

**Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee**  
**Outcomes - Meeting 25, 22 August 2006**

**Apologies**

Karl Schaerf, Max Graham

**Confirmation of minutes from previous RFFTEC meeting**

The Committee accepted the draft outcomes as a true and accurate record of discussions from the 24<sup>th</sup> RFFTEC meeting, held 6-7 April 2006. **Moved:** Rodney Tonkin. **Seconded:** Brian Hale. **Carried**

**Action items from previous meeting**

1. A briefing had been forwarded to the Director General seeking a reduction in the cost recovery rate for overheads from 52% to 48%, in line with the rate for commercial fishery programs. 2. The Education Officer (EO) West contract expired on 30 June 06. An Expression of Interest has been prepared to fill this vacancy, as a 3-year temporary contract. 3. Mr David Harasti will arrange for an information package to be provided to the Council of Freshwater Anglers on the status of habitat protection within the Tumut River catchment. 4. NSW DPI has provided the Council of Freshwater Anglers with the contact information for inland commercial carp fishers, regarding the potential removal of carp from Wyangala dam.

**1. Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust report (Bryan van der Walt - DPI)**

The annual Trust budget for 2006/07, recreational fishing issues and project updates were presented and discussed at the meeting.

Total income from the fishing fee in 2005/06 was \$10.8 million. The Committee was advised that the budget for Fee Administration would be increased to 10% of 2005/06 fee revenue (as per previous years).

**2. Update on NSW Recreational Fishing Fee tender process (Bryan van der Walt - DPI)**

An update on the implementation of enhancements to improve the recreational fishing fee administration process, including the provision of plastic licences, a licence application form for paying your fee in advance, licence renewal letters and a new database management system, was provided at the meeting. It was noted that contingency funding of \$300,000 in 2006/07 had been set aside for an improved administration system. The Committee endorsed the adoption of the above enhancements, which would greatly improve service delivery to agents and fishers. A revised administration budget will be presented to RFFTEC in April 2007 following implementation of the enhancements (noting that the budget may exceed 10% of recreational fishing revenue).

**3. Review of Habitat Restoration Programs (David Harasti - DPI)**

A summary of the first four rounds of the Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program was presented including an overview of the site assessment process that was carried out earlier in the year. Over the first four periods, 78 saltwater and freshwater projects have been funded with a total expenditure of almost \$790,000. Approximately 150 hectares of floodplain and wetland habitat, 90kms of riparian vegetation and 340kms of river has been reinstated for fish passage. NSW DPI is preparing a publication with before and after photos, maps and comments from the proponents from the first 3 rounds of funding. Round 5 of the Fish Habitat Grant Program was recently announced. Applications for funding close 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006. The recreational fishing trust audit has identified a need

for Committee members to review each application individually. Members will be forwarded applications out of session for consideration and ranking. The Committee will then recommend on priorities for funding in consultation with Conservation staff at the November meeting, based on the out of session assessment of proposals.

Mr Kevin McKinnon advised that he was not aware of a recent workshop held on the Murray River regarding an instream and riparian restoration (re-snagging) program between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga Weir. Members asked if they could be provided with a calendar of events for conservation related field activities.

The Committee expressed concern on hearing that the contract of a Conservation Manager based in Sydney has not been renewed. This could potentially create a greater workload for the trust funded positions and important conservation projects could be affected as a result.

**Action item**

That NSW DPI Conservation staff provide RFFTEC members with a calendar of events (out of session) of upcoming conservation based field activities. **Moved** Kevin McKinnon, Seconded Debbie Lennon. **Carried.** – Action NSW DPI Conservation

**Action item**

That the Chair write to the Minister seeking a commitment to maintain the Government funded Conservation Manager position in Sydney, to ensure the strong focus on habitat protection is continued. **Moved** Rodney Tonkin, Seconded Brian Hale. **Carried.** – Action Chair / NSW DPI

#### **4. Current status of freshwater research (Dr Lee Baumgartner - DPI)**

A new principal investigator Dr Lee Baumgartner based in Narrandera, took leadership of the program in June 2006. Aquatic ecosystems staff from Narrandera have successfully completed surveys of brown trout spawning migrations in Lake Eucumbene (Swamp Ck and Gang Gang Ck), Jindabyne (Thredbo River) and Lake Oberon (Fish river). Monitoring of spawning rainbow trout will be undertaken in late August and early September. Preliminary results of Snowy Lakes research were presented. There appears to be little variation in angler catch rates at the two Lakes. Most spawning fish are two or three years old. There is good natural recruitment (but stocking is contributing) and spawning fish are in excellent condition. Upon recruitment of the new Fisheries Technician, the first task will be to immediately finalise publication of a report outlining findings and recommendations for the Snowy Lakes Trout Strategy. Negotiations have also commenced to establish a long-term study investigating the effects of stocking density on growth rates and survival of Murray cod and Golden perch. The outcome of this study will be an improved understanding of stocking rates to establish viable populations of these native fish throughout NSW.

