



**Recreational
Fishing Trusts**

*Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust
Expenditure Committee*

MINUTES

19TH RFFTEC MEETING
10 August, 2004

CRONULLA FISHERIES CENTRE
202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla

**Nineteenth Meeting of the NSW
Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee
Minutes
10.8.04, 9:30am to 3.30pm
NSW Department of Primary Industries, Cronulla Fisheries Centre, 202 Nicholson
Parade, Cronulla**

Attendance

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee Members

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bruce Schumacher | Chair |
| Steve Rudder | Region 1 |
| Brian Hale | Approved Designate Region 2 |
| Steve Tooley | Region 3 |
| Elizabeth Brodbeck | Region 4 |
| Rodney Tonkin | Region 5 |
| Debbie Lennon | Region 6 |
| Richard Ping Kee | Region 7 |
| Kevin McKinnon | Region 8 |

NSW Department of Primary Industries (observers)

Mr Paul O'Connor, Executive Director, Regional and Corporate Services
Mr John Diplock, Principal Manager, Recreational Fisheries
Mr Bryan van der Walt, Senior Fisheries Manager, Recreational Fishing Trusts
Mr Cameron Westaway, Senior Fisheries Manager (Inland)
Mr Craig Watson, Fisheries Manager Recreational Fisheries

Guest presenter

Daniel Williams, Greening Australia

Business

- Chair's introduction
- Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting (1 April, 2004)
- Action Items from previous minutes

Agenda Items

1. Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust financial report (Bryan van der Walt / Cameron Westaway)
2. New trust fund project proposals and proposals for funding through the existing Small Grants Program (Cameron Westaway / Craig Watson)
3. Angling Research & Tournament Monitoring update (Mark James)
4. Review of Habitat Restoration Programs + guest presenter for south creek rehabilitation project (Milly Hobson / Daniel Williams)
5. Licence advertising and fishing guides update (Vera Fiala)
6. Inland Conservation Manager program update (Nicole McKirdy)
7. Inland Fishcare Volunteer program update (Elizabeth Jones/Dee McElligott)
8. Fish stocking programs and Gaden trout hatchery re-development (Craig Watson / Cameron Westaway)
9. Inland fisheries officers update (Peter Tilbrook)

Other business

- Upcoming vacancies on RFFTEC (Craig Watson)
- Freshwater trust project account reports (Cameron Westaway)
- Project milestones reports (Craig Watson)
- Next meeting
- Date and location

Meeting close

Chair's welcoming

The Chair welcomed members to the 19th meeting of the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC). The Chair noted a full agenda for the meeting, which included the assessment of ongoing programs and the consideration of new projects for funding. The Chair introduced members to Mr Brian Hale, approved designate for Region 2.

Apologies

No apologies for the meeting. Mr Doug Joyner, Region 2 representative has tendered his resignation from RFFTEC.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Recommendation

The draft minutes of the 18th RFFTEC meeting were accepted by RFFTEC as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

Action items of the previous meeting

Action items arising from the previous meeting are detailed in the action status table, included with the draft minutes. RFFTEC acknowledged the progression of action items from the previous meeting.

Agenda Item 1

Bryan van der Walt / Cameron Westaway

Issue

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust financial report and revised trust fund position

Background

The Committee was advised that total income received in the Saltwater Trust up until 31 May 2004 was \$8,999 million which was over \$500,000 more compared to last financial year (\$8,394 million in 2002/03). The funding level to the Freshwater Trust will remain at \$2.5 million in 2004/05. The freshwater expenditure committee allocated a total of \$2.546 million to a range of compliance, research, management and education programs to improve recreational fishing in 2003/04 leaving a balance of \$567,419 (as of 30 June 2004).

At the recent budget meeting in April 2004, the Freshwater committee supported a total budget of over \$2.77 million in 2004/05 with a predicted allocation of \$2.5 million based on predicted carryovers from 2003/04. Carry overs for 2003/04 will be confirmed at the meeting.

An independent consultant funded by the Department of Primary Industries has investigated options for improvements to the administration of the licence. Opportunities to improve the recreational fishing licensing system have been identified by the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing, the expenditure committees and other recreational fishing stakeholders throughout the State.

Background continued

Any changes to the scheme would have to be demonstrably cost effective. Outcomes of the report will be provided to the Committee at the meeting.

