



**Advisory Council on
Recreational Fishing**

DRAFT MINUTES

**24th MEETING (04/2002)
9:30am, 17 October 2002**

**Conference Room, Cronulla Fisheries Centre
202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla**

Attendance

Chair

Bruce Schumacher

Members

Elaine Garvey

Peter Goadby

Mark Umbers

Lionel Jones

Neil Ryan

Lisa Terry

Anthony Moore

Scott Mitchell

Terry Maloney

Mel Brown

Ann Lee

Director, NSW Fisheries, or representative

Observers

John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries

Nick James, Manager Recreational Fisheries

Bryan Van Der Walt, Manager Recreational Fisheries

Susan Wildgoose, Fisheries Management Officer

Business

Welcome by Chair

Apologies

Graham Moore

Absent

Minutes of previous meeting

NSW Fisheries requested that funding of \$170,952 for 2004/05 for the recreational harvest of baitfish program in NSW supported by the council at meeting 23 be amended to \$92,261 to correct a typing error.

Recommendation:

The minutes of the 23rd ACoRF meeting, including the amendment recorded above, are a true and accurate record of discussions at the meeting.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Ann Lee

CARRIED

Business arising from the minutes

Nil.

Agenda Items

1. NSW Fisheries report (SD or delegate)
2. Trust expenditure recommendations from the 6th RFSTEC meeting (BVDW)
3. Proposal from Kiama Council to implement a fishing closure in Spring Creek Lagoon (DW/KZ-L)
4. Commercial fishing issues (DW)
 - Proposed extension to abalone closure due to *Perkinsus* disease
 - Outcomes from the juvenile prawn summit
 - Recreational catches of sea garfish in the Clarence River
 - Issues raised by the Ocean Trap & Line Management Advisory Committee/
commercial fishing representative on the Marine and Estuarine Recreational
Charter Management Advisory Committee
 - Use of spider wire (braided line) around traps
 - Use of electric winches by recreational fishers
5. Proposal to extend the spearfishing closure at Evans Head (JD)
6. Research priorities (SK)

Other Business

- *Fisheries Management Strategy/Environmental Impact Statement update (PT)*
- *Eastern cod update (A Moore)*
- *Proposed amendment to the Barramundi stocking policy (NJ)*
- *Feedback from the Recreational Fishing Rights workshop, for information (JD)*
- *Salt Ash Air Weapons Range, for information (NJ)*
- *Public liability update, for information (NJ)*
- *Grey nurse shark recovery plan update (JD)*
- *North harbour - little penguins (NJ)*
- *Angel rings – copies of previous ANSA media release (NJ)*
- *Charter fishing boat update (NJ)*

*Correspondence received
Around the table*

Next meeting – Thursday 20 February 2003.

Agenda Item 1

NSW Fisheries

Issue

NSW Fisheries report.

Outcomes

NSW Fisheries updates and comments considered on agenda item basis.

Issue

Recommendations from the 6th Recreational Fishing (Saltwater) Trust Expenditure Committee meeting.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

At the 5th RFSTEC meeting on 29 May 2002, the Committee reviewed applications for programs to be funded from the saltwater trust. A total of 49 saltwater applications were received after an extensive advertising campaign. The Committee recommended deferring a number of applications to a future meeting, including 4 artificial reefs programs, to enable a more coordinated approach to common activities proposed. A draft policy regarding the creation and deployment of artificial reefs is being developed by NSW Fisheries and once finalised will be distributed to the artificial reefs applicants. Deferred programs reviewed at the 5th meeting are listed in Table 1.

Mr Matt Taylor of Keep Australia Beautiful presented the proposal for sponsorship of the Clean Beach Challenge. The Committee was advised that the deadline for confirming sponsorship of an award category is February 2003. The Committee recommended deferring this application to the next meeting.

The Committee acknowledged the need for research on luderick, as it is an important recreational fishing species. The proposal for a small project to investigate patterns of abundance, size structure and movement of luderick was discussed, however the Committee asked for a comprehensive research program to investigate the life history of luderick and also requested that the program investigate migration and exploitation of the species using recreational tagging. NSW Fisheries is developing a comprehensive research proposal on luderick, which will be considered by the Expenditure Committee out of session. The Committee's recommendation will then be forwarded to the council for out of session consideration.

Dr Charles Gray of NSW Fisheries provided information on the proposal to investigate the life history and biology of black bream. In particular, the Committee was advised that research on this species completed in Victoria and Western Australia had indicated that there was variation in the life history of this species between regions and that recruitment was sporadic and heavily dependent on environmental conditions. The effects of hybridisation with yellowfin bream were also unknown. For these reasons, separate studies on stock structure were required in each region/state. Black bream have also been identified as a potential stocking species for the future, particularly because this species remains in the estuary. Contributionary funding from the trust fund is requested with NSW Fisheries providing part of the staff requirements and all sampling equipment such as boats, nets etc. The program will also involve tagging of black bream by recreational anglers to investigate migration and growth of black bream.

The Committee noted that a program assessing the effectiveness of recreational fishing havens had been previously supported by the Committee on 17 January 2002.

