

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee
Draft Outcomes - Meeting 31, 26 November 2008

1. Apologies

None

2. Confirmation of outcomes from previous RFFTEC meeting

The draft outcomes of the 30th RFFTEC meeting with corrections (previously circulated) were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting. **Moved:** Kevin McKinnon
Seconded: Karl Schaerf. **Carried.**

3. Action Items from meeting 30

All other action items had been completed.

4. NSW DPI Organisational Structure

DPI advised that the Wild Harvest Fisheries Branch was restructured to ensure best service delivery in 2008. A new Fisheries Operations Branch has been created and Mr Peter Turnell is the Director of the Branch. The position of Manager, Commercial Fisheries and Manager, Recreational Fisheries report to the Director. See attached organisational chart.

5. NSW Recreational Fishing Trust Investment Plan and format for 2009 budget meeting

The Minister has approved the Recreational Fishing Trust Investment Plan in light of recommendations from RFSTEC and ACoRF. The various platforms of approved programs were incorporated in the draft Investment Plan which had been provided to members.

The Trust Investment Plan will be subject to annual review to account for any variations in revenue and to direct funds towards new emerging priorities, if required. An annual community expression of interest for Trust funded programs will continue to be advertised by DPI in the future.

A meeting format for the budget meeting in early 2009, with details of a joint RFSTEC and RFFTEC session, was presented at the meeting. Annual reports will be provided to the Committees prior to the budget meeting to review progress of the various programs funded by the Trusts.

6. Government Licensing System

DPI advised that the Recreational Licensing System was being integrated into the Government Licensing Service (GLS), which commenced on September 1. Stage 1 of the integration included the issuing of plastic licences and licence renewal notices. The development of the GLS database has also now been implemented and over 24,000 plastic licences have been issued since 1 September. Stage 2, involving the amalgamation of the agent management system into the GLS database, will occur early next year.

7. World Recreational Fishing Conference

Ms Ann Garard (RFSTEC, ACoRF and MERCMAC) and Mr Bryan van der Walt (DPI) attended the World Recreational Fishing Conference in Daina Beach, Florida USA on 10-13 November 2008. There were approximately 230 presenters from around the world at the conference including speakers from the United States, Australia, South America and various eastern and western Europe countries. There were approximately 180 papers and 17 poster presentations were given over 3 concurrent sessions. A full report on the conference will be provided at a future RFFTEC meeting.