The reminder notice system was implemented in April 2004 and approximately 75,000 notices have been sent to 1 and 3 year licence holders with expiring licences. An update on this program will be provided at the meeting.

Outcomes**Financial report**

At the end of June 2004, the total amount of revenue received to the Recreational Fishing Trusts was \$8,999,000. The total income to the Recreational Fishing Trusts has increased in each of the 3 years since the general licence has been in place. In the first 2 financial years, the \$8.5 million predicted income level was not reached, however in 2003/04, nearly half a million more than the predicted level of income was achieved.

Possible reasons for this increase in income include increased compliance rates, the renewal of 3-year licences purchased when the licence was introduced 3 years previously and the reminder notice system, which was implemented in April this year. Another factor could be the excellent fishing reported in the recreational fishing havens, which would also lead to a greater acceptance of the fishing licence. RFFTEC acknowledged that the reminder system is an essential service for anglers.

Agenda Item 2**Cameron Westaway / Craig Watson****Issue**

New trust fund general project proposals and proposals for funding through the existing Small Grants Program

Background

Six new proposals for funding from the Freshwater Trust have been submitted to the Department of Primary Industries for the consideration by the Committee.

Background continued

These are summarised in the table below. Successful applicants will be required to report to the expenditure committees on a regular basis in the approved format.

Outcomes

Six applications for funding were received. These had been circulated to members before the meeting. The Committee discussed each application at the meeting and made one of the following recommendations:

1. Program to be supported by the trust,
2. Program not supported by the trust.

The Committee supported 4 of the 6 programs, considered to show direct benefits to recreational fishing. These were Inland Advisory Trailer \$27,300; Tracking fish associations with Structural Woody Habitat, \$5,000; Spawning behaviour of the endangered eastern freshwater cod; \$4,995 and Freshwater mussels enhancement, \$5,000 (funding for the first year of the project) – total \$42,295. Programs not supported were considered to be either too costly, low priority for recreational fisheries management or of minimal benefit to recreational fishing. The Committee noted that the \$20,000 budget for the Small Grants Program will be overspent if the three new Small Grants programs are approved, as \$8,133 in funds has already been committed for other projects. RFFTEC recommended that the Small Grants Program budget be increased to \$40,000, to enable funding for this year's committed programs and any future supported projects.

The freshwater mussels proposal is a three-year project. RFFTEC asked for the applicant to resubmit the proposal during years 2 and 3 and for future funding to be reviewed based on the success of the mussel introduction experiment.

RFFTEC queried the storage location for the inland advisory trailer. NSW DPI advised that the advisory trailer will be housed at the Central Tablelands Office for use by Education Officer in inland NSW at boat shows, trade shows and for other advisory functions.

Recommendations

- RFFTEC supported funding for the following projects through the Small Grants Program during the 04/05 year: Tracking fish associations with structural woody habitat, \$5,000, Spawning behaviour of the endangered eastern freshwater cod:, \$4,995, Freshwater mussels enhancement, \$5,000 (year 1 of the project) – total \$14,995.
- RFFTEC supported an increase in the Small Grants Program budget to \$40,000 to cater for current and future supported programs.
- RFFTEC supported the funding of \$27,300 for an inland advisory trailer as a general project, to be housed at the Central Tablelands Office.

New applications for funding, 04/05 financial year

Small grants

| Project Title | Proponent | Description | Freshwater funding request | Recommendation |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Tracking Fish Associations with Structural Woody Habitat | Department of Primary Industries / Griffith University | Fish monitoring project using radio transmitters to track fish associations with structural woody habitat | \$5,000 | Funding supported |
| Spawning behaviour of the endangered eastern freshwater cod | Southern Cross University | To study spawning behaviour of eastern freshwater cod and investigate the potential impacts of angling on nesting sites using underwater cameras | \$4,995 | Funding supported |
| Freshwater mussels enhancement | University of Western Sydney | To reintroduce freshwater mussels in the Nepean catchment (Penrith Lakes) to improve ecosystem health and water quality for recreational fish species. | \$5,000 (each year for 3 years) | Funding supported for Year 1 of the project. Application for funding to be resubmitted in years 2 & 3. Future funding subject to results of the freshwater mussel introduction experiment. |

