

Recreational fishing in NSW national parks: Strategies and actions

A collaborative approach by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW Department of Primary Industries



Department of
Primary Industries

FOREWORD

New South Wales has a magnificent reserve system of over 850 parks covering more than seven million hectares. Established for the conservation of natural and cultural values, these parks also provide for public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of these values.

The NSW Government recognises that recreational fishing is a legitimate activity in national parks with over 400 national parks located across the State providing visitors with the opportunity to enjoy fishing in a natural setting.

Committed to providing the community with diverse opportunities to experience and enjoy these areas, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is working collaboratively with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to create sustainable opportunities for the many thousands of recreational fishers who visit our national parks every year. This strategy will inform the delivery of sustainable recreational fishing opportunities through partnership between NPWS and DPI.



Photo: MK Images

OVERVIEW

Our national parks and reserves provide access to a wide range of fishing locations for residents and visitors to New South Wales. NPWS supports the work of DPI in developing programs providing for quality recreational fishing opportunities.

Priority programs include:

- improving access
- managing fish resources
- ensuring the protection and rehabilitation of key fish habitats to sustain healthy aquatic ecosystems for future generations.

Many programs are delivered through funding generated by the sale of recreational fishing licenses, as well as from the NSW Government.

The strategy has direct linkages with the OEHS Corporate Plan, the NSW DPI Strategic Plan 2017–2019 and the *National Recreational Fishing in Australia – 2011 and Beyond: A National Industry Development Strategy*.

NPWS and DPI have jointly prepared this strategy to inform the approach to enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in NSW parks whilst supporting the protection and enhancement of our natural and cultural assets.

RECREATIONAL FISHING IS PERMITTED IN NATIONAL PARKS

Recreational fishing in fresh and saltwater is permitted in national parks and reserves, consistent with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act aims to protect natural, cultural and heritage assets in reserves managed by NPWS – national parks, historic sites, state conservation areas, karst conservation reserves, nature reserves, and Aboriginal areas. The NPW Act allows for the use of these areas for recreation, education, research and general enjoyment purposes, including recreational fishing.

The *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (NSW) acknowledges the importance of recreational fishing to the community. The Act aims to conserve, develop and share the fishery resources of the State while promoting quality recreational fishing opportunities. The Act applies to recreational fishing activities in all waters within NSW. This strategy refers to recreational fishing as defined in the Act, meaning a recreational fisher who takes fish by any method, otherwise than for sale.

VISITOR FACILITIES AND INFORMATION

NPWS provides a range of facilities to support recreational fishing in parks such as boat ramps, jetties, pontoons, wharves, fish cleaning tables, life buoy stands, and information signage. Fishers also enjoy picnic and camping areas and accommodation. NPWS is committed to working with DPI to ensure uniform, consistent and timely information is provided to fishers about access to fishing sites and facilities in parks. Communication is largely web-based and fishing information for parks, including coastal fishing from beaches and rock platforms, and freshwater fishing on rivers and inland waterways, can be found on:

- the *Fishing in NSW* webpage which is a dedicated fishing page with links to the *Fishing safety* page plus locations where fishing is a highlighted activity. Go to www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/fishing-nsw
- itinerary webpages include suggested fishing trips around regional NSW. Itineraries offer engaging multi-day itineraries with ideas and advice around where to fish, local fish species, what to expect and more.
- the *Fishing safety* webpage also has important information about water and fishing safety, links to other relevant website, and specific information about the rules and requirements for rock fishing.

The DPI website – www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational – provides information on current fishing rules, including bag and size limits, permitted methods, access details, safe fishing tips and how to fish responsibly. DPI also offers a free FishSmart app which provides 24/7 access to essential information on all aspects of recreational fishing in NSW.



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Pilot eco hut project

A trial of remote fishing opportunities via a hut program in national parks has been completed in a joint project between DPI and NPWS. The initiative involves the usage of remote huts to support recreational fishing opportunities in spectacular natural settings.

DPI and NPWS conducted the first trial of a remote heritage-style hut located in the Kosciuszko National Park which is close to a number of quality trout fisheries. The location of the hut provided visitors with the opportunity to catch rainbow trout and brown trout from the Upper Murrumbidgee River and Tantangra Dam. An online survey was conducted during the pilot program and received 665 responses. The trial was very successful with the offer now extended to include (?) locations, including discount bookings for recreational fishers.

NPWS AND DPI WORKING TOGETHER

NPWS and DPI share a common purpose in conserving and improving the health of catchments, waterways and the environment for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of NSW and its visitors including recreational fishers.

DPI develops and implements policies and projects that aim to ensure sustainable use of and access to natural resources. DPI has jurisdiction over fish resources and marine vegetation in State waters. This includes permanent and intermittent freshwater areas and 'water land' below the highest astronomical tide in tidal areas, extending to three nautical miles offshore (or beyond where other legislative powers of the State apply). DPI is also involved directly in a range of whole-of-government natural resource management programs which influence the health of fish habitat by enhancing catchment and river health, coastal management and water management.



