acknowledged the value of the data and its appeal to fishers.

Action item: Action item: DPI to complete data entry on 2,000 sites and arrange a soft public launch of the website by 30 June 2017 (to resolve any identified teething issues), followed by a media campaign promoting the website in October 2017.

h) Items for next meeting

Council members requested a number of items for inclusion on the next meeting agenda.

Action item: The following items to be included on the next RFNSW meeting agenda: update on native title land claims and the compulsory lifejackets trial in Randwick local government area.