General projects

| Project Title | Proponent | Description | Freshwater funding request | Recommendation |
|--|----------------------------------|--|--|----------------|
| Definition and utilisation of bass habitat | Department of Primary Industries | To map the Clarence and Clyde Rivers as the basis for long term monitoring and to assess the extent of change in the habitats of the Macleay River since the previous mapping was undertaken | \$124,530 (Yr 1) \$135,004 (Yr 2) Total <u>\$259,534</u> | Not supported |

New applications for funding, 04/05 financial year

General projects continued

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Anglers Oracle (joint freshwater and saltwater trust project)</p> | <p>Department of Primary Industries</p> | <p>Develop a map based internet site which will provide a "one stop shop" of information for recreational anglers</p> | <p>\$30,300 (Yr 1) \$4,500 (Yr 2) \$4,500 (Yr 3) Total <u>\$39,300</u> (total \$101,000 with \$70,700 requested from the saltwater trust in year 1, with ongoing prorata basis)</p> | <p>Not supported</p> |
| <p>Inland Advisory Trailer</p> | <p>Department of Primary Industries</p> | <p>To improve education / advisory services for inland anglers.</p> | <p>\$27,300</p> | <p>Funding supported. Inland Advisory Trailer to be housed at the Central Tablelands Office for use by Education Officer across inland NSW.</p> |

Issue

Angling Research and Tournament Monitoring update

Background

The tournament monitoring program collects angling catch data at fishing competitions throughout NSW which assists in assessing the quality of freshwater angling and the effectiveness of fish stocking and other management strategies. Support has been shown to the program by angling groups throughout the state.

In the past year, 52 fishing tournaments had been monitored in fresh and saltwater and more than 46,000 hours of angling had been recorded. In addition, over 20,500 fish had been measured and recorded, with over 8,500 angler days monitored and 46,000 hours of fishing.

Mr Mark James will brief the Committee on the progress of the tournament monitoring project and future directions of the program. In response to a request from RFFTEC at the previous meeting, the Department of Primary Industries will also report on the population structure of Murray cod in Lake Mulwala based on tournament survey results.

Outcomes

Nine fishing events have been monitored in the last quarter with 6000 hours of angling effort recorded from 550 anglers. The tournaments monitored were Mulwala Classic – Lake Mulwala, Hawkesbury River Bass Invitational – Walkers Beach, Outback Fishing Challenge – Darling River, Bourke, Kandos – Rylstone Classic – Lake Windamere, NSW Pro Bass – Hawkesbury and Colo Rivers, Frank Trudgett Memorial Trophy – Lake Glenbawn, ABT Pro Bass – Lake Toonumbar, ABT Pro Bass – Danjerra Dam and SGFC Trout Extravaganza – Lake Eucumbene. Results of these tournaments were presented to members, detailing species caught, average length of fish caught, total number of fish recorded, species composition, number of anglers contributing data, total number of fishing hours recorded and catch rate per unit of effort.

The results of the Mulwala fishing classic over the past 10 years showed an average length of Murray Cod between 400 and 500mm. Cameron Westaway noted that, while the 50cm size limit is respected by anglers and is effective in protecting fish below the size limit, it is not protecting all immature Murray Cod, especially in areas where growth rates are high. A community discussion paper on the review of freshwater fishing regulations, currently being prepared, will propose a number of options to maintain more sustainable populations of cod. This includes increasing the size limit to 60cm to increase the percentage of immature fish protected in systems where growth rate is more rapid.

Outcomes continued

The past 6 years of data from the Native Fish Challenge has shown a steady decline in the numbers of carp being taken. No carp were captured at this event in 2004, an encouraging sign on the status of the fishery. Murray cod, golden perch and trout cod are the dominant species caught at this tournament.

NSW DPI advised that an annual report is being prepared incorporating an analysis of data collected since the projects inception.

Agenda Item 4**Milly Hobson****Issue**

Review of habitat restoration programs

Background

Successful Freshwater Habitat Grant applicants (second round) have been notified and funding is being distributed. Progress reports have been received and some projects are well underway. An update on the progress of first and second round projects will be provided and final project reports for completed programs will be distributed at the meeting.

The announcement for the third round expression of interest for the Freshwater Habitat Grant Program will be made shortly. The closing date for applications has been set for 29 October 2004. Advertisements will be targeted in areas that have not yet received funding, in particular the Far West region (eg. Bourke and Broken Hill). A general state-wide advertisement will also be placed along with a mail out to fishing clubs and local councils in NSW.