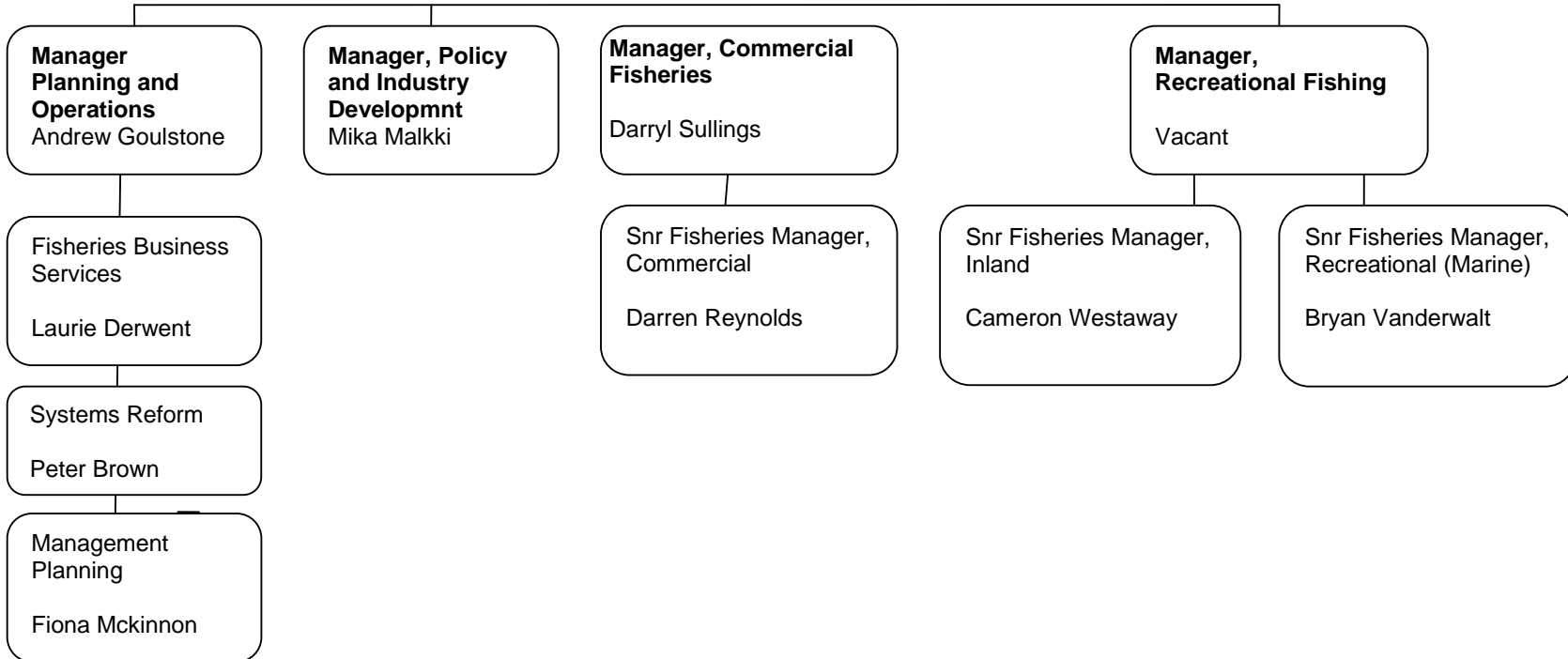
**Deputy Director General and Executive Director,
Fisheries, Compliance and Regional Relations**

George Davey

**Director,
Fisheries Operations
Branch**

Peter Turnell

Executive Assistant
Megan Lloyd/Besi
Belalis



8. Proposed sale of the Gaden Trout Hatchery

On Friday 21 November, the Minister for Primary Industries met with the Member for Monaro, the Chair of ACoRF and other key stakeholders to discuss the proposed closure of the Gaden Trout Hatchery. The proposal was part of the NSW Government's Mini Budget announcement on 11 November and associated reforms to the Public Sector. Eight departmental field stations (including Gaden) were identified as being in excess to the core services of the department and were proposed to be consolidated as part of an overall new extension and advisory strategy, aimed at refocusing delivery of services from within the department from a district based model to a regional model. The outcome of the meeting between the Minister and stakeholders was an agreement to delay the closure of the Gaden hatchery subject to stakeholders seeking an investment from the Freshwater Trust to cover recurrent expenditure costs at the hatchery – total \$417,000 per annum.

The Committee reviewed capital and recurrent expenditure at the Gaden trout hatchery and the current financial position of the Freshwater Trust. The Committee noted that funding for a variety of programs may need to be adjusted or possibly withdrawn at next years budget meeting, if recurrent expenditure at the hatchery is funded, depending on the balance of the Trust at the end of the financial year. Programs identified by the Committee requiring possible budget review were: Fishing Promotion and Event Management; Inland Conservation Manager; Habitat Action Program; Recreational Fishing Guides; Enhancing Australian bass populations in the Clarence River; NSW Socio Economic Survey of Recreational Fishing; Scientific Data Collection from Recreational Fishing Tournaments; Survival and Release of Caught Fish and Dollar for Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program.

Motion: The Committee supported funding of \$417,000 for the **Gaden Trout hatchery** commencing 2009/10, to cover the cost of ongoing recurrent expenditure at the hatchery, subject to the following conditions:

Condition 1: that a management board of directors from relevant fishing organisations with legal recognition be set up as a management body to oversee the operations of the hatchery;

Condition 2: that the long term lease of the property be investigated;

Condition 3: that an MOU be established to guarantee that there will be no additional closures of recreational fishing facilities without the agreement of ACORF and that

Condition 4: Any financial profits from the Gaden Hatchery come back to the Freshwater Trust.

