

**Advisory Council on  
Recreational Fishing**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**29<sup>th</sup> MEETING (01/2004)**  
9:30am, 29 April 2004

**CFC Conference Room**  
**202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla**

**Attendance**

**Chair**

Bruce Schumacher

**Members**

Elaine Garvey

Jim Harnwell

John Dunphy

Lionel Jones

Neil Ryan

Anthony Moore

Scott Mitchell

Margaret Dodson

Terry Maloney

Mel Brown

Ann Lee

Director-General/NSW Fisheries

**Observers**

John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries

Bryan van der Walt, Senior Manager Recreational Fisheries

Nick James, Manager Recreational Fisheries

Susan Wildgoose, Management Officer Recreational Fisheries

**Business**

*Welcome by Chair*

*Apologies*

Lisa Terry

*Absent*

Graham Moore

*Minutes of previous meeting*

**Recommendation**

The minutes are a true and accurate record of discussions at the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, held 11 December 2003.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Mel Brown

**Carried**

*Business arising from the minutes*

Nil.

## **Agenda Items**

1. Re-opening of the Missingham Bridge sea mullet hauling shot in the Richmond River recreational fishing haven – for information.
2. Recreational Fishing Trusts financial report (Bryan van der Walt) – for information.
3. Renewal of NSW Fisheries ongoing trust funded programs (Bryan van der Walt) – for recommendation.
4. Expression of Interest for trust fund applications, new trust fund project proposals and proposals for funding through the existing Small Grants Program (Bryan van der Walt) – for recommendation.
5. Clarence Pilot Habitat Grant Program – Second Call for Applications (Bryan van der Walt) – for recommendation.
6. Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program – Second Call for Applications (Bryan van der Walt) – for recommendation.
7. Update on the Fisheries Management Strategy for Recreational and Charter Fishing (Doug Ferrell) – for information.
8. Regional Services (compliance) report (Glenn Tritton) – for recommendation.
9. Commercial fishing update (Sonya Errington) – for recommendation.
10. Hawkesbury River Prawn Trawl weekend and public holiday closures – for recommendation.
11. Update on the proposed expansion to Port Botany – for information.
12. Request for a seasonal closure at Doon Doon Creek – for recommendation.
13. Closure renewals – for recommendation.
14. NSW Fisheries dusky flathead research project (Charles Gray) – for information.
15. Recreational fishing gear research update: (i) estimates of the fate of released angler-caught fish and (ii) the selectivity of recreational prawn-catching gears (Matt Broadhurst) – for information.

### *Other Business*

- Gag Hooks – for information.
- Sea Acres Nature Reserve, Port Macquarie – for information.

### *Out of session items*

- Proposal to undertake a second stocking of mulloway fingerlings in Botany Bay.
- Atlantis Divers request to create an artificial reef off the northern beaches of Sydney.
- Amendments to the Threatened Species Conservation Act and Subsequent amendments to the Fisheries Management Act.
- Amendment and renewal of the Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lakes (including Munmorah and Budgewoi Lakes) closure notifications.
- Section 8 Closure to protect Murray crayfish stocks in Blowering Dam.

*Correspondence received*

- Representation on a Standards Australia technical committee for degradable plastics.
- Plastral Fidene - biodegradable fishing bait bags.
- RFSTEC Region 7 representative - effect of soft plastic lures on fish.

*Around the table*

***Next meeting (2/04) scheduled for 8 July 2004. Dates for meeting 3/04 (Sept/Oct) and 4/04 (early December) to be confirmed at the next meeting***

**Issue**

Re-opening of the Missingham Bridge sea mullet hauling shot in the Richmond River recreational fishing haven.

**Background**

When the Richmond River Recreational Fishing Haven was implemented it included the Missingham Bridge sea mullet hauling shot undertaken on a small beach near the entrance to the Richmond River. This shot generated significant income to the hauling crews who had traditionally targeted schools of sea mullet during the autumn mullet run. As sea mullet are not targeted by recreational fishers, local commercial fishers sought to regain access to this shot during the mullet run.

After extensive consultation and negotiation at a local level, recreational and commercial fishers agreed to the mullet hauling shot being reopened to endorsed commercial fishers in exchange for the further closure to commercial fishing of 27 km of the upper Richmond River to protect bass. There will be no changes to the regulation defining the Richmond River Recreational Fishing Haven, rather the mullet haulers will be allowed to operate under a section 37 permit under close supervision, while the closure of the upper river will be achieved by a section 8 closure.

The Minister has publicly stated that there will be no widespread changes to recreational fishing havens, and any minor changes will require local community support and consensus.

An out-of-session information item detailing the proposed changes was emailed to ACoRF on 16th March. One member expressed strong opposition. Several ACoRF members have expressed concern about the reliance on local agreements for changes to RFHs that may have consequences for recreational fishers from other parts of the state. Concern has also been expressed about the approvals process and the failure to formally seek ACoRF support.