The Committee discussed the proposal for a fish cleaning table at Tuncurry to be funded from the Saltwater Trust. NSW Fisheries advised that at the 5th meeting, the Committee reviewed other funding applications for capital works programs, including fishing cleaning tables, submitted by Eurobodalla Shire Council. At that time the Committee had not previously supported funding for capital works programs. NSW Fisheries reported on a recent round of meetings with local Councils where there was a willingness to work cooperatively on small-scale programs to benefit recreational fishers. The Committee agreed that recreational anglers would benefit greatly from programs, such as erecting fish cleaning tables. Providing that matching funding from councils/organisations was available, the Committee recommended that such programs should now be supported from the Trust. The Committee agreed to re-consider 5 applications for capital works programs received from the Eurobodalla Shire Council, which had been reviewed at the previous meeting.

Table 1: Proposals for funding from the Saltwater Trust, including recommendations from the Expenditure Committee.

Title	Proponent	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	RFSTEC recommendation
*Impact of restocked fingerlings in NSW estuaries	University of NSW	\$75,020	\$54,645	\$40,460	Supported
**State-wide fish habitat grant program	NSW Fisheries	\$200,000	-	-	Supported
Patterns of abundance, size structure and small-scale movement of luderick.	NSW Fisheries	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	Supported
Sponsorship of the Clean Beach Challenge.	Keep Australia Beautiful NSW	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	Deferred to next meeting
Development of a Coffs Harbour fishing information web site.	Robert Thorsby	\$4,997			Not supported
Impact of leatherjackets and luderick on seagrass beds in NSW.	University of Technology	\$14,000	\$14,000		Not supported
Life history and biology of Black Bream (<i>Acanthopagrus butcheri</i>).	NSW Fisheries	\$124,067	\$124,456	\$103,849	Supported funding of \$100,000 in 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05
Age validation and growth of key recreational fish species.	NSW Fisheries	\$21,626	\$22,313		Supported
Jervis Bay Recreational Fishing Access.	NPWS	\$10,000			Not supported
Fish cleaning table – Tuncurry	Great Lakes Council	\$4,850 (per unit)			Supported matching funding of \$2,425
Catch and release facilities	Reefscience Australia	\$5,000			Not supported

Table 1 continued.

Title	Proponent	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	RFSTEC recommendation
Monitoring the benefits of the Lake Macquarie recreational fishing haven	University of Newcastle	\$65,116	\$94,627	\$68,287	Not supported
Upgrade to the Mystery Bay boat ramp.	Mystery Bay Fishing Club/ Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$50,000			Not supported
Upgrade to facilities at Moruya River Park Jetty.	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$25,000			Not supported
Erection of fish cleaning tables for Mill Bay, Narooma and Korner's Park, North Batemans Bay.	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$10,000			Supported matching funding of \$5,000
Protection of Durras Lake from sedimentation through erosion of banks caused by uncontrolled access.	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$10,000			Not supported
Provision of better directions to the Hanging Rock Boat Ramp.	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$4,000			Not supported

Outcomes

*NSW Fisheries notes that any proposal to undertake an assessment of marine fish stocking needs to be done within an agreed policy framework. At this time there is no marine fish stocking policy framework. NSW Fisheries will prepare an agenda item for discussion at the next meeting of ACoRF. It is requested that funding discussion on the recommendation from RFSTEC be deferred until ACoRF advice is provided on more broad issues relating to marine fish stocking policy. This debate should include discussion of marine stocking successes and failures, suitable areas and species, priority areas and species, environmental assessment issues, and the long term cost of proceeding with such a policy.

The council supports the principle of marine stocking, however, it was recommended that consideration of the 3 year project to study the impact of restocked fingerlings in NSW estuaries be deferred until a marine stocking policy is developed or further advice received and out of session discussions held.

Motion: That the council establish a working group to formulate a long term policy position on marine stocking.

Moved Peter Goadby, Seconded Scott Mitchell. **Carried**

The proposed composition of the working group is:

Bruce Schumacher – chairperson

Anthony Moore

Mel Brown

Peter Goadby

Mark Umbers

John Diplock – NSW Fisheries representative

Action item: NSW Fisheries to set meeting date.

NSW Fisheries notes that the state-wide fish habitat grant program has been supported by RFSTEC in advance of **any outcomes from the approved Clarence River pilot fish habitat grants program. NSW Fisheries suggests that ACoRF support for the state-wide program be deferred pending a review of the success of the pilot program, noting that an expression of interest for the pilot program is currently being prepared. It would, however, be appropriate for ACoRF to express in principle support for specific, case by case, fish habitat grant programs that supported practical on-ground habitat works, so that specific funding applications can be made under the Natural Heritage Trust 2 (NHT2) round of Commonwealth funding. This would require a budget contingency to be made, but does not require the approval of the Minister for a set amount or a specific program – each project would be considered by RFSTEC/ACoRF on a case by case basis.

The council conveyed strong support for habitat rehabilitation programs, however, it was recommended that the statewide fish habitat program be deferred until the outcomes of the Clarence River pilot program are known.

Motion: Defer approval of further habitat rehabilitation funding until the Clarence River pilot program outcomes have been assessed, as outlined above.
Moved Lionel Jones, Seconded Ann Lee. **Carried**

The council supported the recommendation for the clean beach challenge proposal to be considered by RFSTEC at their next meeting prior to being considered by ACoRF.

The council did not support funding for programs that were not recommended by RFSTEC.

Recommendation

That the following recommendations for funding from the Saltwater Trust Fund be supported.