Moved: Karl Schaerf. **Seconded:** Kevin McKinnon. **Carried.** DPI noted that it would investigate Conditions 1 and 2 through the Trust funded DPI Corporate Governance Program, currently funded by the Saltwater Trust.

9. HQAS implementation and bass breeding program, PSFC

Mr Ian Lyall provided an overview of the NSW Hatchery Quality Assurance Scheme (HQAS) which has been developed to meet new breeding/hatchery production requirements of the 2005 Fish Stocking Fisheries Management Strategy. A key principle of the HQAS is the requirement for hatcheries to use sufficient broodfish to achieve an effective population size (N_e) in order to maximise the amount of genetic variation in stocked fish. However a new procedure for breeding Australian bass involving separation of pair's matings, which is now used to meet new HQAS genetic guidelines, has posed some challenges in bass hatcheries. This is because single pairs of bass have been found to be far less predictable spawners than when spawning multiple pairs through the traditional mass spawning method.

Dr Stewart Fielder advised that the application of this new breeding technique this year has lead to a production shortfall within the northern and central zone areas. New broodstock have been captured from these regions and are currently being held in controlled phototherm tanks. NSW DPI will aim to spawn from these fish in Autumn next year, in order to ensure a stocking in central and northern impoundments before the end of the current financial year.

Mr Lyall advised that HQAS standards in relation to breeding methodologies for Australian bass will be reviewed in light of these difficulties in order to identify optimal techniques for fish propagation and also ensure appropriate genetic diversity of fish to be stocked. In the interim, NSW DPI will permit fish releases at a particular location where minimum population size requirements for bass have been reached by combining population size of batches from Government and private hatcheries to meet genetic guidelines and the broodfish and corresponding fish batches being successfully tested/screened for Nodavirus before any release is conducted.

Mr Cameron Westaway noted that RFFTEC may wish to consider the purchase of up to \$20,000 worth of bass from private hatcheries this year through the dollar for dollar program to ensure stockings in Tallowa Dam, Lake Lyell and Lake Wallace, given the production shortfall at Port Stephens. Mr Westaway sought the concurrence of the Committee to potentially exceed the dollar for dollar program budget in order to undertake these stockings.

Motion: The Committee supported the purchase of up to \$20,000 of bass from private hatcheries through the Dollar for Dollar program for stocking into Tallowa Dam, Lake Lyell and Lake Wallace subject to availability and to potentially exceed the dollar for dollar program budget this year in order to undertake these extra fish releases. **Moved:** Kevin McKinnon. **Seconded:** Karl Schaerf. **Carried.**

10. Nodavirus research in wild bass populations

Dr Stewart Fielder advised that additional information is needed on the status of Nodavirus in bass in the wild and that the highly sensitive Real time PCR test has been recently developed to test the presence / absence of Nodavirus in Australian bass. Dr Fielder queried the merit of a proposal for the Biosecurity Division to collect upstream migrating juvenile bass for PCR testing. The Chair noted that a funding application could be submitted for the Committees consideration. *Action item: That NSW DPI develop a funding proposal for sampling of upstream migrating juvenile bass for PCR testing, to determine the status of Nodavirus in wild juvenile bass populations, for consideration by RFFTEC.*

11. Reciprocity of recreational fishing licences with DPI Fisheries Victoria

The Chair advised that a request had been received from DPI Fisheries Victoria to introduce a reciprocal Victorian / NSW recreational fishing licence. DPI presented the potential risks and benefits of licence reciprocity. The Committee noted that there would potentially be a substantial loss of revenue to the Recreational Fishing Trusts if a reciprocal recreational fishing licence were to be introduced as well as other issues relating to joint management of funds and expenditure between NSW and Victoria.

