

**NSW Advisory Council on
Recreational Fishing**

Minutes

18th MEETING

9:30am, 22 June, 2001

<p>Conference Room, Cronulla Fisheries Centre 202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla</p>

Attendance

Chair

Bruce Schumacher

Members

Elaine Garvey

Scott Mitchell

Peter Goadby

Mark Umbers

Lionel Jones

Robert Cooper

Terry Maloney

Mel Brown

Mark Smith (deputising for Ann Lee)

Graham Moore

Margaret Dodson

NSW Fisheries (observers)

Glenn Tritton, Principal Manager Fisheries Services

Andrew Sanger, Regional Manager Western

Andrew Read, Senior Manager Protected Areas

John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries

Nick James, Manager Recreational Fisheries

John Spyrakis, Fisheries Management Officer, Recreational Fisheries

Apologies

Steve Dunn, Director of Fisheries

George Dodds, Director Fisheries Services

Ann Lee

Lisa Terry

Tim Simpson (resigned)

Agenda Items

1. Director's report (no report)
2. Banning of spearfishing from Swansea Bridge to Coon Island (John Diplock)
3. Marking hand held nets with compliance tags (Glenn Tritton)
4. Banning of nipper pumping in Maianbar channel (Nick James)
5. Joint meetings of NSW and VIC Ministries (Andrew Sanger)
6. Research prioritising (Bruce Schumacher)
7. Concern about berleying for sharks close to shore (John Diplock)
8. Proposed fishing closures at Eraring and Vales Point Power station outlets (Glenn Tritton)
9. Report on Recfish meeting (Bruce Schumacher)
10. RFFTEC budget for 2000/2001 (Andrew Sanger)
11. Budget and proposed expenditure of charter fishing trust funds (Nick James)
12. Issues arising from the 3rd General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation Committee meeting
 - a) Process for Trust applications (John Diplock)
 - b) Dusky flathead and jewfish regulations (John Diplock)
 - c) Compliance Working Group recommendations (Glenn Tritton)
 - d) Budget recommendations for expenditure from the Saltwater Trust (Bruce Schumacher)
13. General Business
 - a) Aquatic Reserves update (Andrew Read)
 - b) Open Community Forums
 - c) Baitfish Working Group (Darryl Sullings)
 - d) Update of where are at with IPA's (Elaine Garvey)
 - e) Research into Macquarie Perch (Andrew Sanger)
 - f) Contact Details update

Welcome by Chair

Bruce Schumacher introduced and welcomed two new members, Mr Graham Moore and Ms Margaret Dodson, to the Council. Mr Mark Smith was nominated as the deputy for Ms Lisa Terry, who was unable to attend. Apology for not attending was received by Council member Ms Ann Lee.

Minutes of previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting were provided to members for confirmation.

Business arising from the minutes

N/A.

Other Business

It was noted that some items would be discussed out of order, due to the availability of NSW Fisheries staff/presenters.

Next meeting

It is proposed to hold the next meeting on Thursday 27 September 2001.
Wollstonecraft/Cronulla (preferred venues)

Agenda item 1

Director

Issue

Director's report

Background

No report.

Discussion

The Director was unable to attend the meeting.

Issue

Request to ban spearfishing from Swansea Bridge to Coon Island.

Background

Representations were made by Mr Milton Orkopoulos MP, Member for Swansea, on behalf of a local recreational fisher, concerning the banning of spearfishing from Swansea Bridge to Coon Island.

The fisher believes that spearfishers diving in this area scare the fish, making it difficult for anglers to catch anything. Further, as spearfishing is already banned from Swansea Bridge to the Heads, it is just an extension of that ban that is required.

Discussion

A spearfishing closure already exists at the front end of the channel. The proposed closure would be an extension further into the lake and the Council did not consider it justified as there was insufficient evidence presented to establish a case.

Concerns were expressed regarding some of the proposals put forward to the Council. The Council believes that these kinds of issues should be dealt with out of session, and that they should move away from considering one person complaints. The Council was advised that the Minister had requested ACoRF's point of view on these issues.

Recommendation

ACoRF does not support the proposal to ban spearfishing from Swansea Bridge to Coon Island.

Issue

Marking hand held prawn nets with a tag for compliance purposes.

Background

NSW Fisheries Officers have advised that some people are using one registration for a number of different nets, some of which are illegal (mesh size and net lengths). To solve this problem, FO's have started to record some details on the registration certificate to provide a brief description of the net. This is relatively effective, however, people are still often found to be using an illegal net with a similar description.

Discussion

Consideration should be given to annual registration and tagging of nets. The hand held prawn nets referred to are 6m (20 feet) drag nets.

Field Services advised that there are a number of issues that require further discussion prior to a decision being made. The Council was advised that this agenda item would be presented for information only at this stage, however, ACoRF will be included in future discussions.

Resolution

Fisheries Services would like to consider issues associated with this situation in greater detail and provide further information to ACoRF in the future.

Issue

Request to have nipper pumping banned in the channel at Maianbar, Port Hacking.

Background

The channel at Maianbar is a popular area for nipper pumping. Locals have made complaints that pumping occurs at an excessive level so as to make the sand pot-holed and unattractive, and that some people are illegally selling their catch to local bait and tackle stores.

At present, there is no bag limit on saltwater nippers, however nipper pumping is prohibited in some local areas, including Gunnamatta Bay.

