

**Recreational Fishing NSW  
Advisory Council minutes**

**Meeting 26, 15 and 16 November 2022  
Hotel Nelson and Port Stephens  
Fisheries Institute**

Members Present	Johann Bell Paul Lennon Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Vic Levett Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 6 – North West Inland Region 7 – South West Inland Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Nominee of the Secretary - DPI representative
Apologies	Ian Puckeridge (15 Nov only) Steve Samuels Justin Duggan Dave Rae Matt Tripet	Spearfishing Region 8 Region 3 Region 1 Social benefits of recreational fishing

**1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping**

**NOTED:**

- The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of RFNSW.
- The Chair acknowledged the meeting would be the last face-to-face meeting of the current term of members and strongly encouraged all members to re-apply for a further three-year term when the EOI for new membership is advertised.

**2) Register of Interests**

**NOTED:**

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the Register of Interests provided in the agenda.
- Karl Mathers declared the tender by the Wedge Group/Pulse Environment for the Recreational Fishing Trust-funded project 'Review and update of the NSW Trout Recreational Fishing Strategy and development of a Murray Cod recreational Fishing Strategy' had been successful.
- Paul Lennon advised he may apply for any potential tenders for the Oyster Reef Project in Port Stephens.
- DPI updated the Register of Interests accordingly.

### **3) Agreement on the agenda, adoption of previous meeting record, proposed future meeting schedule**

#### **NOTED:**

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting.
- Next meeting is proposed to be held early 2023 following completion of the EIO for new RFNSW membership (date to be confirmed).

### **4) Review of action items from Meeting 25 (17 and 18 August 2022)**

#### **NOTED:**

- Council noted the action items from the previous meeting.

### **5) Update on EOI process for RFNSW membership**

#### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided a brief update on the upcoming Expression of Interest for RFNSW membership.
- DPI advised that all member positions will expire on 30 November 2022 and that an Expression of Interest for membership on the Council should be advertised in the near future.

### **6) NSW Harvest Strategy and Mulloway updates, including Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group and the Mulloway Compliance Operation**

#### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided an update on progress of the development and implementation of Harvest Strategies in NSW, including advice that the draft Spanner Crab 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 applications was underway.
- The Council welcomed Dr James Findlay, Chair of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group, to the meeting. Dr Findlay provided a brief background on the history of 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 determining potential decision rules and trigger points. Dr Findlay also highlighted another key priority area for the harvest strategy was the need to improve the quality and precision of the recreational and commercial fishing 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.
- An update will be provided at the next meeting on the proposed establishment of a NSW Line and Trap Fishery Harvest Strategy Working Group, which will include key species in the NSW inshore and offshore line and trap fisheries, commencing with Kingfish and Snapper.

#### **7) Presentation on catch reporting case study/improving catch estimates for recreationally caught fish, including Mulloway**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided a presentation on the current system used to report commercial catches for Eastern Rock Lobster and how this “real time” information contributes to accurate data collection which subsequently assists in determining total allowable commercial catch.
- Accurate data collection has also assisted significantly with being able to monitor the rebuilding of the stock of Lobster from its previous overfished state to its current robust level. Following identification of the need to improve the recreational catch of Mulloway by the Harvest Strategy Working Group, DPI advised electronic or real time catch reporting for recreational Mulloway is a potential measure to assist with effectively monitoring the changes in abundance of the depleted fish stock over time. Various other states in Australia have been implementing trials of limited online or real time catch reporting for recreational fishers.
- RFNSW was supportive of the concept of electronic or real time reporting for Mulloway (and Lobster) as part of a trial for recreational fishing in NSW.
- It was noted that any real time reporting system in NSW would need to be mandatory (rather than voluntary) in order for it to be effective.
- Council was supportive of DPI developing the proposal for electronic or real time reporting in more detail to take account of stock assessment and compliance implementation requirements. It was noted state-wide communication with the recreational sector regarding electronic reporting would be required prior to implementation of a trial.

#### **8) Recreational Fishing Trust matters - Expenditure advice from RFSTEC and RFFTEC**

##### **NOTED:**

- The Council reviewed advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding a number of new Saltwater and Freshwater grant applications made to the Recreational Fishing Trust. The Council also reviewed 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.

#### **9) Tweed Aboriginal Cultural Fishing Local Management Plan and Aboriginal Fisheries**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI briefed the Council on the current status of the trial Tweed Aboriginal Cultural Fishing Local Management Plan.
- It was noted that the trial was a new approach to the management of cultural fishing that will help inform the best way forward to preserve, protect and promote cultural fishing into the future.
- In addition to the presentation on the Tweed Management Plan, DPI advised the Council that information on the newly established Aboriginal Fisheries Business Development Program would be provided to members out of session following the meeting for members advice.

#### **10) Freshwater Environment updates on the proposed trial site to showcase a “bubble plume” system to mitigate Cold Water Pollution (CWP) from NSW impoundments, Fish Passage Strategy and Fish Screening**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided updates on a number of key freshwater environment priority projects which have significant flow-on benefits for native fish and the recreational fishery. These 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.