- A 3 year, small scale study of the abundance, size structure and movement of luderick - \$5,000 for 2002/03, 03/04 and 04/05.
- A 3 year study of the life history of black bream - \$100,000 for 2002/03, 03/04 and 04/05.
- A 2 year study of age validation and growth of key recreational species - \$21,626 for 2002/03 and \$22,313 for 03/04.
- Matching funding of \$2,425 for 2002/03 for creation of a fish cleaning table at Tuncurry.
- Matching funding of \$5,000 for 2002/03 for creation of 2 fish cleaning tables – one at Mill Bay, Narooma and another at Korners Park, North Batemans Bay.

Moved: Mark Umbers Seconded: Margaret Dodson **Carried**

Issue

Proposal from Kiama Council to implement a fishing closure in Spring Creek Lagoon (Wrights Creek) near Bombo.

Background (The Council of the Municipality of Kiama)

The following letter was received from Kiama Council and has been reproduced for your consideration.

17 December 2001
Mr S Dunn
Director of NSW Fisheries
P O Box 21
CRONULLA 2230

Dear Mr Dunn

Commercial Fishing Coastal Lagoons

At its meeting held on the 20 November 2001, Council considered a report regarding commercial fishing in Spring Creek Lagoon (Wrights Creek) Bombo. This followed an investigation by Council's Ranger into reports of commercial fishing taking place in Spring Creek using mesh nets on the east and west sides of the Highway. The incident within the Spring Creek Wetlands Plan of Management area and also within the area covered by SEPP 14. The land west of the highway is zoned 7(b) Estuarine Wetlands and the land on the east side of the highway is zoned 6(a) existing recreation.

The plan of Management requires approval from Council to engage in a trade or business and further prohibits "Activities in the view of Council that may be damaging, disruptive and/or may represent a danger to users of the reserve". However, commercial fishing in Spring Creek does not require Development Consent.

Following the incident the Ranger contacted NSW Fisheries at Lake Illawarra. The Fisheries Officer advised that he had been notified of the activity and spoken to the fishermen who they concluded were licensed and operating in an area not subject of a Fisheries Closure and within the NSW Fisheries area of control. The Officer said he was unaware of the status of Spring Creek and was sympathetic to Council's position and suggested that Council apply for a formal closure based on its environmental status. He indicated that he would support any such application.

The fisherman have been contacted by Council's Ranger and advised of Council policy on the matter. However, in regards to commercial fishing it would appear that NSW Fisheries control commercial fishing and the mechanism for controlling this activity is through the Fisheries Act via a Fisheries Closure.

Council therefore resolved to apply for a formal Fisheries Closure of Spring Creek Lagoon and express its concern that commercial fishing is allowed in coastal lagoons of this size.

Your favourable consideration of this application would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Bryan Whittaker
Director of Engineering and Works

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Spring Creek Lagoon (Wrights Creek) near Bombo in the Kiama Council area is a wetland protected under State Environmental Protection Plan number 14. These protected wetland areas have been created primarily for the purposes of conserving wetland habitat. This habitat is conserved through the application of strict controls and impact assessment requirements on proposed developments, although existing activities are exempt from these controls and assessment requirements.

Commercial fishing permitted in Spring Creek includes mesh netting, fish and eel trapping, crab trapping by the use of a crab trap and hoop or lift net and prawning by the use of the prawn haul net, push and scissor net, hand hauled prawn net and dip or scoop net.

According to the NSW Fisheries commercial catch records database, Spring Creek (Wrights Creek) has not been recorded as commercially fished, although discussions with a local commercial fisher has indicated that he has meshed there from time to time for mullet. Any catch data for this estuary may have been captured into the category of 'other estuaries' and therefore cannot be separated from any other estuaries that have been grouped into this category.

Discussions with the local MAC representative have indicated that both he and the local fishers would support a fishing closure for all methods with the exception of eel trapping.

NSW Fisheries would support the introduction of a closure to all fishing methods in Spring Creek Lagoon due to its small size and apparent relatively low significance to the industry.

Estuary General Management Advisory Committee discussion

The Committee noted that Spring Creek Lagoon is located adjacent to the Princes Highway at Kiama and is in the public eye and is not important by any commercial means. It was suggested by the local industry representative that NSW Fisheries recommend Spring Creek Lagoon be declared an aquatic reserve so that no take at all can occur. MAC members including the NCC representative agreed to support a total closure of this area to all fishing.

Further consultation

Whilst the views of ACoRF are sought, local angling clubs and the local tackle industry will also be consulted prior to a recommendation being made .

Outcomes

It was noted that the local Council requested consideration of a commercial fishing closure.

Representatives familiar with the area stated that local anglers do fish Spring Creek Lagoon on a regular basis and therefore, access to Spring Creek Lagoon by recreational fishers should not be restricted.

Recommendation

ACoRF not support a closure for recreational fishing.

Moved: Mel Brown Seconded Scott Mitchell **Carried**

Issue

Commercial fishing issues.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The commercial fisheries management team has requested this council's consideration of the following issues:

1. Proposed extension to abalone closure due to *Perkinsus* disease
2. Outcomes from the small prawn summit
3. Recreational catches of sea garfish in the Clarence River
4. Issues raised by the Ocean Trap & Line Management Advisory Committee/ commercial fishing representative on the Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter Management Advisory Committee

Background information for these issues is attached.

Outcomes

1. *Proposed extension to abalone closure due to Perkinsus disease*

The abalone Total Allowable Catch Committee has highlighted a dramatic decline in abalone populations from commercial catches, which has been supported by independent research.