Local residents have contacted and made complaints to the Sans Souci Fisheries Office (SSFO). As a result, patrols in the area have increased to at least two times per week at low tide, usually by plain clothed officers. Several groups have been followed to see if people are selling their catch, but to date no one has been caught. SSFO has compiled a list of possible suspects. Local residents have also taken photos of people nipper pumping which have been forwarded to the SSFO to assist in their investigations. These residents have proposed a closure to the sand flats area at Maianbar.

It is recommended that ACoRF consider a ban on nipper pumping in the channel at Maianbar, Port Hacking.

Discussion

A map of Port Hacking was provided to the Council highlighting the area in question. NSW Fisheries suggested that a closure in Cabbage Tree Basin (ie the channel) be considered to address the resource allocation issue.

NSW Fisheries was advised that nipper pumping in Port Hacking can be traced as far back as 1936 and that there is no sign of degradation to the area or a decline in the nipper population. It was also noted that the appearance of the sandflats is regularly restored by wave and tide action.

Recommendation

ACoRF does not support a closure to restrict the recreational harvest of nippers at Maianbar, Port Hacking.

Issue

Joint meeting of NSW and Victorian Ministries – Rationalising recreational fishing on Lakes Hume and Mulwala and along the Murray River.

Background

The NSW and Victorian Cabinets held a joint meeting on 26 March 2001, to discuss delivering improved outcomes in the environment, the economy, and basic government issues.

Recreational fishing issues were discussed. In particular, an agreement was reached to move towards rationalising recreational fishing on Lakes Hume and Mulwala and along the Murray River, to help end many years of dispute and debate.

Under the proposals NSW would manage the recreational fisheries of Lake Mulwala, while Victoria would manage Lake Hume. Anglers will need only a single licence from the relevant State for recreational fishing in these lakes

The proposed arrangements will simplify current seasonal opening and closing arrangements, size and bag limits, and gear entitlements. Boundary limits for the two lakes for compliance purposes would also be made clearer.

Discussion

Various areas of Lakes Hume and Mulwala lie within both NSW and VIC. Victorians have lobbied for a reciprocal licence on the two Lakes and along the Murray River. The NSW government does not support this position, however, it is keen to resolve the issue and develop a solution that is equitable for both states.

Following the meeting it was proposed that Victoria manage Lake Hume and NSW manage Lake Mulwala. A draft Public Consultation Paper is expected to be distributed during the winter months of 2001 for a 6-month consultation period. The Ministers need to agree on the issues and content of the paper prior to release. Following consultation, memorandum between the two state Ministers will occur to ensure all issues raised during the consultation process are considered. Council members familiar with these developments will provide further information and outline concerns before the draft is finalised.

Concerns were raised by Council members that there was a problem with the way the proposal was announced, which has led to members of the public believing these new arrangements are already in place. Also, there is concern that Victoria will not manage Lake Hume as effectively as NSW.

The Victorian government recognises that they have to improve their stocking program to match that of NSW. Victorian managers are working towards securing funds to be able to match the NSW stocking rate.

Members requested clarification as to the financial impact of the proposal. The Council was informed that Lake Mulwala was more of a trophy lake and that the majority of people visiting the lake would be fishing. However, Lake Hume is more of a family holiday destination. There would be minor financial impact on both states.

Concerns were raised that NSW representatives attended Victorian recreational fishing expos but we usually don't get Victorian representatives attending NSW recreational fishing expos. The Council was advised that approximately one third of our freshwater clients come from Victoria, indicating that the majority of fishers travelling between the two states were Victorians into NSW.

Resolution

That ACoRF make recommendations on this issue, out of session or at the next meeting, following input into the consultation process by Council members.

Issue

Research prioritising - Obtaining a list of research questions and needs.

Background

In fisheries research, there are always many more questions asked than resources and funding available to answer them. This means that research questions and needs must undergo a process of prioritisation within each field of research (eg. commercial, recreational, conservation, etc.) and between each field. The first step in research prioritisation is to compile lists of research needs and rank them.

The most crucial lists of research questions and needs are those obtained from each Advisory Council. Once armed with these, individual research needs from each Council will be prioritised against each other and against those compiled by the department. This prioritisation is done by the NSW Fisheries Executive and the Minister. The Chief Scientist of NSW Fisheries has the role of coordinating this process.

The first and most important step is to obtain research questions and needs (in ranked order) from each Advisory Council. Therefore, ACoRF is invited to provide such a list. In compiling these lists, each advisory Council will need to consult with those Management Advisory Committees, fishing clubs and other groups that provide advice to them.

The recently formed Fisheries Research Advisory Committee (FRAC) is a key part in this process. After ACoRF has completed its role, the FRAC assesses those research projects to be submitted to FRDC against the priority list of research questions and needs, developed by the above process.

The entire process will be repeated annually and will progressively incorporate the needs advised from environmental assessments and the Fisheries Resource Conservation Assessment Council (FRCAC).

Please note that a proforma for Prioritising of Fisheries Research Areas will be distributed at the meeting.

Discussion

The aim of this process is to determine where research money should be allocated in future years, now that the Saltwater Trust has been formed. It was requested that ACoRF members take the proforma away and list research priorities for the next meeting.

Action Item: Send a list of current research and ongoing programs run by NSW Fisheries to all ACoRF members for prioritising.

It was requested that a NSW Fisheries representative attend the next ACoRF meeting to discuss and inform the Council about *Caulerpa taxifolia*.