The Director-General has advised that when briefing the Minister on this issue he believed ACoRF had been consulted. On closer inspection of ACoRF minutes he now acknowledges that when the matter was raised, NSW Fisheries did agree to bring the matter back for further discussion. The Director-General apologises for this breakdown in process.

**Outcomes**

The extent of local consultation undertaken on this issue was discussed by Council members. Council noted that the local community and the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee local representative were supportive of the amendment.

Due to the local support Council was generally supportive of the amendment. However, they were not supportive of the consultation process that occurred prior to the announcement of the amendment. Council members felt that alterations to RFHs are issues of such importance to all recreational fishers that Council should be formally consulted on all proposals. Additionally it was stated that all recreational licence holders residing in the area should have been consulted, as they are the local stakeholders. Council expressed doubts about the process of local consultation and supported surveys of recreational fishing licence holders resident in the affected area.

Council decided to inform the Minister in writing of their concerns and request that, in future, proper consultative processes are maintained using the licence database as the only true guide to local opinion.

**Action Item** – Council write to the Minister to inform of concerns about the lack of consultation on the recent changes to the RFH in the Richmond River.

Moved: Jim Harnwell                      Seconded: Anthony Moore                      *Carried*

A draft letter was considered and supported by the council.

Moved: Lionel Jones                      Seconded: Neil Ryan                      *Carried*

**Recommendation**

For information.

**Issue**

Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust financial report.

**Background**

The general recreational fishing licence has been in place since March 2001 and the freshwater licence has been providing funds since 1998. Over this time, there have been a large number of projects recommended by the fresh and saltwater expenditure committees and ACoRF, and approved by the Minister.

**Current Trust Fund Position**

Total income from licence sales was nearly \$8.4 million in 2002/03. The saltwater trust fund has a program budget allocation of \$7.3 million for the financial year ending 30 June 2004 giving an anticipated balance of approximately \$500,000.

Since the decision was made to introduce the general recreational fishing fee, income to the freshwater trust fund has been maintained at \$2.5 million per year. The freshwater trust fund has a program budget allocation of over \$2.7 million for the financial year ending 30 June 2004 giving an anticipated balance of approximately \$300,000.

The 2004/05 program budget for ongoing programs and new programs will be assessed at the meeting. Financial tables showing budgets and anticipated carryover will be presented for discussion.

**Outcomes**

NSW Fisheries advised the Council of the predicted balance of the Saltwater and Freshwater Trusts at the end of the 2003/04 financial year following the allocation of funds by the expenditure committees and ACoRF to programs to benefit recreational fishing. Income received so far from licence sales in the current financial year was comparable to that received in 2002/03.

It was noted that the predicted balance was substantially lower compared to previous years because of the many programs funded by the Trust in this financial year (over \$7.3 million). This needed to be taken into account when reviewing new project proposals, the renewal of existing programs and funding levels for programs beyond 2004/05.

**Recommendation**

For information.

**Issue**

Renewal of NSW Fisheries ongoing trust funded programs.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

Budgets for the ongoing NSW Fisheries trust fund programs that had not been previously approved by the trust expenditure committees and the Council for 2004/05 have been prepared. Freshwater renewal applications were reviewed by RFFTEC on 1 April 2004 and saltwater renewal applications were reviewed by RFSTEC on 6 April 2004. All recommended funding for ongoing programs is summarised in tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

Table 1: *Budget and expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Fund, for ongoing programs, 04/05 financial year as approved by RFFTEC*

Program	03/04 predicted carryover	04/05 supported budget	04/05 allocation
Dollar for dollar native fish stocking	\$0	\$225,000	\$225,000
Enhanced Government fish production	\$0	\$304,500	\$304,500
Freshwater recreational management	\$0	\$160,400	\$160,400
RFFTEC meeting expenses	\$6,000	\$18,000	\$12,000
Fishcare volunteer program	\$90,000	\$268,130	\$178,130
Inland fisheries officers	\$0	\$625,000	\$625,000
Regional fish habitat (inland)	\$28,000	\$280,000	\$252,000
Effectiveness of stocking program	\$30,000	\$160,000	\$130,000
Freshwater tournament monitoring	\$7,000	\$150,000	\$143,000
Small grants program	\$4,400	\$20,000	\$15,600
Fish habitat grant program	-\$13,760	\$100,000	\$113,760
Eastern cod stocking program	\$13,000	\$0	-\$13,000
Gaden trout hatchery	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$214,640</b>	<b>\$2,411,030</b>	<b>\$2,196,390</b>

Table 2: *Budget and expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Fund, for ongoing programs, 04/05 financial year as approved by RSFTEC*

Program	03/04 predicted carryover	04/05 supported budget	04/05 allocation	05/06 allocation
Fishcare Volunteer Program	\$150,000	\$606,877	\$456,877	-
Recreational Mobile Squad	\$0	\$355,000	\$355,000	-
Saltwater Tournament Monitoring Program	\$50,000	\$150,000	\$100,000	-
RFSTEC meeting expenses	\$8,000	\$30,000	\$22,000	-
Small grants program	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	-
Licence Reminder Notice	\$100,000	\$144,000	\$44,000	-
Estuarine Fish Biology-black bream (additional funding)	\$0	\$6,693	\$6,693	\$9,450
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$333,000</b>	<b>\$1,342,570</b>	<b>\$1,009,570</b>	<b>\$9,450</b>