The selection process will begin once all applications have been received. Recommendations for successful projects will be submitted to RFFTEC at the next project review meeting, so that expenditure of funds can take place prior to the end of the 04-05 financial year.

Outcomes

The milestone summary reports for projects sponsored in rounds 1 and 2 of the habitat grant program were distributed for the information of committee members. Ms Milly Hobson advised that nine of the thirteen round 1 projects are now complete. NSW DPI will inform RFFTEC on the continued progress of the other 4 projects. Eleven of the 14 projects sponsored in the second round of applications have commenced the planning process / works (refer to milestone reports). Follow up inspections by conservation managers will complete these projects.

Outcomes continued

Round 3 of the fish habitat grant program was announced on 22nd of July. The closing date for applications has been set for 29 October 2004. The EOI reflects the wishes of the Committee, in particular benefits to recreational anglers, public access areas, dollar for dollar value, technical expertise, the inclusion of a map and photos and a prerequisite for the applicants to contact the local Conservation Manager (Department of Primary Industries) prior to submitting an application. These projects will be ranked by conservation staff according to these criteria and presented to RFFTEC at the next meeting in December.

Rehabilitation projects approved and underway as part of Rounds 1 and 2 represent the rehabilitation of approximately 180 hectares of floodplain and wetland habitat, management of 60km of riparian vegetation through replanting and weed removal and fish passage reinstated for more than 60km of river. A small number of projects are research based and will look at issues such as fish passage design and flows to wetlands.

A guest presenter from Greening Australia, Mr Daniel Williams briefed the committee on the outcomes of the South Creek Rehabilitation project, which received funding support during the first round of proposals. The aim of the project is to provide suitable habitat for Australian Bass and other native freshwater fish along a selected section of South Creek, where the riparian zone had become highly degraded. This has been achieved through the removal of undesirable species such as African Olive and pasture grass, which were replaced with native species such as nutgrass. The cut olive trees have been relocated into the deeper sections of South Creek to provide instream habitat. Some trees were placed just out of the water to provide habitat along the creek bank. Local fishing clubs (Bass Sydney and Hawkesbury Nepean Bass Anglers) have been involved in these activities and have been highly supportive of the project.

RFFTEC thanked Mr Williams for his attendance and commended the efforts of Greening Australia on improving bass habitat at South Creek.

Agenda Item 5**Vera Fiala****Issue**

Licence advertising, re-print of fishing guides and fishing clinics update

BackgroundLicence advertising:

Licence advertising was focused on the busy Easter holiday period to encourage responsible fishing and to promote the fishing licence.

Background continued

These included a wide program of radio advertisements on regional and Sydney-based radio stations and freshwater-themed print advertisements in seven peak regional newspapers. Each campaign was also combined with a departmental media release and newspapers were contacted in order to secure editorial/background coverage. Advertisements were also placed in the major fishing magazines.

Fishing guides:

Production of the 2004-05 Freshwater Fishing Guide is on schedule for publication in early October 2004 (rather than the December date of previous years, in order to maximise distribution in peak Christmas/New Year period). A consultant has been appointed following a full tender process. A minimum of 100,000 guides will be produced and widely distributed.

Fishing clinics:

Three highly successful fishing clinics were held at Jindabyne, Ebor and Narrandera in the April school holiday period. The review of the fishing clinics program has progressed significantly. An internal consultation workshop has been held with staff and an external workshop for potential program partners is being planned. Detailed, costed proposals will be developed for the key external stakeholder workshop. This work on redeveloping the fishing clinics program is focused upon:

1. clarifying program objectives and ensuring they are being met
2. Improving clinic content and staff training
3. improving equity and consistency across the state
4. making coordination and budgeting more professional and efficient
5. ensuring all legal requirements are met
6. exploring ways to increase collaboration with fishing clubs and other groups
7. developing corporate sponsorship for the program

Outcomes

The 2004-05 advertising campaign is now being prepared and will commence with the trout opening season in October. The campaign will include departmental media releases and newspapers, magazines, radio advertisements and incorporate regional and coastal newspapers at peak fishing times. Advertisements will be placed in Open Road, Fishing World and Fishing Monthly magazines and in the Victorian newspapers, reminding anglers to buy a NSW fishing licence when fishing the Murray. These will be placed over the Victorian long weekend and in March 2005. Advertisements will also be placed in non-English speaking newspapers in spring and over Easter.