Council members inquired about the historical recreational and commercial abalone catch in the area. The point was raised that if the recreational catch is much smaller than commercial catches, will a closure on recreational abalone harvesting actually have a positive impact on the recovery of abalone populations. It is believed that the decline is due to *Perkinsus* disease, not commercial over-fishing, therefore any proposed closure to protect the stocks should cover all harvesting sectors.

The underwater fishing representative stated that spearfishing members have not recently observed abalone that is affected by the parasite, however, there is no doubt it exists and affects the health of abalone.

It was noted that if an abalone closure was introduced for recreational harvesters, then a compulsory commercial fishing closure should also be implemented. A total closure would enhance compliance efforts, as well as maximise the opportunities for the recovery of abalone in the area.

Recommendation

The council supports a full closure to all harvesters of abalone in the proposed area.

Moved: Mark Umbers Seconded: Lionel Jones **Carried**

2. *Outcomes from the small prawn summit*

The council supports a common closure with the commercial sector to protect juvenile prawns. If a river or section of river is closed as a result of the commercial count, then the area should also be closed to recreational prawn harvesting. It was noted that a recreational prawn closure is in place in the Hunter River during the winter closure to commercial fishing activity.

Council does not believe prawn counts for recreational fishers would be practical, nor readily adopted by the recreational fishing sector – mesh sizes should be used to limit recreational catch of prawns.

Recommendations

That recreational closures only apply for prawns in areas where commercial closures have been introduced because the prawns are too small.

Moved: Peter Goadby Seconded: Scott Mitchell **Carried**

(Note: This matter to be pursued through the management strategy process.)

The council does not support prawn counts for recreational fishers.

Moved: Lionel Jones Seconded: Mark Umbers **Carried**

3. *Recreational catches of sea garfish in the Clarence River*

The council expressed concern that large quantities of finfish are being caught in nets by anglers and that some of these anglers are illegally selling the catch. The council discussed the opportunity for a zero limit for finfish caught in recreational prawn scoop nets. It was noted that this might also restrict an angler's ability to take baitfish, which is not the intention. The issue has been raised due to concern for garfish stocks, not to allocate garfish to the commercial fishing sector.

The council asked what action the commercial sector would be taking to address these concerns. Arrangements such as a total allowable commercial catch for garfish will be considered as part of the Fisheries Management Strategy for the ocean haul fishery.

It was stated that saltwater recreational bag and size limits will be reviewed through the fisheries management strategy process and that it is appropriate to consider the classification/status of garfish at that time.

To address concerns regarding garfish, the advisory council supports the proposal for a total bag limit of 10 of any fin fish species being taken **combined** when using a prawn scoop net and that this proposal be included in the draft fishery management strategy for recreational fishing.

Recommendation

The council supports the recommendation, as proposed.

Moved: Mark Umbers Seconded: Lisa Terry **Carried**

4. a. Use of hydraulic winches by recreational fishers

The council acknowledges that the use of hydraulic/electric winches is not a traditional recreational fishing method and has allowed anglers to target deep water species, for example, blue-eye cod and gemfish. There is also a concern that these high value species may be black marketed.

Motion: That the use of hydraulic/electric winches by recreational fishers be banned.

Moved: Peter Goadby

Seconded: Nil

Motion lapsed

It was noted that powered winches allow disabled/incapacitated people to participate in recreational fishing activities, which may not be possible without them. Further, the council believes that bag and size limits are the appropriate way to limit recreational catch.

Recommendation

The council does not support the recommendation to ban hydraulic winches.

Moved: Mark Umbers

Seconded: Terry Maloney

Carried

(Note: NSW Fisheries believes this matter is important and represents a significant potential for increase in fishing capacity on deepwater species – the matter should be raised again as part of the management strategy process)

4. b. Use of braided line by recreational fishers

With regards to the use of braided line, such as spider wire, the council believes this is a conflict issue stemming from different groups using the same fishing grounds. It was stated that there should be a level of courtesy and consideration of other people's fishing gear/property when sharing these areas.

It was clearly stated that commercial fishers have only asked for anglers to consider these issues, not to recommend banning the use of them.

Education was mentioned as a way of reducing/preventing the accidental loss of commercial gear through the use of braided line by anglers. The council agreed that these issues would be considered during the fishery management strategy processes for recreational and charter fishing.

Recommendation

The council does not support the removal of braided line from the recreational fishing sector at this stage.

Moved: Mark Umbers

Seconded: Neil Ryan

Carried

Background information for Agenda Item 4 - ACoRF meeting 17/10/02

1. *Proposed extension to abalone closure due to Perkinsus disease.*

Issue

Proposed closure to recreational fishing of abalone in the area from Port Stephens south to Wreck Bay (commercial abalone fishing zones F to L) in response to the Total Allowable Catch Committee's recommendation that zero abalone catch be taken in region 1 (NSW/Queensland border to Wreck Bay) after 30 June 2002.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Outbreaks of *Perkinsus* infection combined with other factors are thought to be responsible for the decline in abalone stocks around Terrigal, Sydney and more recently Kiama and Port Stephens. In response to evidence of the serious depletion of abalone in these regions, a portion of the affected areas have been closed to all abalone harvesting to assist their recovery. Currently abalone fishing closures cover areas from The Entrance to Terrigal, Bondi Beach to Marley Beach and Bombo Beach to Warri Beach, near Kiama. These closures were recently renewed until September 2004.