Motion: The Committee did not support the introduction of a reciprocal recreational fishing licensing system with DPI Fisheries Victoria. **Moved:** Kevin McKinnon **Seconded:** Karl Schaerf. **Carried.**

12. Freshwater Compliance

Mr Pat Tully presented details of the recruitment schedule for Trust funded inland compliance officer positions. Approval to advertise inland vacancies externally has been granted, which will provide an opportunity to attract candidates from local areas. Recruitment to existing inland Fisheries Officer vacancies will occur once appointments to other vacant Fisheries Officer Grade 3 positions have been finalised.

Mr Tully provided a summary of fisheries compliance activities undertaken in inland NSW over the past 6 months. The presentation included information on enforcement outcomes such as fishers checked and compliance rates plus significant apprehensions and court results. It was noted that more than 1,700 freshwater anglers had been inspected between July and November 2008, with an overall compliance rate of 93%. Mr Tully noted that a Compliance Management System is being adopted in NSW with an emphasis on preventative compliance measures and effective planning and mobilisation of resources for specific targeted operations. Crime mapping techniques are also being investigated to enhance the quality of intelligence gathering.

13. Habitat Action Program

A proposal for the management and completion of aquatic rehabilitation and restoration projects through the Habitat Action Program in 2008/09 (previously funded \$200,000 per annum at the May budget meeting) was presented by NSW DPI. It was proposed that funding and resources for the program should be allocated to four key theme areas to provide opportunities for leveraging funding support from other bodies. The four key theme areas were: *Recreational Fishers Habitat Network* – to establish a dedicated Fishers Habitat Network to build capacity and engage more recreational anglers in aquatic habitat rehabilitation projects and programs (\$6,000); *Coastal Fish Passage barriers* - to remove freshwater in-stream barriers such as weirs, floodgates and road crossings (\$24,532); *Demonstration Reaches* – establishment of reaches of river where multiple management interventions in partnership with other authorities e.g. MDBC, CMA's are put in place for the purpose of rehabilitating and conserving local native fish communities (\$117,508) and *Habitat Improvements* – to address local habitat issues brought to the attention of the program by local recreational anglers or other groups which have angler support (\$26,960).

RFFTEC noted that funding for the Habitat Action Program was provided on the basis that specific grant applications were to be submitted at meetings throughout the year and that each grant was to be reviewed on a case by case basis. The Committee did not support the proposal in its current form and requested that it be amended to ensure that individual applications are forwarded to members for consideration and that the DPI management component should be included in each application, as part of the overall assessment of the proposal. The Chair noted that a revised proposal could be re-circulated to Committee members out of session for consideration.

Motion: The Committee did not support the proposed format of the Habitat Action Program.
Moved: Kevin McKinnon, Seconded: Brian Hale. **Carried.** *Action item: That NSW DPI prepares a revised Habitat Action Program proposal for circulation to Committee members out of session.*

Note. A revised Habitat Action Program Investment Plan was prepared by DPI after the meeting and circulated to RFFTEC out of session. The Committee supported the revised Investment Plan. Members provided comments on the implementation of the program, which were provided to the Habitat Action project manager.

14. New Trust Fund applications

The following Trust applications were received by DPI since the last meeting and were reviewed by the Expenditure Committee:

Program supported by RFFTEC

Platform: Fishing Access and Facilities

Program	Proponent	2008/09
Anglers Reach Boat Ramp Signage - aims to install recreational interpretive signage at two boat ramps at Lake Eucumbene near Anglers Reach providing information on recreational fishing rules. DPI to provide recreational fisheries signage. Trust funding is provided for signage installation costs. Motion: The Committee supports funding for the installation costs components of the program. Moved: Brian Hale. Seconded: Ian Ward. Carried.	Lake Eucumbene Chamber of Commerce / Snowy River Shire Council	\$600
Fishing facilities at Mannus Lake - aims to build a fish cleaning table at Mannus Lake picnic area for use by recreational anglers and to attract visitors to the area. Motion: The Committee supports funding for the program. Moved: Ian Ward. Seconded: Debbie Lennon Carried.	Tumbarumba Shire Council	\$6,270