Outcomes continued

Production of the 2004-05 Freshwater Fishing Guide is on schedule for publication in early October 2004. DPI staff are reviewing the content of the guides to ensure the most current information is provided for anglers (currently at 2nd edit stage).

Sponsorship of the guide is being broadened to reduce the cost of production. 100,000 guides will be produced this year for distribution to licence agents and fisheries offices. The Chair requested that the fishing guide sub-committee be given an opportunity to proof read the document before publication. NSW DPI agreed to distribute the draft guide to the subcommittee for proofing, prior to printing.

Three successful fishing clinics were held in the April school holidays at Ebor, Jindabyne and Narrandera. More clinics are scheduled between September to November and special group bookings will be taken. The fishing clinic program review is well underway. The review is focused upon clarifying program objectives, standardising clinic content, improving equity and consistency of clinics across the state and developing corporate sponsorship for the program. Issues discussed at the internal workshop (held in June) included future program audiences; clinic content and inclusions; staffing issues (such as controlling the quality, size and content of the clinics program); how clinics will be co-ordinated both centrally and at each location; training needs for staff and volunteers; options for external collaborations and directions and sponsorship. Feedback from the workshops has been positive and some excellent progress has been made on these issues.

Action: That the freshwater and saltwater fishing guides be distributed to the sub-committee (the Chair of RFFTEC, Mrs Elizabeth Brodbeck and Mr Malcolm Poole - RFFSTEC) for proof reading, prior to the next print run.

Agenda Item 6**Nicole McKirdy****Issue**

Inland Conservation Manager program update

Background

The inland conservation manager's program constitutes two managers, which are based at Port Stephens and Narrandera.

Background continued

These managers are responsible for a variety of activities including weir review, fishway installation, management of the habitat grant program, management of habitat rehabilitation projects, impact assessment, extension and education, recovery planning for threatened species and coordinating the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Native Fish Strategy.

Outcomes

Ms Nicole McKirdy, a conservation manager based at Narrandera, briefed the Committee on the broadscale natural resource management responsibilities of the position. Duties include implementation of the policies and guidelines for bridges, roads, causeways, culverts crossings and similar structures with respect to fish habitat and passage requirements, preparation and implementation of fish habitat protection plans, liaison with development proponents such as Councils, Government agencies and individuals, assessment of development applications, review of environmental factors / environmental impact statements and representation on government boards and committees. Current projects include an investigation into the operations of the Fosters Creek Regulator on Gooragool Lagoon, options for rehabilitation of Dry Lake and Blakneys Creek on the Murray River and other on-ground assessments.

Future challenges for the position are to work with the Catchment Management Authorities to ensure that aquatic conservation / fish passage issues are incorporated into catchment management plans and investment strategies. RFFTEC queried the status of River Management Committees and the Walcha Fish Habitat Options Paper. NSW DPI advised that the River Management Committees will convene once the Water Management Act and Water Sharing Plans were enacted. The draft Walcha Fish Habitat Options Paper is almost complete and will be circulated to members out of session for comment when finalised.

Mr Ping Kee and Mr Rodney Tonkin expressed concern over a mooted future loss of 7 conservation staff positions from within the department as part of the cost saving from the department merger. Mr Ping Kee noted that the ability of staff to provide effective advice on aquatic habitat and fisheries policy in their assessment of regional developments and in the water reforms process in general will be significantly eroded, if a decrease in staff numbers across the department takes place. Mr Ping Kee noted that other State agencies are unable to provide this advice and that local government authorities do not possess the in-house expertise to manage these issues effectively.

Outcomes continued

The Committee concurred that the proposed reduction in conservation staff was a serious concern and asked for the Chair to write to the Minister to seek a commitment for staffing to be maintained at current levels and for a continuation in the focus on regional habitat protection.

Action

That the Chair of RFFTEC write a letter to the Minister seeking a commitment for current conservation staffing levels to be maintained, to ensure a continued focus on regional habitat protection.