In July 2001 the Abalone Management Advisory Committee (AbMAC) recommended that further commercial closures be implemented from Terrigal to Bondi Beach and it was proposed that the entire area from Terrigal to Bondi Beach should be closed to all abalone harvesting. At its meeting on 21 January 2002 the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) discussed and supported the proposed new abalone fishing closures from Terrigal to Bondi Beach.

In its determination for 2002/03 the Total Allowable Catch Setting and Review (TAC) Committee recommended that there be no harvesting of abalone in Region 1 (from the NSW/Queensland border to Wreck Bay) after 30 June 2002, due to the low levels of abalone in that area and the need to assist their recovery.

At its meeting on 15 August 2002 AbMAC recommended and agreed to a voluntary halt to commercial fishing of abalone in part of region 1 (Port Stephens to Wreck Bay) until the end of the fishing period (30 June 2003) in response to the TAC Committee's recommendation. This will then be considered in the next fishing period. The Minister has supported the voluntary halt to commercial fishing of abalone in this area. Should a lack of compliance with the voluntary halt to commercial harvesting of abalone in the area from Port Stephens to Wreck Bay be observed, a Section 8 Fishing Closure will be implemented to close this area to commercial harvesting of abalone.

The Advisory Council's views are sought on a closure to recreational fishing of abalone in the area from Port Stephens to Wreck Bay until 28 September 2004, in line with the existing commercial abalone fishing closures. This proposal is consistent with and extends the additional proposed closures to abalone fishing (Terrigal to Bondi Beach) previously supported by ACoRF in January 2002.

NSW Fisheries scientists advise that, although it is estimated that recreational fishers generally only take small quantities of abalone, their actions would significantly slow the recovery of abalone stocks by removing the mature individuals remaining in shallow water. Recreational fishers currently have a possession limit of 10 abalone per day. Each abalone shell must be at least 11.5 cm long.

If the proposed closure to recreational fishing of abalone is approved, it is planned that information on the areas closed to abalone fishing will be conveyed to recreational fishers and the general public.

Recommendation

It is recommended that ACoRF support a closure to recreational fishing of abalone in the area from Port Stephens to Wreck Bay until 28 September 2004.

2. Outcomes from the small prawn summit

Issue

Managing the harvesting of juvenile prawns.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

On 26 and 27 June 2000 the Minister for Fisheries held a Juvenile Prawns Summit to bring together stakeholders and resolve various issues concerning the harvesting of prawns in NSW. The summit was attended by representatives of NSW Fisheries, the marketing sector, conservation, recreational fishing and the ocean prawn trawl, estuary prawn trawl and estuary general commercial fisheries. A working group was formed to progress the issues arising.

One outstanding issue relevant to both commercial and recreational fishers is the harvesting of juvenile prawns, particularly school prawns and king prawns.

Commercial fishers are trying to maximise the size of prawns harvested to maintain recruitment back into the fishery (ie. allow prawns to reach maturity and spawn) and to maximise biological yield and economic returns. Conservationists and recreational fishers also supported the need to ensure adequate recruitment to maximise biological yield.

A 'count' is a relative measure of the size of prawns and is expressed in terms of the number of prawns per ½ kilogram. For example: prawns at a count of 200 per ½ kg are on average much smaller than prawns at a count of 3 (is this meant to be 300?) per ½ kg.

Preliminary results (yield per recruit models) show that the optimum size at first capture to maximise biological yield from our school prawns stocks is between 136 and 43 school prawns per ½ kg. A three year study commencing July 2002 will provide more accurate information on the optimum size at first capture.

Research (yield per recruit models) show that the optimum size at first capture to maximise biological yield from our king prawn stocks is between 40 and 13 king prawns per ½ kg.

The working group recommends that State wide mandatory 'counts' be introduced to stop the harvesting of juvenile school and king prawns. This would be complemented by local closures and modified prawning gear. A three year research project commenced during May 2002 to examine the selectivity of all legal prawning nets and to provide information on modifications for selectively harvesting larger prawns.

Table 1 provides an indication of the relationship between market grades used on the north coast of NSW and prawn counts. This information, particularly that for school prawns, is not necessarily representative of the market grading used in other regions in

NSW. For example, a 'number one' school prawn from the Hawkesbury River would meet a count of 70-80 per ½ kg, not 110-120 per ½ kg.

Table 1. Relationship between market grading on the north coast of NSW and prawn counts.

Market grading	Counts (# prawns per ½ kg)	Comments
Extra large (king prawn)	No greater than 10 per ½ kg	Consumption
Large (king prawn)	Between 11 and 15 per ½ kg	Consumption
Medium (king prawn)	Between 16 and 25 per ½ kg	Consumption
Small medium (king prawn)	Between 26 and 45 per ½ kg	Consumption
Small (king prawn)	Between 46 and 70 per ½ kg	Consumption
Number 1 (school prawn)	No greater than 110 per ½ kg (cooked) No greater than 120 per ½ kg (green)	Bait / Consumption
Number 2 (school prawn)	Between 111 and 150 per ½ kg (cooked) Between 121 and 160 per ½ kg (green)	Bait / Consumption
Number 3 (school prawn)	Between 161 and 180 per ½ kg (green)	Bait

Prawn counts are likely to be introduced in all commercial prawn harvesting fisheries. To ensure a consistent approach across user groups, it is proposed that counts also be introduced for recreational fishers. This will ensure prawns are harvested at a size that maximises biological yield.

Recommendation

It is recommended that ACoRF provide advice on managing the harvest of juvenile prawns and on appropriate 'counts' for school and king prawns for recreational fishers.

