



**Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council
Outcomes
Meeting 20, 12 May 2021
Branksome Hotel, Robey Street, Mascot**

Members Present	Johann Bell Dave Rae Paul Lennon Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Jo Starling Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Steven Samuels Ray Tang Ian Puckeridge Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 1 – Mid and Far North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 5 – South Coast Region 6 – North West Inland Region 7 – South West Inland Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Spear Fishing Nominee of the Secretary - DPI representative
Apologies	Justin Duggan Vic Levett Matt Tripet	Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Charter Fishing Social benefits of recreational fishing

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the 20th meeting of RFNSW at the Branksome Hotel, Mascot.
- The Chair noted that Mr Sean Sloan, Deputy Director-General, DPI Fisheries would be providing an update on general fisheries management news during the meeting.

2) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the Register of Interests provided in the agenda.
- Matt Hansen advised he has recently resigned as President of Inland Waterways OzFish and the OzFish Board and has now been appointed Public Relations Officer for Inland Waterways OzFish.

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 19th meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting.
- Next meeting is proposed for 17 August 2021.

4) Review of action items from Meeting 19 (February 2021)

NOTED:

- Council noted the action items from the previous meeting.

5) DPI Fisheries Deputy Director General update

NOTED:

- RFNSW received an informative update from Mr Sean Sloan on general fisheries management news, including updates on the implementation of a Harvest Strategy framework in NSW, the marine park management planning process currently underway across the five mainland marine parks in NSW and the implementation of the NSW Fish Passage Strategy.

ACTION: DPI to facilitate updates on Marine Park planning processes and the NSW Fish Passage Strategy at the next meeting.

ACTION: The Chair and the DDG, DPI Fisheries to meet to discuss boosting communication and promotion of recreational fishing initiatives and Trust projects. DPI to also provide a presentation at the next meeting to discuss enhancing current media processes.

6) NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy update

NOTED:

- DPI provided an update on progress of development of the NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy following the third meeting of the sub group on 11 May 2021.
- The sub group focused on developing further key action items for the Strategy.
- The Chair thanked the sub group for its ongoing work to develop the Strategy.

7) Harvest Strategies

NOTED:

- DPI provided an update on the implementation of Harvest Strategies in NSW, including the progress being made by the Trawl Whiting and Lobster Harvest Strategy Working Groups.
- DPI sought comments from Council following receipt of a letter from the Chair of MFAC to the RFNSW Chair seeking any final comments on the draft NSW Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines following public consultation.
- RFNSW raised no issues with the final draft of the NSW Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines.
- Members welcomed the news of an expression of interest for the establishment of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group being advertised seeking membership for the Group.

- It was also noted that Working Groups for the Spanner Crab and Abalone fisheries were currently being established.

8) **DPI presentation on FishGen Research**

NOTED:

- Members welcomed a presentation by Meaghan Duncan, Freshwater Fish Ecologist DPI on an exciting project focused on tracing stocked fish in the wild to assist with maintaining the genetic integrity of wild fish stocks and providing for improved broodfish management.
- Members expressed support for this project and extended an invitation to DPI to provide details of project resources required to accelerate this project and gain a better understanding of the impacts on stocked fish on natural recruitment.

ACTION: Council recommended that DPI provide further feedback on additional initiatives that may be needed to accelerate FishGen research and better understand natural recruitment processes.

9) **Fish Screening update**

NOTED:

- Craig Boys, Senior Fisheries Scientist DPI, updated Council on the roll-out of fish screening technology in NSW.
- RFNSW members were pleased to hear about the excellent progress being made with the introduction and uptake of fish screening technology by some key irrigators in the Murray Darling Basin.
- Council once again strongly highlighted the importance of fish screening to achieve better native fish outcomes but also complementary technology benefits for irrigators. RFNSW members acknowledged the efforts of DPI on current project outcomes and encouraged the Department to continue working closely with the irrigation sector to form partnerships and to extend the benefits of fitting screens to pumps across NSW.

ACTION: DPI to provide a presentation on Fish Screening developments in NSW to the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee at their next meeting.