An economic survey on recreational and commercial fishing in a small town such as Yamba and Bermagui was suggested as a research priority. Yamba would be suitable

as it is a small coastal town that can be studied quite quickly. Scientific research is also needed to determine impacts and economic benefits on recreational fishing areas.

Motion: ACoRF recommends that funds be made available to conduct an economic survey, comparing recreational and commercial fishing activities, in a small coastal town (location to be determined by GRFFIC/RFSTEC).

Motion carried.

Motion: ACoRF recommends a proposal be put to GRFFIC to consider allocating funds for Mr Goadby to attend the International Billfish Symposium in Cairns in August 2001.

Motion carried.

Resolution

That ACoRF members prioritise fisheries research areas, to enable development of a research priority list at the next meeting.

Issue

Concern about the use of berley to attract sharks close to the shore.

Background

Concerns have been raised by a Newcastle resident, that shark fishers are placing large amounts of berley close to shore. The resident reported that a boat was sighted putting approximately 10 boxes of berley into the water to attract tiger sharks, just 1km off Redhead south of Newcastle.

NSW Fisheries is very concerned about this practice and would like to discuss options with ACoRF. One option could be to restrict the use of berley within 3 nautical miles of shore.

South Australia prohibits the use of berley to attract sharks, except for restricted use by tourist boat operators under permit. Victoria has banned the use of mammal products in berley. Management and research staff are currently investigating restrictions on the use of berley in other states.

Discussion

The Council feels that more information/evidence is required before they are in a position to support this type of closure, however, investigations should commence if it is a re-occurring event.

There is a sign at Tathra wharf that states 'no shark berleying', but the problem is that there is no way of telling if someone is berleying for sharks or other species, for example, snapper.

It was highlighted that neither of the game-fishing clubs in the area supports this proposal. It would be very difficult for Compliance staff to determine the difference between berleying for sharks or other species.

Recommendation

That NSW Fisheries write to the complainant stating there appears to be little supporting evidence to show this is a problem at this time, however, if further concerns are raised and more evidence presented the Council proposes to re-investigate this situation.

Issue

Proposal to implement fishing closures at Eraring and Vales Point power station outlet canals.

Background

As has been the case for a considerable period of time, recreational anglers from Sydney have been travelling to these locations on Lake Macquarie. A cross section of these anglers is prevalent at night during the winter months, with the bulk of their catch consisting of prohibited size fish.

Large schools of juvenile fish congregate in the waters of the outlet canals during winter. They are attracted to the warm water and abundant food supply provided by the outlet habitat.

These locations are policed regularly and history suggests that advisory and compliance initiatives are not acting as an effective deterrent. In certain instances particular offenders have been apprehended on numerous occasions.

Local anglers also use the outlet canals, predominantly during daylight hours in winter. Luderick is the major species targeted by these fishers.

Commercial fishers use meshing nets to target mullet at the canals at dawn and dusk, in winter.

The last 10 years have seen a dramatic increase in unsavoury behaviour by offenders apprehended at the outlet canals. An officer has been assaulted and physically beaten at Munmorah canal. Officer safety is paramount. Police assistance has been requested for night patrols.

Present Position

The cooler months have arrived and the visitors from Sydney have returned. A new initiative is required therefore a closure is proposed. Closing the outlets would effectively mean that a person would not be allowed in, on or adjacent to these areas with fishing gear. Compliance would be simplified, as there would be no need to apprehend a person in possession of prohibited size fish. Conservation of the prolific juvenile fish biomass at these sites would also be resolved.

Consultation with the other stakeholder groups mentioned above, revealed that a closure of this nature would have minimal impact on their activities. ACoRF has recommended an identical closure at the adjacent Munmorah power station outlet canal.

Discussion

The Council was informed that illegal fishing has increased at Eraring and Vales Point power station outlet canals. There has been increasing misbehaviour and undertaking of undersize fish during winter months. Local anglers are scared to visit the area and Fisheries Officers patrolling the area often have to be accompanied by police as a safety precaution.

It was suggested that a total closure be proposed not just a winter/night closure. Also, road access to the area could be blocked off to make the area less accessible to anglers. Concerns were raised that the problem may shift to another area.

A partial closure is required to protect juvenile fish populations. It is proposed that a similar closure be enforced to that at Munmorah Power station. The proposed closure includes a 100m buffer zone to keep anglers away from the mouth of the canals, which will assist compliance efforts.

Recommendation

That a fishing closure be implemented between 6pm and 5am at the Vales Point and Eraring Power Station outlet canals, including 100 metres surrounding the canal extremities, for the months of May to August inclusive.

Issue

Report on meeting to consider the restructure of RECFISH Australia.

Background

Following the Recfish AGM, held last October in Canberra, ACoRF decided not to continue its affiliation with Recfish. This decision was made in the belief that Recfish, as a National representative body, was no longer truly representing the views of its members, particularly its State members, when negotiating recreational fishing management matters with the Federal Government. Other State member bodies have expressed similar concerns.

On the 31st May and 1st June 2001, a meeting was convened in Canberra to consider the possibility of restructuring Recfish, with invitations extended to all interested parties. Bruce Schumacher attended on behalf of ACoRF and John Diplock and Andrew Sanger represented NSW Fisheries.

During the course of the meeting short presentations were made by each attendee, as to the view of their respective organisations on how Recfish could best serve their needs, with particular reference to a number of proposals that came from the Recfish AGM last October. Included in those proposals were recommendations varying from: State member representation only; States to host AGM's and chair meetings on a rotational basis; reduced voting rights for National members; and maintaining the status quo.