3. Recreational catches of sea garfish in the Clarence River

Issue

Concern regarding the number of sea garfish being taken by recreational fishers in the mouth of the Clarence River.

Background (Ocean Haul Management Advisory Committee representative for the Clarence River region)

Commercial fishers have observed recreational fishers catching large numbers of sea garfish with the use of prawn scoop nets in the entrance waters of the Clarence River. As garfish are currently identified as a bait species, the general bag limit of 20 fish does not apply. This is not a traditional recreational fish species and whilst legal sized fish can be retained if caught in scoop nets, it is not intended as recreational fish scoop net.

There are significant concerns over the sustainability of sea garfish resulting in new restrictions for the commercial fishery. It is believed the matter needs looking at as a matter of urgency.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

NSW Fisheries Officers and commercial fishers have observed recreational fishers with esky's full of garfish. Provided recreational fishers are licensed and have a scoop net of legal dimensions, there is no legislation in place that is sufficient to stop this activity. The prawn scoop net clause permits fish to be retained whilst the net is being used to take prawns. NSW Fisheries Officers have advised that the current rule is not sufficient to stop people taking fish with a scoop net.

On 16 September 2002 the Minister for Fisheries announced a new Management Strategy for the Ocean Hauling Fishery which is due to commence operation from 1 November 2002. This strategy contains an outline of the management objectives and rules under which the fishery operates ensuring that the fishery is managed in a sustainable manner.

A dramatic decline in the landings of sea garfish through the 1990s has prompted concern over the status of the stock. Catch levels are as low as 10% of the values from the early 1990s and it is likely that a decline in abundance of the species has occurred.

The Ocean Hauling Fishery will implement actions to commence the development of a recovery program for sea garfish. NSW Fisheries will continue to monitor the sea garfish stock. Should the measures taken not have an impact on landings of sea garfish, the fishery will implement a seasonal closure on sea garfish to promote recovery of the species.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the advisory council support a proposal for a total bag limit of 10 of any fin fish species being taken **combined** when using a prawn scoop net and that

this proposal be included in the draft recreational fishing fishery management strategy. NSW Fisheries will also consult with local angling groups likely to be impacted before presenting any recommendations to the Minister.

4. Use of hydraulic winches and spider wire (braided line) by recreational fishers

Issue

Use of hydraulic winches and spider wire (braided line) by recreational fishers.

Background

The use of gear such as winches, hydraulic line haulers and lead lines are traditionally used by commercial fishers for greater efficiency in commercial operations.

Commercial fishers have reported that recreational and charter boat operators, particularly on the south coast, have been using this gear to target fish species caught in the deeper waters, such as hapuka, bar and blue-eye cod. It has been claimed that these deeper water areas have not been historically fished by the recreational and charter boat sectors.

Recent observations in the Port Macquarie region have seen recreational fishers with significant numbers of these deep sea fish. There are concerns that these fish find their way into the black market. Reports of theft of commercial gear off boats have also been received.

It is not physically possible to catch large numbers of these fish on a hand held line or rod. The use of winches has greatly increased fishing intensity offshore.

The Ocean Trap and Line Management Advisory Committee (OTL MAC) regards the use of commercial style gear by recreational and charter boat operators as being inconsistent with normal recreational fishing objectives and a threat to ensuring a sustainable fishery resource.

The minutes of the last Ocean Trap and Line Management Advisory Committee recommended to the Minister that when the terms of reference of the recreational fishing strategy is prepared, consideration be given to these issues in conjunction with recreational gear use.

A separate issue raised by the MAC is the use of trolled spider wire by recreational vessels, allegedly resulting in commercial head gear being severed and lost.

Recommendations

That ACoRF agree that regulation of these issues be considered as part of the draft recreational fishing fishery management strategy, and that recreational fishers note there are penalties for interfering with commercial fishing gear. NSW Fisheries will also raise this matter at the next meeting with the Marine and Estuarine Charter Boat Management Advisory Committee.

Issue

Proposal to extend the Evans River spearfishing closure beyond the entrance of the river, to outside the northern and southern breakwalls.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

A representative of local anglers from Evans Head previously wrote to the Minister expressing concern about the activities of spearfishers operating on the outside of the Evans River breakwalls.

Spearfishing is currently prohibited in the Evans River, but is permitted outside the breakwalls. The proposal to extend the existing closure was considered by the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing at its meeting on 15 November 2001. The Council did not support an extension of the spearfishing closure at Evans River.

The angler representative has written to the Minister again asking that the matter be recommended.

Local anglers believe that the geographical features of the area provide extensive opportunities for spearfishers. John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fishing and Max Withnell, Regional Manager (North) recently visited the area and held further discussions with anglers regarding this issue. An overview of these discussions will be provided at the meeting. NSW Fisheries will also consult with local spearfishing group and the peak spearfishing organisation before any proposal is put to the Minister.

Outcomes

Discussions between NSW Fisheries and local anglers determined that unknown spearfishers, who do not reside in the Evans Head area, have caused the conflict. NSW Fisheries staff observed that the interaction between anglers and spearfishers does seem to cause difficulties for anglers when fishing off the breakwall.

Local anglers believe there are plenty of opportunities for spearfishers in other areas. While it is acknowledged that there are also opportunities for anglers to fish elsewhere, the breakwall is a popular line fishing spot for locals and tourists.

Although there was general support from the council to introduce a local closure to address the specific issues raised at Evans Head, concern was expressed over the apparent increase in restrictions on spearfishing activities throughout the state.