10) **Bait quality and associated biosecurity implications**

NOTED:

- At meeting 19, Council requested that DPI facilitate a presentation by the Department's Biosecurity unit to discuss the issue of bait quality and how potential biosecurity implications could be addressed.
- At the meeting, Jeff Go, Senior Veterinary Officer, DPI provided a brief background on the treatment of prawns from Southeast Queensland to minimise the risk of white spot disease and the ongoing media campaign recommending that the public should not use prawns intended for human consumption as bait in NSW waters. It was noted that media actions continue to be increased during holiday periods.

11) **Recreational Fishing Trust Applications**

NOTED:

- Council reviewed advice from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure

Committee regarding two applications for funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust.

- Council endorsed the advice provided by the Expenditure Committees and will pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration.

12) General Business

a) Eurobodalla water storage facility

NOTED:

- Jo Starling sought an update from DPI regarding potential recreational fishing access to the new proposed off-river water storage facility being built on the Tuross River catchment in the Eurobodalla Shire.
- At the meeting, DPI provided an update advising that the Department had made a submission on the Eurobodalla Southern Storage proposal in 2018, which focused on various issues, including ensuring that environmental flows established under the Tuross River Sharing Plan are maintained and that the new dam was a potential location for impoundment fish stocking and associated recreational fishing.
- Council recognised that this new dam facility represents a potential, future quality recreational fishing location, which could also contribute to bushfire/flood/Covid recovery in the region.

ACTION: DPI and member Jo Starling to contact and arrange a meeting with Eurobodalla Shire Council to discuss recreational fishing access in the proposed Tuross off-river water storage facility.

b) Concerns over bait fishing at Thompsons Creek Dam

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang raised concern about bait fishing in the dam, which is currently not permitted.
- It was recommended that new signage be installed at the dam advising fishers that bait fishing is not permitted.

ACTION: DPI to consult with Energy Australia (as landowners) on the RFNSW recommendation to install new signage at Thompson Creek Dam advising fishers that bait fishing is not permitted there.

13) Dusky flathead issues

NOTED:

- The Minister has requested RFNSW to review current stock status information and quality of recreational fishing for Dusky Flathead following a representation from a local Lake Macquarie representative.
- RFNSW noted there had been previous social-media debate regarding management arrangements for Dusky Flathead, including a slot size limit. Council reiterated its position on Dusky flathead which includes a reduction in the bag limit from 10 to 5 and the introduction of a slot limit of 36 - 70cm.
- RFNSW also considered making provision for spearfishers to take one fish over 70cm from ocean waters, given that it can be difficult to estimate the size of flathead

underwater. RFNSW considered this could lead to increased targeting of large flathead. RFNSW also recommended CommFish NSW be informed of this issue.

ACTION: DPI to refer the RFNSW advice to the Minister that the bag limit for dusky flathead be reduced from 10 to 5, and that a slot size limit is applied which only permits recreational fishers to retain dusky flathead measuring 36 to 70 cm in total length.

14) Hand-hauled prawn net issues

NOTED:

- The Minister has requested RFNSW to review correspondence relating to the use of, and impacts from, hand-hauled prawn nets in NSW South Coast Lakes.
- RFNSW noted most prawn fishers use scoop nets and that only a small proportion of fishers use hand hauled nets in those estuaries suitable for this fishing method.

ACTION: DPI to consult with fisheries compliance to get feedback on any current issues associated with recreational prawn hauling and to report back to Council at its next meeting. DPI to also provide a fisheries compliance presentation at the next meeting.

15) Bow fishing regulations

NOTED:

- At the meeting, DPI sought feedback from RFNSW on a proposal to legalise bowfishing for Carp species in specified inland waters in NSW where it is currently prohibited. Council raised no issues with the proposal on the understanding that applications to expand bowfishing to other species in inland and coastal waters would not be considered.

16) Business Efficiency Program (BEP) working group

NOTED:

- At the meeting, Council was advised that DPI is undertaking consultation on existing commercial fisheries regulations that, following the recent reforms to the NSW commercial fishing industry, are no longer considered necessary and continue to impede business efficiency.
- At Meeting 14 in May 2020, nominations were sought for membership on the Business Efficiency Program (BEP) working group. Vic Levett, Paul Lennon and Ian Puckeridge agreed to represent RFNSW on the working group, along with CommFish representatives, to assist with the review of existing commercial fisheries regulations.
- The first meeting of the BEP working group will convene in the near future and DPI was seeking to reconfirm RFNSW membership on the working group. Steve Samuels and Grahame Williams were nominated as reserve members of the working group.