#### **11) Update on Australian Salmon**

##### **NOTED:**

- As a follow up to a number of discussions and presentations at previous meetings regarding the stock status of Australian Salmon, Council had requested a short update on the status of Australian Salmon in NSW, including any advice on the climatic and environmental factors that may be influencing the distribution of the species.
- DPI provided a short presentation on the current stock status of the species and a short Q&A session was held to explore factors influencing Salmon distribution.
- It was concluded that more research was needed on the drivers of Australian Salmon movement in NSW.

#### **12) Fisheries (Inland) Compliance update**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided a brief update on the status of recruitment of Fisheries Officer positions across the state.
- It was noted that the temporary inland mobile squads (TIMS) program where coastal Compliance Staff were assisting with compliance operations on the inland to respond to illegal fishing hotspots and support existing inland staff was continuing to work well.

#### **13) Presentation on the Women’s Recreational Fishing League**

##### **NOTED:**

- Jo Starling, President of the Women's Recreational Fishing League, introduced the newly established Fishing League and outlined its key goals, objectives and recent outcomes.
- Ms Starling noted that the Fishing League had been established to provide a pathway for women to take up fishing as a pastime sport or build and develop their fishing skills.
- The Council acknowledged the progress on implementation of the League by Ms Starling and commended her work in supporting women in fishing through its network.

#### **14) Lord Howe Island spearfishing access proposal**

##### **NOTED:**

- At meeting 24, DPI provided an update on the Lord Howe Marine Park Management Plan, where Council was advised a draft management plan for the mainland marine park network had been completed and the next phase would be implementing the new management plan by reviewing management rules (regulations) in each marine park, including Lord Howe Island. Spearfishing access will be considered as part of the rules review for Lord Howe Island Marine Park.
- In light of the above advice, Council member Ian Puckeridge presented suggested identified areas within the Lord Howe Island Marine Park suitable for spearfishing access for consideration as part of the future rules review.
- Mr Puckeridge highlighted that any potential areas for spearfishing access should focus on the land extremities of the main island, and/or offshore islands, to minimise interactions with other users.
- The Council acknowledged the proactive work undertaken by Mr Puckeridge and was supportive of the suggested areas being forwarded to DPI for inclusion in the marine park planning process.

**ACTION:** DPI to forward Mr Puckeridge's suggested identified areas within the Lord Howe Island Marine Park which may be suitable for spearfishing access to the DPI marine park planning team for consideration as part of the future rules review for the marine park.

#### **15) Environmental Assessment on Recreational Fishing update**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided a presentation on the Environmental Assessment on Recreational Fishing (EA).
- The presentation included an update on the environmental component of the assessment and the key threats identified through the process, as well as current work underway on the cultural fishing assessment component of the EA. DPI also provided an update on a range of responsible fishing initiatives being developed for rollout in 2023.

#### **16) Recreational Fishing Licence update**

##### **NOTED:**

- DPI advised Council about a proposal from the Victorian Fisheries Authority for a new licence category consisting of a dual NSW/Victoria recreational fishing licence for the combined cost of both licences.

- Council considered it was essential that cross-border discussions occur between agencies to assess the feasibility of the proposal and that the cost-benefits of the proposal should also be assessed prior to further consideration by Council.

## **17) Update on Bowfishing**

### **NOTED:**

- DPI advised Council that a community representative had recently written to the Minister regarding a proposal requesting a number of changes to bowfishing in NSW, including permitting bow fishing in coastal waters. The letter has been referred by the Minister to Council for consideration.
- New bowfishing rules were introduced in late 2021 which carefully manage how bowfishing can be undertaken in NSW. Currently the activity is limited to targeting carp in selected inland waters.
- Council noted the current rules have only been in place for a short period of time and recognised that more time was needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the new rules prior to any changes being considered.

## **18) General Business**

### **a) Mulloway stakeholder correspondence**

#### **NOTED:**

- It was noted that a community member had written to DPI (via the RFNSW enquiries email) and the Minister regarding advice on the management actions to support and rebuild Mulloway stocks in NSW. Council noted that it was proposed for the Minister to reply directly to the community member.

### **b) Spanish Mackerel in Queensland**

#### **NOTED:**

- DPI provided a brief update on implementation of new rules for Spanish Mackerel in Queensland.

### **c) Release of the Annual Recreational Fishing Trust report 2021/2022**

#### **NOTED:**

- DPI was pleased to advise Council about the release of the Recreational Fishing Trust Annual Report for 2021/22.
- It was noted that this was the second Annual Report to be released and showcases many of the Trust programs and achievements during the 2021/22 financial year.

## **19) Draft Policy for the Co-management of Fisheries in NSW**

### **NOTED:**

- DPI briefed the Council on the latest draft of the DPI Fisheries Co-Management policy document.

- It was noted that the Council had previously provided advice on an early version of the draft supporting the Policy.
- The Council reiterated its support for the draft Policy. DPI advised any further feedback on the current draft can also be provided out of session as needed.