Recommendation

Apply a spearfishing exclusion zone of 50 metres at the Evans Head breakwall.

Moved: Neil Ryan Seconded: Margaret Dodson **Carried**

Issue

Priorities for Research.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Some time ago the Chief Scientist of NSW Fisheries sought priority areas for research from each Management Advisory Committee, Advisory Council and Departmental Team as the first step in developing a Strategic Research Plan. Most of these groups responded leading to the identification of about 300 research areas. A small group of internal and independent scientists and academics has now worked on this list by combining similar projects, separating the various projects into particular categories, sub-headings, etc to provide a more readable and manageable spreadsheet.

It is now time for each Management Advisory Committee/Advisory Council/Team to review this spreadsheet and add/subtract priorities to the existing projects or add new ones. The idea is for each group to look at all the projects (including those not in their direct area) to provide a priority if appropriate. For example, in addition to projects in its own area, it may be that a particular commercial Management Advisory Committee wishes to assign a priority to an Aquaculture project, or vice-versa, etc.

The Chief Scientist will outline a process by which each group may wish to progress this issue. He would like responses back from each group after their next meeting so that the list can be finalised before sending out to other stakeholder groups not yet included in this process.

Outcomes

Approximately 300 research priorities were initially identified by advisory councils and management advisory committees, representing recreational and commercial fishing, conservation and aquaculture interests. The priorities identified have been divided into categories and refined to reduce duplication. There is now a list of just over 200 research priorities, which was distributed to the council for information and further consideration.

NSW Fisheries is currently distributing the revised list to all advisory councils and management advisory committees for comment. The advisory council was asked to consider the new list and identify the programs they believe to be the highest and lowest priority to their sector. It was agreed that this should be done separately by each member, by assigning each research priority a rating of between 1 and 10 (10 being the highest).

Action item: Members are to forward their research priorities to the chairperson for collation prior to the next meeting.

Recommendation

That the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing review the current list of Research Priorities and provide changes to the Chief Scientist after their next meeting.

Other Business

- *Fisheries Management Strategy update (PT)*

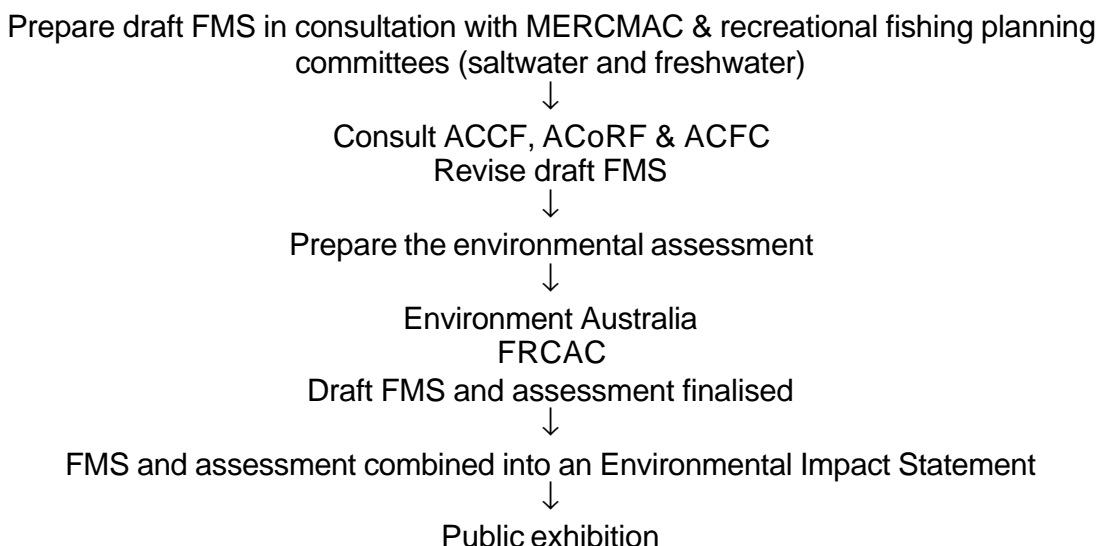
Council members have been given the opportunity to comment on the draft guidelines developed by Planning NSW, for example, to propose an amendment to assist the consultation process. The revised guidelines will be provided to the council at the next meeting.

The role of the council during the FMS process was discussed. A copy of the consultation process is attached.

The purpose of the FMS is to identify issues relevant to the fishery and provide a plan of how these will be addressed. The Fishery Management Strategies and Environmental Impact Statement for recreational and charter fishing must contain the following information (guidelines developed by Planning NSW):

- A – Executive summary
- B – Review of the fishery
- C – The FMS (like a proposal)
- D – Assessment of alternative management
- E – Impact on the fish stocks
- F – Impact on the environment
- G – Economic issues
- H – Social issues
- I – Justification for activity

The FMS/EIS process involves the following steps:



The FMS/EIS process cont...



The FMS and the environmental assessment combine together to make the EIS. After the environmental impacts of implementing the FMS have been considered, the FMS is further developed. The environmental assessment however, remains as it was at the public exhibition stage.

A saltwater planning committee is being established to assist with the identification and consideration of issues to be addressed by the FMS/EIS. The council requested that a copy of the planning committee expression of interest be sent to members of the advisory council and freshwater and saltwater trust expenditure committees, when advertised.