There were also presentations by a number of Commonwealth government agencies stressing the importance of having a peak national recreational fishing body.

Final recommendations that were discussed involved change to the Recfish constitution. This will effectively mean that the State members will have a majority voting right, with regards to policy and the direction that Recfish takes when dealing with Commonwealth agencies.

From discussions, both in and out of session, it is believed that there will be further changes proposed at the next Recfish AGM with respect to hosting of meetings, funding, Canberra office, and the executive.

Discussion

Recfish is made up of State and National bodies. It is referred to in Government legislation as acting on behalf of 5 million recreational anglers.

At present Recfish is not working effectively and changes are required. Peter Goadby was involved in the original set up and is in favour of setting it up again, but the problem is securing suitable funding and the right people at the top. It was suggested that ACoRF could re-affiliated with Recfish under certain conditions, including the establishment of sub-committees. Maintaining an executive in Canberra is very expensive. Currently there are concerns that certain people at the top are going off on there own agendas and a lot of Federal issues are raised that should have input from the State governments and State peak bodies.

Concerns were also raised that grassroots fishers are not being represented by Recfish Australia, as there is no information feedback loop. The Federal government does not manage most fisheries. One proposal is to have a Recfish West arrangement set up in each state, which would meet annually on a rotation basis.

NSW will not get official recognition at the Recfish Australia AGM where the changes to the constitution will be moved if ACoRF does not re-affiliate. It was suggested that ACoRF should consider re-joining Recfish.

Recommendation

That ACoRF re-affiliate with Recfish Australia, subject to certain conditions, such as the formation of state sub-committees.

Issue

Recreational Freshwater Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) budget for 2001/2002.

Background

RFFTEC have made recommendations to the Minister and the Minister will forward them to ACoRF.

Discussion

Budget for RFFTEC recommended programs during the 2001/2002 financial year:

- Dollar for dollar stockings; \$200,000 (includes \$30,000 carryover)
- Enhance Departmental stocking with new indoor facility at Narranderra for yellowbelly and silver perch; \$300,000 (includes \$84,000 carryover)
- Education and information; \$220,000 (includes \$16,000 carryover)
- Fishcare Volunteers; \$304,000 (includes \$114,000 carryover)
- Licence administration; \$251,000 (includes \$51,000 carryover)
- Fisheries Officers - 6 additional inland FO's, additional operations (eg. Murray Cray operation) and equipment (eg. cameras); \$604,000 (includes \$104,000 carryover)
- Statewide Angler database; \$7,000
- *Regional Habitat Managers (Liaison between developers/public etc); \$250,000
- *Fish Passage - on ground works such as removing weirs and barriers; \$100,000 (includes \$68,000 carryover)
- *Effects of Stocking Program; \$251,000 (includes \$121,000 carryover)
- *Freshwater Monitoring Program; \$250,000 (includes \$80,000 carryover)
- *Angler Expenditure Survey; \$65,000 (includes \$15,000 carryover)
- *Eastern Cod Stocking; \$2,000
- Small Grants Program; \$20,000 (includes \$18,000 carryover)
- *Impoundment's Access/Fishouts; \$69,000 (includes \$48,000 carryover)

New programs:

- *Juvenile Bass habitat; \$100,000
- Restoration of Wetlands and Riparian habitats; \$100,000 (Riparian habitat refers to the dry habitat along the bank of rivers) involves native planting, fencing, consulting with stakeholders to provide flows, producing maps to define areas that need work and assisting in carp removal.

* *refers to non continuing programs*

- 2.35 million allocated out of trust fund this year.
- 2.5 million per year allocation

RFFTEC did not accept some proposals and recognised of the need for funds in future years, therefore will not use the whole \$2.5 million allocated.

Recommendation

That ACoRF approve the budget as proposed by RFFTEC.

Issue

Transfer of charter fishing boat licence application and review fees to the new Charter Fishing Trust Fund.

Background

All application and review fees associated with the charter boat licensing process were placed into the Estuarine and Marine Trust on a temporary basis, until the Charter Fishing Trust Fund was established. NSW Fisheries recently advised members of ACoRF and GRFFIC that charter fishing application and review fees were to be transferred to the new Charter Fishing Trust Fund.

NSW Fisheries requires funds from the Trust to finance licence administration, cost of reviews, industry representative meetings (CBIRG/MERCMAC), maintain the charter fishing logbook and monitoring program, and to support future initiatives in the charter fishing sector.

As at 30 April 2001, NSW Fisheries had received \$152 800.96 for charter fishing licence application fees and \$7 550.00 in review application fees. Please note that review application fees are a 'one off' payment, therefore, they may only be considered for the 2001/02 financial year. These fees were recently transferred to the Charter Fishing Trust Fund. It is requested that ACoRF consider the budget and proposed expenditure of charter fishing trust funds.

Discussion

\$160,000 carried forward from 2000/2001 plus approx. \$150,000 in November 2001 (licence renewals) will be placed into the Charter Fishing Trust Fund. The intention of introducing a licence fee for charter fishing boat operators was not to gain revenue, but instead to partially cover the costs of managing charter fishing activities in NSW. As it is not a fully cost recovered industry under the current fee structure, there is a need to apportion this revenue and allocate to various areas.