Agenda Item 7**Elizabeth Jones/Dee McElligott****Issue**

Inland Fishcare Volunteer program update

Background

The fisheries education officer (based at Bathurst) is responsible for the training and support of Fishcare volunteers in inland NSW. The education officer manages volunteers in the following regions: (Armidale, Bathurst, Orange, Forbes & Cowra, Albury & Corowa, Mudgee & Scone, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Yass). There are 83 active volunteers operating in these regions. The education officer also provides support to other community programs, such as fishing clinics and school visits. Recent activities include tournament monitoring and data collection at the southern competition circuit, 2 days of school workshops at the "bidgee biobuzz", habitat restoration at Lake Canobolas and training of new volunteers in Tamworth and Armidale.

The Recreational Fishing Trusts sub committee met on 26 May to discuss Fishcare management issues raised by the Committee at the previous meeting and during the review of the program in 2003/04, with a view to strengthening and progressing the program in 2004/05.

Outcomes

The Fishcare Volunteer program has been reviewed and consolidated and is now managed under Recreational Fisheries Branch. Volunteer networks have been refocused from 14 to 9 groups. A total of 341 volunteers are registered with the program. New volunteers have been trained at Tamworth to build on the current core groups of volunteers in this region plus the Armidale and Scone regions. A Calendar of Events for the 04/05 financial year, listing training days, field orientation days, planning meetings, advisory and information stands, fishing clinics, surveys and other activities that the EO and volunteers will be involved in during the year, has been implemented in each region (a copy of the plan was distributed amongst committee members).

Outcomes continued

The Education Officer is responsible for re-energising and motivating existing volunteer networks. The expertise of volunteers is being better utilized. For example, school visits can be intimidating for those that don't have group presentation skills. Volunteers that have a background in teaching are being identified, as they are often more willing and capable to conduct these types of visits. Some skill enhancement workshops have been held over the past few months. These have entailed fish kill training, training in tournament data collection, angler field events, fishing clinics and communication techniques.

Fish handling and first aid training has been made available for those volunteers that have committed over 200 hours to the program. Volunteers have also assisted in research activities (e.g. creel surveys), habitat restoration (e.g. removal of weeds, clean ups etc.), school visits and provided the Education Officer with administrative assistance, where required.

John Diplock advised that NSW DPI is promoting awareness of the program in fishing magazines and working with the media unit to increase the profile of the program. A new flyer promoting the Fishcare program has also been produced.

Agenda Item 8**Craig Watson / Cameron Westaway****Issue**

Fish stocking programs, Gaden Trout Hatchery redevelopment, freshwater review

Background

Enhanced government stocking provides for the supply of high priority freshwater recreational species including trout, salmon, Australian bass, Murray cod, golden perch and silver perch. Many of the most important impoundments do not support native fish breeding, thus the stocking of fish in these impoundments supports significant recreational fishing activity.

The Dollar for Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program involves stocking of native fish into rivers and dams in NSW on a dollar-for-dollar basis, with fish sourced from private industry. Typically, 80% of funds are used to stock inland native fish (Murray cod and golden perch) with the other 20% used to stock Australian bass. During 03/04, 536,000 golden perch, 225,000 Murray cod and 230,000 bass were stocked. This is a record figure and 47,000 more fish than the previous best result.

Background continued

Despite severe drought conditions on the inland, this year has seen another record number of fish stocked. The number of fish stocked in 2003/04 (*both Government and dollar for dollar) totals 8.5 million comprising 4 million native fish and 4.5 million salmonids. There has been a record production of native fish at Narrandera Fisheries Centre this year. Native fish from Narrandera, Grafton and Port Stephens were comprised of 1,136,000 Golden Perch, 371,000 Murray Cod, 598,200 Silver Perch, 66,000 Trout Cod and 204,200 Australian Bass. The enhanced fish production program has exceeded last year's record government stocking of 7.2 million fish.

The Gaden Trout Hatchery re-development is now underway with the Visitor Centre refurbishment to include administration and reception areas (funded from consolidated revenue) expected to be completed in mid-August. This will allow staff to vacate the hatching shed. The extension to the existing slab can be poured in October. Major works on the hatching shed can then commence when this season's production is moved from the hatching room to outside tanks in early December/January, allowing full-scale production with a new shed and fingerling production facilities next season.