- *Eastern cod update (Anthony Moore)*

From the information found during the study, there are misgivings with the effect of stocking eastern cod at present. It was highlighted that genetic information must be used to select broodstock and that stringent controls on hatchery protocols are needed to maintain the genetic diversity of eastern cod populations. If not, heterozygosity – the amount of genetic diversity (ie to reduce in-breeding), fecundity – the number of eggs produced by each female, and growth rates of individuals within a population will be dramatically reduced. Monitoring and compliance of hatchery protocols is integral to the recovery of the species.

It was suggested that recovery of eastern cod populations should be a high priority for the recreational fishing sector, to ensure the species is available to anglers in the future.

Motion: That ACoRF ask the Minister to note the current problems with stocking eastern cod and request consideration of these issues under the freshwater fish

stocking FMS/EIS including the development of a thorough stocking policy, including monitoring and compliance requirements, for the species.

Moved: Mark Umbers

Seconded: Ann Lee

Carried

- *Proposed amendment to the barramundi stocking policy, for information (NJ)*

The council was advised of a minor amendment to the barramundi stocking policy, to ensure consistency between the States. Further information regarding his policy can be obtained from Ms Cassandra Nelson at Port Stephens Fisheries Centre.

- *Feedback from the Recreational Fishing Rights workshop, for information (JD)*

The main topic discussed is the desire to have clearly defined recreational fishing rights in Commonwealth waters. NSW currently has this right but other states do not. The intention of the conference was to formalise each state's statute right to fish in Commonwealth waters. These defined rights would then form part of a total allowable catch (TAC) for recreational species in Commonwealth waters. There was general agreement that recreational fishing in Commonwealth waters will be managed by the relevant state, which would be expected to manage their fishery within the TAC for the Commonwealth fishery.

Suggestions on how this type of management structure may work included:

1. Tagging system – where states get a quota of tags;
2. A levy on certain species;
3. Licence – not well supported by states who have a licence as it would complicate current arrangements.

- *Salt Ash Air Weapons Range, for information (NJ)*

NSW Fisheries has requested further and ongoing discussions with the RAAF regarding the potential impact on recreational and commercial fishing. If council members/anglers wish to raise any issues, please forward them to Nick James for consideration by NSW Fisheries and the RAAF during future discussions.

- *Public liability update, for information (NJ)*

An information handout regarding public liability was distributed to council members.

- *Grey nurse shark recovery plan update (JD)*

Discussion paper submissions closed on 26 June 2002. NSW Fisheries received detailed public comment, which is currently being considered.

The council reiterated its previous position on this issue, that no wire traces be used in grey nurse shark critical habitat areas.

Motion: That the council write to the Minister to convey concern that decisions about grey nurse sharks. Members of the council questioned the source of the scientific information, stating that much of the research has been conducted by people associated with the ecotourism industry, thus having a vested interest in closing the areas. As a result, members of the council have decided that no grey nurse shark

closures that ban recreational fishing that is not harmful to GNS will be supported until detailed quality data is available.

Moved: Mark Umbers Seconded: Mel Brown **Carried**

- *North harbour (little penguins) update (NJ)*

NSW Fisheries sent a submission to NPWS regarding recreational and commercial fishing access. Further discussions will occur between NSW Fisheries and NPWS to progress this issue. If council members/anglers wish to raise any issues regarding recreational fishing access in the area, please forward them to Nick James for consideration during future discussions.

- *Angel rings media release update – copies of previous ANSA media releases to be provided (NJ)*

Action item: ACoRF to send a letter to ANSA requesting that all angel ring press releases show the recreational fishing trusts logo, to acknowledge funding assistance from the trust.

It was stated that the recreational fishing trust logo will be displayed on the angel rings at each location.

- *Charter fishing boat update (NJ)*

NSW Fisheries recently conducted regional port meetings with charter fishing boat operators. An overview of topics discussed at the port meetings was provided to the council for information. The charter fishing representative also provided council with an overview of current issues facing the charter fishing sector, for example, the release of a discussion paper by NPWS regarding a proposal to licence tour operators (eg whale watching/ecotourism vessels).

- *Horseshoe Lagoon*

Information regarding this proposal was sent to council members out of session. It was mentioned that supporting this proposal would promote the principles of catch and release fishing.

The council supports a catch and release fishery in Horseshoe Lagoon, as proposed.

- *Renewal of recreational fishing closure in Woody Bay*

The council supports the renewal of the Woody Bay closure, as proposed.

Correspondence received

Nil.

General discussion

- Lake Hume/Mulwala discussion paper - comments close on 15 November 2002.

- The Snowy Mountains Review Group will be meeting on 2 November 2002.
- Confirmation regarding the current status of the threatened species legislation relating to the stocking of trout was requested. The recreational freshwater management team will provide this.

Action item: NSW Fisheries to advise anglers in the Lake Macquarie area that the lake is closed to all recreational trapping methods.

- Indigenous Fishing Strategy – council expressed some disappointment with the level of detail in the final report, particularly following the level of consultation NSW Fisheries had with coastal Indigenous communities to discuss issues.
- Artificial Reef policy development – the council supported the establishment of a working group to progress the development of a policy for artificial reefs.

Motion: That a working group be established to progress the development of a policy for artificial reefs in NSW.
 Moved: Lionel Jones Seconded: Mel Brown **Carried**

The proposed composition of the artificial reefs working group is:

- Lionel Jones
- Mel Brown
- Peter Goadby
- NSW Fisheries representative

Next meeting – Thursday 20 February 2003.