Members agreed that full representation from the charter boat industry is required, therefore, a Management Advisory Committee (MAC) should be set up to oversee fund expenditure. The legislation requires expenditure from the Charter Fishing Trust Fund to be approved by ACoRF only, however, the Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter Management Advisory Committee (MERCMAC) will be involved in discussions regarding the expenditure of this revenue.

Recommendation

Provide ACoRF with an estimated budget to set up MERCMAC and to continue the charter boat monitoring program. Future budget to be considered in consultation with MERCMAC.

Issue

Process for Trust applications.

Background

Revenue from the recreational fishing fee is paid into the Recreational Fishing (Saltwater) Trust Fund. The Minister is required to consult with ACoRF about the allocation of those funds and policies and priorities for expenditure from the Fund.

The Recreational Freshwater Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) provides advice to ACoRF on expenditure from the Freshwater Trust. ACoRF then provides advice to the Minister. It is proposed to establish an equivalent saltwater committee to provide advice to ACoRF and subsequently to the Minister.

Procedures for determining funding priorities and the format for presenting information need to be developed. The input of the implementation committee was sought on the best way to progress this issue, and the development of an appropriate framework for expenditure committee members to bring forward their funding proposals.

At the previous GRFFIC meeting NSW Fisheries circulated a draft flow diagram that outlined a possible process for determining funding priorities from the saltwater trust. The committee was asked to consider processes that will ensure transparency and equity in the allocation of funds to particular projects.

The committee agreed to review the draft document, formulate possible alternatives and discuss this issue further at the following meeting.

The Draft Discussion Paper titled "Policies and Priorities for Expenditure from the Recreational Trusts", a possible process for determining funding priorities from the saltwater trust, was discussed. The Council was asked to make amendments to the document as required during the meeting, and out of session, if necessary.

It was noted that proformas have been based on those utilised by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and other funding bodies.

It was generally agreed that the expertise of departmental staff should be utilised where possible to carry out projects.

NSW Fisheries advised that it will not cull applications, however, it suggested that the secretariat would complete a summary form and attach it to the proposal, to assist the committee. It was agreed that the forms should include a tick sheet, ABN number, and there should be contract stages. Public liability and insurance issues were raised.

Council members agreed that the final process should allow flexibility and variations must be approved by the Council. Minor amendments to the draft document were made to provide greater flexibility relating to financial administration arrangements, including the ability of the Council to approve changes to the timing of payments.

The Chair advised that an informal project proposal process has been in place for the Freshwater Trust. When approved, both the saltwater and freshwater trust expenditure

committees will use the same application and prioritisation process. NSW Fisheries confirmed that the draft document would go to the next RFFTEC and ACoRF meetings for further consultation and comment.

Discussion

The intention of this document is to standardise the expenditure proposal process, for funds raised from the recreational fishing licence.

The Recreational Fishing (Saltwater) Trust Expenditure Committee (RFSTEC) and the Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) reviewed and amended the draft and have indicated their support for this document. The Department is interested in comments and proposed amendments regarding the document from members.

It was stated that more details should be included regarding financial reporting, to ensure transparency and therefore assist auditing purposes.

Recommendation

ACoRF reviewed and support the draft "Policies and Priorities for Expenditure from the Recreational Trusts" document.

Issue

Dusky flathead and jewfish regulations.

Background

NSW Fisheries is required to review the saltwater recreational fishing regulations every five years. This provides for regular adjustment to ensure that the rules not only protect fish stocks but also take into consideration the views of the public.

A review committee (comprised of representatives of the Minister's advisory councils on recreational fishing, commercial fishing and fisheries research, the Australian Fishing Clubs Association, the NSW Game Fishing Association, the Australian National Sportfishing Association, the Nature Conservation Council and an Indigenous representative) was formed to identify the issues and prepare a discussion paper.

Anglers and others interested in the marine environment were asked for their input in a questionnaire attached to the discussion paper. The majority of the information collected related to bag and size limit regulations, however the final question provided an opportunity for participants to include "General Comments". More than 63,000 copies of the discussion paper and questionnaire were distributed throughout the state, and 5,016 responses were received.

The Region 7 GRFFIC member noted that the recreational fishing survey conducted at Tuross Head indicated that people in the area were very happy with the current bag and size limits. However, concerns had been raised by local fishers regarding the regulations for flathead and jewfish. The recreational limit for dusky flathead allows 1 fish longer than 70 cm to be retained. Only 2 jewfish longer than 70cm may be kept. The complaint was that this limit does not apply to commercial fishers. The Committee indicated that it would support commercial constraint with regard to this issue.

Discussion

Concerns have been raised that size limits are different between commercial and recreational fishers. This issue was discussed during the saltwater review but was not accepted as commercial fishers argued that these species are usually dead by the time they reach the boat, therefore impossible to release under size fish. However, Council members believe that this is a sad excuse by commercial fishers. It was also suggested that seasonal (spawning) closures be enforced for these species.

Normally changes to bag and size limits are made every five years during the saltwater review process, otherwise it can be very expensive because advisory material has to be changed.

The Council was informed that older individuals may be less fertile in some species. Therefore, more education and biological information is necessary. It was suggested that a study of the fecundity of large fish could be a possible research priority. As there are often complaints from the public that there is no scientific evidence available to support current size and bag limits.

Recommendation

To defer recommendation to enforce similar size limits to commercial fishers for flathead and jewfish until the next saltwater review in 3 years time.