A collaboration is being continued with the Arthur Rylah Institute to apply new batch marking techniques to Australian Bass in various water bodies on the South Coast. It is anticipated to initially perform a field trial in Tallowa Dam to determine the applicability of this technique to other sites where Australian Bass are stocked. The chemical Alizarin redS is effective for marking large numbers of fish in a single application, without the need to handle the fish. Detection of the mark does not require sacrifice of the fish and there are no reported negative effects of external staining on mortality and growth rates. However, Alizarin redS is not presently listed on the Good Manufacturing and Practice (GMP) Food Safety Schedule of approved colourings, so cannot be used for fish stockings at this point in time.

**Action item**

That NSW DPI investigate usage of Alizarin redS to mark fish for stocking, in accordance with GMP guidelines. **Moved** Rodney Tonkin, Seconded Debbie Lennon. **Carried.** – Action NSW DPI / Lee Baumgartner

**5. Angling research and tournament monitoring (Tim Park – DPI)**

The freshwater component has monitored 95 different freshwater tournaments comprising 776 tournament days since 1988. The Project Officer oversees and maintains the data collection processes and reporting to the recreational fishing community. The main objective of the project for this financial year is the evaluation of data derived from fishing tournaments in reference to assessing the state of fish stocks, the impact of fishing tournaments; the success of fish stocking regimes, the status of introduced fish and the quality of angling. This involves identifying tournaments that can provide long-term information of use for resource assessment and management. The distribution of tournaments involved in the tournament monitoring program, including their location, drainage type and region was presented. Tournament reports detailing catch per unit of effort, catch composition, catch rates and size data for tournaments in the Hastings River, Hawkesbury – Nepean River, Lake Glenbawn, Lake Mulwala and Lake Windamere, were distributed.

**6. 2006-07 Fish Stocking Programs (Craig Watson – DPI)**

Trout hatcheries are preparing for the upcoming season, with the first releases from the Ebor hatchery commencing in September 06. Three bass broodstock collecting trips have occurred (two in the Southern Zone and one in the Northern Zone) and these broodfish have been successfully spawned at the PSFC. NSW DPI currently has excellent quality larvae growing in culture tanks at this facility. Assessment of fish stocking applications for the 06/07 season will be finalised in early September. Currently there are 917 sites that have been reviewed for stocking. Of those, through the enhanced government stocking program, the DPI and acclimatisation societies (for trout) aim to release a total of 5.6 million fish. The number of fish stocked in 2005/06 (excluding dollar for dollar) totalled 6.7 million fish comprising 2.8 million native fish and 3.9 million salmonids.

Dollar for dollar bass proposals have been assessed and clubs notified on the outcomes of their applications. Of note, Australian bass are planned for release at Tallowa dam in 06/07, both through the dollar for dollar program and Port Stephens, which will be the first release at the dam since 1998. The number of fish stocked in 2005/06 through the Dollar for dollar program totalled 923,682 native fish. Stocking permits for dollar for dollar applications will now be issued through the DPI Recreational Fisheries Section.

**7. Nodavirus testing in hatcheries producing Australian bass (Bill Bardsley – DPI)**

NSW DPI is working with industry to obtain blood samples from broodstock and larvae during the 2006/07 stocking season for Nodavirus testing. Hatcheries have been provided with equipment and training necessary for the preparation and submission of samples. Australian bass broodstock and larvae will be sampled using protocols and data interpretation developed in conjunction with aquatic animal health experts from other State and Commonwealth organisations. Diagnosis will be made using a mixture of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), virus isolation, and Electron Microscopy (EM) techniques. It is important to note that no positive tests have been recorded from private bass hatcheries at this point in time. In addition, NSW DPI is contributing to a multi-state collaborative research proposal to further investigate Nodavirus status in wild populations in NSW and south eastern Australia.

## **8. Access through traveling stock routes and crown reserves (Alistair McBurnie – DPI)**

The Crown Lands and TSR Access analysis to named watercourses is almost complete. There are approximately 5,839 named rivers in NSW (excluding impoundments), 1,229 State Forests adjacent to waterways, 656 National Park Holdings adjacent to named waterways, 7,357 formed roads that cross named watercourses bridges and causeways, 7,380 TSR's adjacent to named watercourses, 104,776 road corridors (paper roads) directly adjacent to named watercourses, 108,984 other crown reserves and holdings adjacent to named watercourses, of which 30,000 are reserves managed by the State.