Photo: Ben Caddaye

NPWS parks comprise almost 9% of lands in NSW. Consequently, NPWS park management contributes significantly to catchment and waterway health and access to fishing opportunities in natural settings. NPWS is committed to working with DPI and other resource managers to support works and programs that improve water quality, water regimes, instream habitat and recreational fishing opportunities. DPI employs full-time Access Officers for fresh and saltwater fisheries. DPI's Access Officers, in conjunction with relevant members of the Recreational Fishing NSW Ministerial Advisory Council, will be able to provide NPWS with feedback and advice about all access issues and input regarding fishing-related enhancements and infrastructure.

Both NPWS and DPI have led and participated in programs to improve catchment, waterway, wetland and coastal zone values which contribute to the sustainability of recreational fishing and increased opportunities. The development of this strategy and working more closely together will result in greater efficiencies and achievements.



Yarrahappini project

Other ways that OEH and DPI are working together to enhance recreational fishing outcomes include the restoration of key fish habitats within the national park estate. The Yarrahappini project involved restoring tidal inundation to this nationally recognised wetland via the removal of floodgates and a levee.

As a result, natural tidal flows have improved fishing at the site and resulted in a healthier wetland environment within the Yarrahappini Wetlands National Park – and downstream within the Macleay River estuary. The site was previously well known for very poor water quality including low dissolved oxygen or pH levels that resulted in fish kill events, particularly after rainfalls. These events have been substantially reduced.



Photo: Ken Smith

ACTIVITIES IN PARKS ARE INFORMED PLANS OF MANAGEMENT

Every park is important. And every park needs a plan. In NSW, national park plans of management are legal documents, created under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Every plan considers the park's natural, cultural and visitor values and how to best manage them for current and future generations..

Plans of management are generally long-lived and set high level strategies and management priorities, anticipating future possibilities for the park, and seek to allow managers to adapt over time.

Depending on the park's values, plans may have more or less detail. Other plans, strategies and policies may support its implementation. When developing a plan of management, NPWS liaises with DPI to ensure consideration is given to the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* and that interested members of the public have input on enhancing and maintaining fisher access to parks. After the plan is adopted, all operations and activities in the park must be in line with the plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A number of guiding principles have been applied in developing the strategic objectives and actions detailed in the following Action Plan. The guiding principles are:

- protecting the values of national parks for future generations
- encouraging participation in and appreciation of the natural environment
- recognising recreational fishing as a popular activity in national parks
- deepening the visitor experience in national parks by improving public awareness and enhancement of recreational fishing access opportunities
- ensuring a positive contribution to the broader social and economic fabric of regional NSW
- supporting State and National management strategies for recreational fishing.

ACTION PLAN

KEY:



Ongoing actions



Short term actions
(Year 1 of implementation)



Medium term actions
(Year 2 of implementation)

Strategic Objective 1: Ensure the delivery of sustainable and safe recreational fishing opportunities in NSW National Parks whilst protecting the ecological, cultural and heritage values of national parks.

Actions		Lead/assisted by
1.1	Review this strategic plan every three years in consultation with DPI.	NPWS/DPI

Strategic Objective 2: Increase the collaboration between NPWS and DPI Fisheries to achieve a consistent approach to enhancing the recreational fishing experience and access in NSW national parks.

Actions		Lead/assisted by
2.1	DPI and NPWS to continue identifying, communicating and resolving issues informed by stakeholder input on ways to improve sustainable recreational fishing opportunities and the uniform and consistent delivery of recreational fishing access and experiences.	NPWS/DPI
2.2	DPI and NPWS to ensure stakeholder input on key issues and potential park management responses during the development of draft plans of management for national parks adjacent to or including waterways to provide for uniform and consistent recreational fishing opportunities.	

Strategic Objective 3: Develop a greater appreciation of national parks within the recreational fishing community via the effective promotion of the diverse experiences available.

Actions		Lead/assisted by
3.1	Optimise existing communication channels available to DPI and NPWS including respective websites.	NPWS/DPI
3.2	Engage with DPI to conduct an annual review of fishing related content on the NPWS website	NPWS/DPI

Strategic Objective 4: Facilitate new projects to enhance fishing amenity for visitors in national parks through continued collaboration between NPWS and DPI

Actions		Lead/assisted by
4.1	NPWS and DPI work together to develop and implement visitor experience initiatives, subject to prioritisation, funding, available resources and relevant approvals and planning processes.	NPWS/DPI

Strategic Objective 5: Encourage and support safe fishing practices.

Actions		Lead/assisted by
5.1	Support public education and communication campaigns to promote safe fishing practices (including rock fishing) and supporting legislation.	NPWS/DPI
5.2	NPWS and DPI will work with stakeholders to support implementation of legislation related to rock fishing safety.	NPWS/DPI, Recreational Fishing NSW, relevant recreational fishing organisations, NSW Police, Justice Department, Surf Lifesaving NSW