Issue

Compliance Working Group recommendations.

Background

A draft compliance strategy for the focus and role of NSW Fisheries Field Services branch, including Fisheries Officers, was presented to the implementation committee at its previous meeting. Lengthy discussion was undertaken regarding all aspects of compliance.

The Chair called for volunteers to participate in an out of session working group. Doug Joyner, Malcolm Poole, John Drew and Bruce Schumacher agreed to be the members of this group.

The working group was established to:

- Further evaluate the specific issues contained in the Compliance Strategy document, and further issues discussed at the meeting.
- Identify the additional resources required to effectively and efficiently achieve the objectives of the strategy.
- Evaluate cost benefits of Fish Care Volunteer program.
- Evaluate the option regarding education of Fishery Officers.
- Evaluate the benefits of part time Fishery Officers.
- Communicate out of session and report back to Implementation Committee at the next meeting.

The Committee was informed that the Compliance Working Group met on 24 April 2001 to evaluate the aims of the existing integrated compliance program.

The program combines enforcement, education and advisory functions, integrated to achieve community understanding and observance of fishing rules. The Committee was issued with a handout that outlined the Working Group's evaluation.

The Council was informed that the working group endorsed an integrated statewide education and advisory program and recommended a joint Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing Compliance Working Group to be assembled. Such a group would be responsible for coordinating and proposing education and advisory programs where trust funds were involved.

The Working Group's findings relating to the Education and Advisory component of the strategy were discussed. The Working Group endorsed the expansion of the Fishcare Volunteer Program into saltwater and continued funding by the trust for 2001/02. The Committee recommended that One State Coordinator should effectively manage the Fishcare Volunteer Program. Five Fisheries Educational Officers (3 coastal and 2 inland) should manage (through senior volunteers) up to 100 volunteers in each area. A new "senior volunteers" program should be developed to assist Fisheries Education Officers to manage and train volunteers. Senior volunteers should be chosen based on

their experience, proven dedication to volunteer programs, availability and existing training skills. An annual senior volunteer's conference should be held to ensure the maintenance of coordination, communication and training across the network.

The Working Group recommended Fishing Clinics, community events, and publications and signage programs for funding consideration in 2001/02.

The Council was informed that Fishing Clinics have been very successful, with children enjoying the clinics and parents now starting to fish as a result. The Council believes that Fishing Clinics are a great idea, however recommended that, they should be centrally coordinated and enhanced.

The Working Group's recommendations in the Compliance Strategy document relating to Fisheries Officers were considered. The Working Group endorsed the concept of recreational fishery mobile squads. It was proposed that squads would comprise of three officers in order to operate more efficiently over large areas of coastline, through intensely planned operations. Furthermore, three such teams should be located in north, central and south coast areas, subject to financial resources, and these should be introduced gradually in consideration of the recreational fishing area process implementation.

The committee was informed that the working group did not support part time Fisheries Officers or supplementing overtime funding, however, cross-authorisation with other agencies, such as NPWS and Waterways should be investigated further. Trust recognition, using the Recreational Fishing Trusts logo, was strongly endorsed.

The Implementation Committee agreed that funding full time compliance officers is the best option for economic efficiency. The Department advised that it is in favour of employing more Fisheries Officers but agrees that there should be a gradual approach. The committee agreed that the budget is limited and that it must ensure that the result is a benefit to recreational fishing.

Committee members reported public concern that often only answering services are provided when reporting illegal fishing activities. They believe it is more effective to talk to an officer rather than a machine. The Committee was advised that the Department couldn't offer 24-hour "000-style" service. Other organisations have much larger infrastructures and often divert calls to other regions. It was noted that this would not be useful for reporting illegal fishing.

The Department advised the committee that the current approach is to use the information gathered from the answering service to increase patrols in problem areas, targeting repeat offenders.

The Implementation Committee agreed that a coordinated approach towards compliance was required between both fresh and saltwater expenditure sub-committees. It was also noted that RFFTEC would need to be consulted and ultimately share some of the costs of future compliance programs. It was determined that a set of firm recommendations should be available for presentation to ACoRF at its June meeting.

Discussion

There was general support for the Compliance Working Group.

Recommendation

That the recommendations of the Compliance Working Group be supported.

Issue

Budget recommendations for expenditure from the Saltwater Trust.

Background

The General Recreational Fishing Fee Implementation Committee (GRFFIC) met on 7 May 2001. The role of this Committee is to assist with the implementation of the fee, and to provide ACoRF with advice regarding expenditure of the Saltwater Trust Fund until an Expenditure Committee has been established.

The recommendations of the Committee for expenditure from the Saltwater Trust are as follows:

- \$10,000,000 for a complete commercial fishing buyout of Botany Bay and Lake Macquarie
- \$1,163,733 towards the RFA process
- \$500,650 for the Fishcare Volunteer program
- \$351,000 to employ 3 additional Fisheries Officers (mobile squad)
- \$75,000 for a survey to assess the comparative economic benefits of the striped marlin resource.
- \$46,000 for Administration
- \$125,000 to assist Information and Advisory over 2 years (1/3 to come from Freshwater Trust)
- \$15,000 to upgrade the Game Fish Tagging program

The Implementation Committee requests that ACoRF consider these recommendations.

Discussion

NSW Fisheries did not previously call for public proposals regarding expenditure of licence revenue. There is a need to develop a formal policy for the public to make proposals. The department is interested in seeking suggestions from members on this issue – see Agenda Item 12a.