NSW DPI advised that it would supply the recreational fishing species bag and size limit signage for installation at the Anglers Reach boat ramp. The applicant should approach NSW Maritime for information on boating rules and water safety. *Action item: NSW DPI to provide recreational fishing species bag and size limit signage to the Lake Eucumbene Chamber of Commerce / Snowy River Shire Council for installation at the Anglers Reach Boat Ramp area.*

15. Project Meeting Reports

Trust Fund meeting reports for DPI and external programs currently underway were reviewed by the Committee. Final reports for one Trust funded program: Habitat utilisation, movement and distribution information required to plan to control Banded Grunter, a noxious pest fish, in the Clarence River was submitted for the Committee's information.

16. General business

1. Vehicle mileage rate: Vehicle mileage rate has been increased since the last meeting. Members may invoice the department for the Official business rate for motor vehicle mileage if they are self employed. Otherwise, the casual vehicle mileage rate should be used. For those members that are self employed, the amount to be claimed will be shown on the member's payment summary as a taxable allowance.

2. Exceeding bag limits to enable upgrade of fish in fishing competitions: Mr Richard Ping Kee questioned whether tournament competitors could catch fish once the daily limit has been reached in order for exchange any larger fish that are subsequently caught with existing fish kept in live holding facilities. NSW DPI advised that it will refer this issue to the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing for consideration. *Action item: For NSW DPI to refer the issue of exceeding bag limits for catch and release fishing competitions to ACoRF for consideration.*

3. Fork length and total length measurement of fish: Mr Max Graham queried the discrepancy in the Recreational Fishing Guide relating to measurement of Australian bass and Murray cod to determine fish weight. The guide currently shows a fork length measurement for Australian bass and a total length measurement for Murray cod for calculation of fish weight. DPI noted that the fork length measurement is the scientific method used to calculate weight for Australian bass however it will investigate whether this can be replaced in the guide with a total length for legal length calculation to avoid confusion of fish measurement methods. *Action item: NSW DPI investigate conversion of the fork*

length for weight calculation for Australian bass to a total length for legal length calculation, as per Murray cod for printing in the 2010 Recreational Fishing Guide.

4. Recognition of trust contribution by persons exempt from fishing fee e.g. Pensioners: Mr Tom Williams asked whether there was an opportunity for people who were exempt from paying the Recreational Fishing Fee to make a contribution to the Trust should they choose to do so and if there was also an ability to provide formal recognition of any such contribution. NSW DPI acknowledged the merit of the proposal and advised it would investigate a cost effective mechanism to enable such a contribution to be made, such as a certificate of recognition. *Action item: That NSW DPI investigate a cost effective mechanism for enabling persons exempt from the fishing fee to make contributions to the Trusts and to allow for the recognition of any such contributions e.g. by way of a certificate of appreciation.*

5. Angler access at Tillegra Dam: Mr Karl Schaerf requested an update on future angler access arrangements at the proposed Tillegra Dam on the NSW Central Coast. The Angler Access manager advised that angler access will be provided at the dam in the upper eastern arm and that powered craft will be permitted on the dam in this area. The area around the off take (centre of the dam) and the lower western arm will be closed to boating access. NSW DPI will investigate options with NSW Crown Lands to provide future access to the lower western arm of the dam for fishing via an existing crown road.

18. Meeting close and next RFFTEC meeting

5-6 May 2009.

19. Other project updates

Project updates on the following programs were presented and discussed after the close of the meeting: Enhanced fish production and recreational fish stocking programs, Angler access through crown reserves / public land, Freshwater Fishing Calendar Photo Competition and Clarence River Fish Monitoring Programs (the movement patterns and habitat use of the banded grunter, catfish and Australian bass within the Clarence River catchment). RFFTEC expressed its appreciation to all presenters and requested that copies of DPI presentations be circulated out of session for the information of members. *Action item: That NSW DPI circulates Trust fund project presentations out of session for the information of Committee members.*