NSW DPI sought advice from the Committee on the information to be included in a survey sheet being developed for fishing clubs as part of a reporting form for the rivers access guide. This information will be used in conjunction with Crown Lands / TSR Access data to produce a publication identifying access sites within river reaches. This information will be returned to NSW DPI for data entry via reply paid envelope. Once compiled the data will be matched to the closest TSR or Crown Reserve and mapped using GIS Software. Many of the sites selected for the survey will have additional attributes such as tournament results and stocking data, which can be included in the rivers access guide.

## **9. Review of new freshwater trust projects**

### **a) Large grant**

The Committee did not support funding of \$53,595 for the project titled: Determining optimum stocking rates of Murray cod in the Dumaresq River. **Moved:** Brian Hale  
Seconded: Ian Ward. **Carried.**

### **b) Small grants**

#### **Program Supported**

The Committee supported funding of \$5,000 for stabilisation of banks of the Manilla River around the Manilla Hatchery pump site. **Moved:** Rodney Tonkin. Seconded: Brian Hale. **Carried.**

#### **Programs Not Supported**

The Committee did not support funding of \$4,800 for the Fish Cleaning Tables at Malpas Dam and Dumaresq Dam. The Committee requested that the applicant be invited to re-submit the proposal provided the following is obtained: a letter of approval from Council; an explanation of linkage of the tables to the water supply and costings for the various components of the project. **Moved:** Rodney Tonkin Seconded: Debbie Lennon **Carried.**

The Committee did not support funding of \$4,000 for the Alma Jean Sullivan's (Paroo Queen) Fishing Tips Calendar 2007. **Moved:** Kevin McKinnon Seconded: Debbie Lennon **Carried.**

The Committee did not support funding of \$1,700 for the Guide to catching crayfish in NSW. **Moved:** Debbie Lennon Seconded: Kevin McKinnon. **Carried.**

## General business

### Recreational Angler Award

The Committee sought clarification on the progress of the proposal for a Recreational Angler Award. NSW DPI advised that an Expression of Interest has been prepared for public release seeking nominations from the community for recognition of outstanding contributions to recreational fishing in NSW.

### Recreational Fishing Review

The Committee requested that the review of recreational fishing regulations be resolved as quickly as possible, given the time lag since the closure of comments to the community discussion paper.

#### **Action item**

That the Chair write to the Minister to seek advice on the status of the implementation of the outcomes of the recreational fishing review. **Moved** Rodney Tonkin, Seconded Bob Bell. **Carried.** – Action Chair / NSW DPI

### Freshwater Guide Reprint

Depending on the outcomes of the recreational fishing review, a batch of the existing freshwater guides (approx.125,000) may need to be printed for distribution through the agent network, prior to busy October long weekend fishing period.

### Guidelines for members of NSW Government Boards and Committees

The Committee acknowledged the receipt of the Conduct and Guidelines for members of NSW Government Boards and Committees

### Dutton Hatchery re-circulation unit

The Committee sought clarification on the progress of the re-circulation unit at Dutton Hatchery and hatching shed at Gaden Trout Hatchery. NSW DPI advised that suppliers for the various components of the unit have been contacted. Hatchery staff have attended the Port Stephens Fisheries Centre to discuss installation requirements for the unit. Equipment for the re-circ unit will be ordered once the budget for the program has been approved.

### Gaden Hatchery Hatching Shed

The Committee sought clarification on the progress of the hatching shed at Gaden Trout Hatchery. NSW DPI advised that staff from Building and Engineering Services will be conducting a site assessment at Gaden Hatchery on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, prior to calling for tenders for the construction of the new hatching shed facility.

### Future Operation of Dutton Trout Hatchery

The Committee expressed considerable concern over a rumour that the NSW DPI planned to close the Dutton trout hatchery. Recreational Management advised that it had not received any advice with respect to such a rumour.

#### **Action item**

That the Chair write to the Minister to ascertain whether there is any substance to the rumour about the closure of the Dutton Trout Hatchery at Ebor. **Moved** Rodney Tonkin, Seconded Kevin McKinnon. **Carried.** – Action Chair / NSW DPI

**Research into catfish genetics**

Mr Ping Kee expressed a need for research to be conducted on the genetics of freshwater catfish. NSW DPI noted that the identification of any catfish population substructures is considered a key priority research area under the fish stocking FMS. NSW DPI will investigate the potential to develop a project proposal on catfish genetics for presentation to RFFTEC at a future meeting.

**Next meeting**

The next RFFTEC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 28 November 2006 at the Dutton Trout Hatchery, Ebor.