The GRFFIC recommended expenditure table be distributed to the Council.

➤ Buyout of Botany Bay and Lake Macquarie

GRFFIC supports the outcomes of the public consultation phase on the issue papers for Botany Bay and Lake Macquarie (option 1). To be funded from Treasury advance but repayment schedule not determined yet.

Motion: That ACoRF advise the Minister that they are prepared to allocate funds from the Trust Fund to fund option 1 (ie. the complete buy-out of both estuaries) only.

Motion carried.

➤ RFA process

Motion: ACoRF supports GRFFIC's recommendation of an allocation of \$1,163,733 to administer the RFA process for the coming financial year.

Motion carried.

➤ Fishcare Volunteers

Proposal to fund 3 coastal regional coordinators (2 inland coordinators to be funded from Freshwater Trust).

Motion: ACoRF supports the allocation of \$500,650 to fund 3 coastal regional coordinators, and makes a further recommendation that the Volunteers should not be warranted FO's (education and advisory duties would suffer by enforcement duties) and that they be uniquely identifiable with a distinctive Volunteers uniform and Trust Fund logo. Motion carried.

➤ New Fisheries Officers

Motion: That ACoRF support GRFFIC's recommendation for the employment of an additional 3 Fisheries Officers to form a 3 person mobile squad (to be expanded to three squads, as funding permits) subject to budget constraints.

Motion carried.

➤ Striped Marlin Economic Study

Survey to assess the comparative economic benefits of making the striped marlin resource recreational only.

Motion: That ACoRF supports GRFFIC's recommendation that up to \$75,000 be allocated to the survey and a sub-committee be formed to define survey questions. Sub-committee to have representatives from ACoRF, NSW Fisheries, NSWGFA and the East Coast Tuna Fishers Association.

Motion carried.

➤ Small Grants Program

This initiative will enable fishing clubs and other community members the opportunity to submit applications for dollar for dollar hatchery funding for small projects to enhance recreational fishing.

Motion: That \$50,000 be allocated for a small grants program.

Motion carried.

➤ Billboards and promotion

Motion: \$140,800 to be allocated over the next 2 years for billboards and promotional material to promote the general recreational fishing licence.

Motion carried.

➤ Information and Advisory

Motion: ACoRF support GRFFIC's recommendation of \$250,000 for advisory material, fishing clinics, brochures and advisory vans.

Motion carried.

➤ Gamefish Tagging Program

Proposal to allocate \$15,000 to employ one person (2 days per week for six months) for promotion of the program and to progress the development of new tags.

Motion: ACoRF supports GRFFIC's recommendation that the NSW Fisheries tagging program is supported with the employment of an additional part-time staff member.

Motion carried.

It was suggested that the tagging program be extended to popular recreational species other than gamefish. It was noted that it is not just a simple case of introducing new species. It involves a rigorous approval process; however, there may be opportunities especially with the different tags available, for example pop-up tags.

Recommendation

ACoRF approves all GRFFIC budget recommendations for expenditure from the Saltwater Trust.

Agenda Item 13

General Business

Aquatic Reserves update

Andrew Read

Public meetings were held to gather social economic information regarding aquatic reserves. Fisheries Officers attended the meetings and information posters were hung up.

Generally people were not concerned about effects in the short term, rather the effects of long term management.

Basic ideas were put forward such as anchoring on seagrass and interim management arrangements.

Estuary issues were much more complex because people seem to be under the perception that aquatic reserves immediately ban fishing. However the majority of the reserves will allow fishing in most areas.

In Lake Macquarie, it is not proposed to stop anchoring or fishing in the channel, rather to protect saltmarsh areas, seagrass areas etc. Aquatic reserve management can be used to plan where to allow or ban construction of moorings, anchoring, boating etc. especially in vulnerable areas. This indicates that Aquatic Reserves can be a very powerful conservation tool.

The Council was informed that none of the 22 proposed Aquatic Reserves are definite or "set in concrete". All may be modified as a result of public consultation.

Council members believe that there is a good reason why these areas have been nominated as Aquatic Reserves, but it hasn't been received well by the public. There would be more support from anglers if there was some scientific evidence that fish stocks would improve as a result of these reserves.

Council member Margaret Dodson informed that fish stocks in the Solitary Marine Park have increased and charter catches have increased dramatically over the last 5 years.

It was suggested that you do not necessarily have to have a marine reserve on the most accessible part of the coastline, or a reserve that effects the public (less harm of social economic issues) when other inaccessible areas might be satisfactory.

It was urged that the public put in submissions because they all count, and recommended that ACoRF be included in the process.

Open Community Forums

Open Community Forums were discussed as a way to assess the communities views on contentious issues. It was considered that Open Community Forums were more about assessing the depth of feeling or a measure of opposition rather than finding out what the public wants us to do.

Concerns were raised that the recent meeting in Cooma regarding the Snowy Region was not advertised and that there were only two short meetings. Not enough time for the public to have their say and have their questions answered.

Baitfish Working Group**Peter Goadby**

Purse seine representatives at the meeting indicated that there was not enough information available to them regarding when and when fishing tournaments are held. Indicating the importance of the two major groups aware of each other's needs and working together.

There is a real concern about latent effort. AFMA have produced a paper on the Australian and Atlantic species but there is nothing very re-assuring in this report.