Outcomes

Stocking

A record 8.5 million fish were stocked in 03/04 (above records of 7.9 and 7.8 million fish for the previous two years), comprising 4.6 million trout, 3.9 million native fish (1 million Murray cod and golden perch were stocked through the Dollar for Dollar Program). A record number of native fish were produced at the Narrandera Fisheries Centre and a record number of Australian bass were stocked through the dollar for dollar program. Figures for the enhanced fish production program and dollar for dollar program in comparison to previous years were presented to the Committee. Stocking figures by catchment were also discussed. Mr Tonkin questioned the increase in numbers of fish stocked in recent years through the dollar for dollar program. Mr McKinnon noted that the increase in numbers of fish released reflected the increase in community participation in the program.

RFFTEC advised that some community concerns had been raised over bass applications to stock in open waters. The Department had met with local angling clubs from Newcastle to Kempsey to discuss their bass stocking proposals. RFFTEC was informed that the NSW DPI will not be undertaking bass stocking in open water systems unless a need has been demonstrated through research. As such, stocking proposals on the Hastings, Williams, Richmond & Myall Rivers have been declined this year. RFFTEC discussed the rumoured closing of the Grafton Research Station and any future impacts to silver perch stockings.

Outcomes continued

The Chair advised that ACoRF would raise the issue of the closing of infrastructure at Grafton and staff reductions with the Minister.

The draft native fish stocking plan for the 04/05 season was released in July for public comment. The draft plan lists projected release figures for major impoundments and a number of smaller reservoirs across NSW for the coming season. An allocation of fish for small dams is included for stocking additional areas, following public consultation. There is a need to determine threatened species interactions & drought impacts before finalising the 04/05 plan for trout and native species.

Gaden hatchery

The Gaden Trout Hatchery re-development is now underway with the Visitor Centre refurbishment to include administration and reception areas (funded from consolidated revenue) expected to be completed in mid-August. This will allow staff to vacate the hatching shed. The extension to the existing slab can be poured in October. Major works on the hatching shed can then commence when this season's production is moved from the hatching room to outside tanks in early December/January, allowing full-scale production with a new shed and fingerling production facilities next season.

Freshwater review

Cameron Westaway advised that NSW DPI had met with the freshwater management planning committee to consider changes to freshwater fishing regulations. The purpose of the review is to simplify regulatory arrangements and standardise fishing rules where possible, in line with cross-border arrangements. A number of issues have been considered including banning set lines, increasing the Murray cod size limit to 60cm, simplification of trout rules, better protection for Australian bass during the spawning period, clarifying bag limits for transport and possession and consolidation of inland closures. These issues are being canvassed in a community discussion paper.

Mr Tonkin requested that 5-yearly reviews of fishing regulations be re-instated. NSW DPI advised that fishing regulation reviews generally take place every five years, in line with regulatory review subordinate legislation. However, the Chair advised that the previous review was unavoidably postponed due to the release of the Lower Murray Endangered Ecological Community Species Impact Statement and current Recreational Fishing EIS/FMS processes.

Issue

Inland Fisheries Officers update

Background

Six Fisheries Officer's positions were created after the reintroduction of the freshwater fishing fee to restore inland numbers to the level that had existed prior to the loss of the licence in 1988. The six positions are currently located at Inverell, Bathurst, Wellington, Cooma/Jindabyne, Albury and Buronga.

These officers continue to enhance the overall effectiveness of inland compliance strategies in NSW.

These positions form an integral component of the team of officers based in inland NSW. Operations are conducted in all inland areas, including Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers, inland impoundments, Darling River and tributaries, highland trout waters. Having additional fisheries officers on hand provided an effective deterrent against illegal activity and afforded good opportunities to distribute advisory material and respond to angler enquiries.

Outcomes

NSW DPI discussed the functions and duties of Fisheries Officers within the western region. Overall compliance on the Murray River with the requirement to hold a fishing licence had been high (93%). The outcomes of some major compliance operations conducted over the past year were detailed. Additional resources have been provided and many successful prosecutions have been mounted. There has been a greater emphasis on interagency and joint patrols. In addition to vessels and vehicles, fixed wing aircraft and helicopters have been utilised when required. New technology such as the nautilus database, digital cameras, night vision equipment, GPS, satellite phones etc... are being used to enhance the ability of Fisheries Officers to gather evidence for prosecutions. Some examples of significant and major seizures were presented. These had taken place at Lake Lyell, Murray River near Euston, Darling River near Wentworth, Edward River near Deniliquin, Providence Portal near Adaminaby and Tumut.