17) Update on Proposed Fisheries and Aquaculture regulation amendments

NOTED:

- DPI advised that the community consultation period on a range of proposals to amend fisheries and aquaculture regulations had now closed.
- Council supported the proposed regulatory amendments relating to recreational and charter fishing.

18) Social media training

- Noting that three members of the Council were unable to attend the meeting, the Chair decided that this item should be deferred until the next meeting.

19) Correspondence

a) Letter from Peter Fagan to the Chair RFNSW re anti-social behaviour at Little Bay Beach, the Congwong Beaches and Bare Island

NOTED:

- The Council noted the current education and advisory activities being undertaken by DPI to address interaction issues associated with spear fishers and other water user groups.
- The Council was supportive of continuing this non-regulatory approach.

b) Email from Stan Konstantaras, RFA NSW re Small Pelagic Fishery and Baitfish harvest and landings in NSW

NOTED:

- Mr Konstantaras has written to the Chair of RFNSW regarding concern with the Small Pelagic Fishery and bait fish harvesting on the NSW south coast.
- DPI provided some brief background information on the Commonwealth Fishery and the local fishing operations on the South Coast.

ACTION: Member Grahame Williams OAM offered to refer the issue to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) for consideration and comment in his capacity as the Game Fishing Association of Australia NSW State Executive Officer.

ACTION: RFNSW requested DPI write to the AFMA CEO to pass on the concerns of the recreational fishing sector and raise the issue of localised depletion, including an option to adjust the “move on’ rule to reduce the potential for localised depletion of stocks.

c) Letter from Minister re Meeting 17 outcomes

NOTED:

- RFNSW noted the response from the Minister on this issue.

d) Letter from Minister re Meeting 18 outcomes

NOTED:

- RFNSW noted the response from the Minister on this issue.

20) Update from Research sub group

NOTED:

- The sub group met via Zoom videoconference on 5 May 2021 to progress discussion of a research evaluation process for Trust Fund applications.

ACTION: The Research sub group to reconvene and finalise comments on the research evaluation process for Trust Fund applications.

21) Lord Howe Island Marine Park implementation (including spearfishing)

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief summary of the Lord Howe Island Marine Park implementation (including spearfishing).
- Members noted some of the justifications used during the establishment of the park may not be valid.
- Council recommended writing to the Minister seeking consideration of spearfishing from boats in the park. It was suggested that well-regulated spearfishing would not impact land-based tourism activities and would potentially address some of the issues raised during the initial Marine Park establishment process in relation to spearfishing. Permitting spearfishing would also increase tourism opportunities for the island.

ACTION: The Chair to write to the Minister to seek consideration of permitting limited spearfishing in the waters of Lord Howe Island Marine Park.

22) Improved transparency around public submissions during DPI consultation processes

NOTED:

- DPI briefly updated Council on a concept proposal around improving transparency of the public submission processes related to fisheries, which could involve submissions being made publicly available during community consultation periods, e.g. published on the relevant DPI consultation webpage. RFNSW raised no initial concerns or issues with this concept proposal.

23) Lobster issues

NOTED:

- RFNSW supported its previous position on Eastern Rock Lobster, that is, an increase in the bag limit from 2 to 3, and agreed that this position should be submitted to the Minister for consideration. The rationale for this recommendation is that there have now been increases in the total allowable catch for Eastern Rock Lobster, indicating ongoing recovery in the stock.

ACTION: DPI to refer the RFNSW advice to the Minister that the bag limit for Eastern Rock lobster should be increased from 2 to 3.

24) Out-of-Session meeting 9 June 2021

NOTED:

- Council also held an out-of-session meeting on 9 June 2021 to consider various issues, including a pathway for progressing its position on Snapper and Kingfish. Council concluded that a further update on the stock status of both species by DPI would be needed at its next meeting to finalise recommendations to the Minister. Council also discussed the proposed use of Bromadiolone to control mice and the flow-on impacts on native fish (and wildlife in general). RFNSW requested that the Chair write to the Minister to express its deep concerns about the proposed use of Bromadiolone.

ACTION: DPI to facilitate a presentation by the Fisheries Research unit on the stock status of Snapper and Kingfish at the next RFNSW meeting.

ACTION: The Chair to write to the Minister to express its concerns about the proposed use of Bromadiolone to control mice in NSW.