Update of where we are at with IPA's**Elaine Garvey**

Concerns were raised for the push from the Green groups. With increasing talks about intertidal areas, closures are being sought by green group pushing through NPWS. Resulting in closing areas where recreational anglers may collect their bait.

It was suggested that ACoRF could possibly defend against these closures by forming a political body like Sunfish in Queensland that would lobby against these closures that have no scientific background. An independent group that is properly funded is needed (eg. 50% private and %50 government funded). It was suggested that BIA and AFTA should contribute to it.

It was also suggested that NSW Fisheries have full control over Intertidal Protected Areas (IPA's).

The Council was informed that a recent study indicates that there has been no significant change as a result of IPA's in the Sydney area.

Research into Macquarie Perch**Andrew Sanger**

Not addressed at this meeting due to no briefing paper provided.

Contact Details update

A table with Council contact details was distributed amongst the members for review and to make any corrections/additions.

Other Business

Does it include squid when allowing fishing for finfish in marine reserves? It was suggested that "fish" should be specified rather than "finfish", as detailed in Aquatic Reserves documentation.

Concerns were raised on how costs of buy-outs were determined during the RFA process. It was suggested that the cost of commercial buy-outs be calculated on tax returns, not catch returns. This could stop paying out on black money, as catch returns may not be an accurate indication of what the operators make. There were also concerns raised on how the advance by the government will be made towards the buy-outs.

It was suggested that research into nipper pumping and its effects could be a research priority. The issue of nipper pumping in Maianbar channel has raised the question of scientific evidence when considering a closure.

The study of benthic bait resource and sustainability was also suggested as a research priority.

Concern was raised about communication between Council members and NSW Fisheries regarding meeting information. It was suggested that email should be the first point of communication followed by fax and then mail.

Council members complained that 'The Snowy Mountain Strategy' was not on the Fisheries web site.

Concerns were raised regarding Acid-Sulfate soils and related fish kills. The question was asked, could we buy out farmland and turn back to wetland/swamp area. However, the Council was informed that recent fish kills were due to de-oxygenation and opening up floodgates would save the problem (flood mitigation).

Council members believe that the title of 'Marine Reserves' should be changed to 'Marine Recreation and Reserves', to stop any confusion.

Action Item

Place the Snowy Mountain Strategy on the Fisheries web site and email to ACoRF member Scott Mitchell.

Action Item

The concerns of retailers about delays in receiving licence books to be relayed to licensing branch.

The question was asked, where are we with the *Caulerpa Taxifolia* problem? It was suggested that this issue be included as an agenda item and have someone from research talk about the problem at the next meeting. Mel Brown informed the Council that SCUBA divers have offered to volunteer in collecting the weed in an attempt to try and clear up the problem.

It was suggested that Andrew Sanger attend the next meeting to talk about the Freshwater Review.

Concerns were raised regarding the quality of the recreational fishing licence especially for divers and snorkelers. There is no set policy relating to divers and if they can leave their licence in the boat or back at the car, while they are in the water. Divers have been told by FO's that they need to carry their licence with them underwater. Concerns that divers are being targeted unfairly. Council was advised that divers were not expected to carry their paper licences underwater, but would be expected to produce it when they returned to shore.

Meeting Closed 3:30pm

18th ACoRF Meeting – 22 June 2001

ACTION ITEMS

Agenda Item	Action	Status	Comments
2. Request to ban spearfishing from Swansea Bridge to Coon Island	Write to Mr Milton Orkopoulos MP, Member for Swansea, with position of ACoRF on this matter.	Pending	
3. Marking hand held prawn nets with a tag for compliance purposes.	NSW Fisheries Field Services to consider the issues associated with this situation in greater detail and provide further information to ACoRF in the future.	Pending	
5. Joint meeting of NSW and VIC Ministries – Rationalising recreational fishing on Lakes Hume and Mulwala and along the Murray River.	A draft Public Consultation Paper is to be distributed during the winter months of 2001 for a 6-month consultation period. ACoRF to make recommendations on this issue, out of session or at the next meeting, following input into the consultation process by Council members.	Pending	
6. Research prioritising – Obtaining a list of research questions and needs.	A list of current research and ongoing programs run by NSW Fisheries be sent to all ACoRF members for prioritising to enable development of a research priority list at the next meeting.	Pending	
6. Research prioritising – Obtaining a list of research questions and needs.	Funds are to be made available to conduct an economic survey, comparing recreational and commercial fishing activities, in a small coastal town (location to be determined by GRFFIC/RFSTEC).	Pending	
6. Research prioritising – Obtaining a list of research questions and	A proposal to be put to GRFFIC to consider allocating funds for Mr Peter Goadby to attend the International Billfish Symposium in Cairns	Pending	

needs.	in August 2001.		
7. Concern about the use of berley to attract sharks close to the shore.	NSW Fisheries to write to the Newcastle resident who raised concerns that shark fishers are placing berley close to shore, stating there appears to be little supporting evidence to show this is a problem.	Pending	
8. Proposal to implement fishing closures at Eraring and Vales Point power station outlet canals.	That a fishing closure be implemented between 6pm and 5am at the Vales Point and Eraring power station outlet canals, including 100m surrounding the canal extremities, for the months of May to August inclusive.	Pending	
13. General Business	NSW Fisheries to place the Snowy Mountain Strategy on the Fisheries website and email to ACoRF member Scott Mitchell.	Pending	
	Concerns of retailers about delays in receiving licence books are to be relayed to licensing branch.	Complete	