An aquaculture training program / workshop had been attended by staff and inspections of aquaculture facilities in the district were being undertaken. Compliance staff have also attended a number of major community forums such as boat and tackle shows and agricultural shows and have assisted with the children's fishing clinics at the Government hatcheries. They have also been involved with other clinics in their districts. New fishnotes have been developed and can be found on the website.

Outcomes continued

The fishnotes provide useful information on fishing, accommodation, popular places to fish, facilities, fishing tips etc.. across the regions. This information can be integrated into the impoundments access guide.

RFFTEC queried the status of management for Lakes Hume and Mulwala. Peter Tilbrook advised that new management arrangements for the lakes had been declared and would come into effect on 1 September, 2004. Fishing in Lake Mulwala will fall under the jurisdiction of NSW and fishing in Lake Hume will be the responsibility of Victoria from this date onwards. Previously anglers had to conceptualise a line between the two lakes with separate licensing requirements on each side of the border. This had created enforcement problems, but will soon no longer be an issue.

RFFTEC asked if there were currently any vacancies held within the 6 trust funded positions. NSW DPI advised that the Hume office was presently carrying two vacancies – the trust funded fisheries officer position and the core-funded District Officer position. This had resulted in a positive carry over in the inland fisheries officer cost centre during 03-04. The trust funded officer position will be filled once a District Fisheries Officer has been appointed. The District Fisheries Officer needs to be appointed first, as this person provides training and supervision for the Fisheries Officer.

Other business**Issue**

Upcoming vacancies on RFFTEC - Craig Watson

Background

Expressions of Interest for new membership for positions expiring in August have been advertised and submission of applications close on 13 August. This will be the last meeting for current members representing regions 2, 3 and 6. Current members are eligible to re-apply. Another expression of interest process will be conducted in November for positions expiring in February 05.

Outcomes

Craig Watson re-iterated that an expression of interest had been advertised for upcoming vacancies on RFFTEC and applications had been received. A decision on new appointees was pending.

Issue

Project milestone reports, April to July - Craig Watson

Background

Trust fund project managers have prepared milestone/progress reports for the Committees information. These reports include details on project objectives and activities since the last meeting and any variations to the project. Project milestone reports will be presented to the Committee at the meeting.

Outcomes

Freshwater trust quarterly project account reports were distributed. Members were advised to contact NSW DPI out of session with any queries on the account reports.

Issue

Recreational Fishing Licence sales

Outcomes

A report of monthly licence sales since the implementation of the licence was distributed to members at the meeting. Members were advised to contact NSW DPI out of session with any queries on licence sales statistics.

Issue

Fishery Management Strategy – Lake Taupo

Outcomes

Mr Tonkin advised that he had discussed the management program for the trout fishery in Lake Taupo with Mr John Gibbs, Area Manager of the Tongariro -Taupo Conservancy, during a recent fishing trip in New Zealand. A report on the management arrangements for the lake was tabled for the information of members.

Issue

Bass tagging program, Shoalhaven River

Outcomes

Mr Steve Tooley advised that the equipment for the Shoalhaven River bass tagging project had been obtained and sampling would commence shortly. The waterproof cases for the 4 hand held global positioning systems had been purchased from the USA, and a cost saving of \$225.00 had been made.

Issue

Impoundments access fishing guide

Outcomes

NSW DPI is preparing an access guide to NSW impoundments which details basic information sought by anglers, for example, impoundment stocking histories, directions to impoundments, amenities provided, catch information and maps of impoundment locations. A temporary assistant continues to develop a database and collate all available information on stocked impoundments in NSW. This database is almost complete following an extensive mailout to dam owners and internet searches. A work placement student has also been recruited to the program at no cost to the trust and is undertaking validation of the database using phone surveys. This will improve the quality and amount of information to be included in the guide.

A meeting has been held a publisher to discuss potential joint publishing options. This publisher has published a number of access guides in the past and it is logical to use them. RFFTEC expressed concern that ownership of the impoundments guide would be lost from the trust if the guide was sold as an independent publication. Negotiations with the publisher are ongoing and NSW DPI will seek input from the Committee on the details of the proposal and planned method of distribution, once the publication issue has been finalised.

Next meeting

The next RFFTEC meeting was scheduled for the Tuesday 7th of December, 2004 at Penrith Panthers, Penrith.

Meeting concluded at 3.30pm.