Table 3: Budget and expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Trusts Fund, for ongoing programs, 04/05 financial year as approved by RFFTEC and RFSTEC

Program	03/04 predicted carryover	04/05 supported budget	04/05 SW Trust allocation	04/05 FW Trust allocation
Fishing guides and clinics	\$0	\$228,000	\$160,000	\$68,000
Licence awareness	\$0	\$71,100	\$49,500	\$21,600
Recreational Angling Database	\$0	\$80,000	\$56,000	\$24,000
Licensing Administration	\$0	\$850,000	\$600,000	\$250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$1,229,100</b>	<b>\$865,500</b>	<b>\$363,600</b>

### Outcomes

Budgets and project details for each ongoing program, recommended for funding by the Trust expenditure committees, were presented to Council for discussion. Members requested details of NSW Fisheries staff currently employed under the various Trust funded programs, such as Fisheries Officers, Fishcare Volunteer Education Officers, Scientists etc. A list detailing all the funded by the Saltwater Trust was distributed to Council for their information.

**Action item:** NSW Fisheries to forward a list of NSW Fisheries staff employed under programs funded by the Freshwater Trust.

### Purchase of fish from private hatcheries

The Dollar for Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program has involved stocking of Murray cod and golden perch into inland rivers and dams, and Australian bass into coastal rivers and dams in NSW on a dollar-for-dollar basis. 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. Stocking for 03/04 is ongoing however it is anticipated that approximately 500,000 golden perch and 250,000 Murray cod will be stocked. Bass stocking is complete and 230,000 bass were stocked. This is a record figure.

Council was advised that NSW Fisheries is seeking an increase in the program budget from \$200,000 per annum to \$225,000 per annum, (see attached submission) to allow for the increase in community participation and to overcome the need for to introduce a pro-rata reduction on applications, given the high number of stocking applications received.

### Tournament Monitoring

Council expressed concern that numbers of catch survey data collection sheets returned from the annual Easter Snowy Lakes survey were very low. This event is part of the Trust Funded Tournament Monitoring Program which has been monitored for the past 4 years. The data is used to assess trout populations in the Snowy Mountains Lakes. NSW Fisheries advised that return of catch sheets had decreased mainly because of the large number of access points around the lakes. A different strategy for distribution of the sheets is required and will be implemented next year.

### Fishcare Volunteer Program

Council was advised that the Expenditure Committees had raised several issues with regard to the management framework of the Fishcare volunteer program. Some members felt that the operation of the program on the inland needed to be consolidated and re-focused to ensure the viability of the program in the future. The program did not appear to be delivering on its objectives in certain areas. The sense of community ownership was not apparent and the direction of the program within Government seemed unclear.



NSW Fisheries concurred that there had been some difficulties in the administration of the program given its rapid expansion into new areas. The Fishcare Volunteer program had also been recently reviewed by an independent consultant to assess ways for better co-ordination overall.

NSW Fisheries also advised that the Fishcare Program would now be managed from within the Regional and Corporate Services Division and that the RFFTEC / RFSTEC sub committee already established under the review will continue to work through the management issues raised by the Expenditure Committees to ensure the feasibility of the program in NSW.

#### Fishing Guides and Clinics

It was noted that three children's fishing clinics were held at each of the 4 Government hatcheries in 2003/04. To date, a total of 312 children have attended these clinics. The freshwater and saltwater trusts funded the production of two updated fishing guides for the 2003/04 fishing season. Last year's highly successful inaugural fishing guides were given a fresh look and were updated to ensure the most current information was being provided for anglers.

#### Recreational Angling Database

Council was advised that the Recreational Angling Database was developed in March 2001 after the introduction of the general licence. The database collects information on the names, addresses, phone numbers, type of licence and starting date of each licence. The information has proved valuable in a number of research surveys, particularly the National Angling Survey which was recently released (July 2003). The database has been used in 2 expenditure surveys of NSW anglers funded by this committee. The database is also essential for sending out reminder notices to one and three year licenceholders, which commenced last month. The initial response from anglers has been good and it has the potential to substantially raise the level of total income by encouraging anglers to renew their licences when they expire, not when they next go fishing. This will be assessed in about 6 months time. The database is also essential for compliance checks of recreational anglers and for issuing replacement licences.

The Database program has been fully funded by the Saltwater Trust since its implementation. However, the benefits of the program are statewide and pro-rata (30%:70%) funding for the program was sought from the Freshwater trust.

#### Fish habitat grant program

NSW Fisheries advised Council that RFFTEC has supported provision of \$100,000 per annum for three years to fund the fish habitat grant program, a project that provides matching funding to community organisations for freshwater fish habitat restoration projects. The purpose of the fish habitat grants program is to provide "on-ground" rehabilitation for fish habitats. RFFTEC approved the renewal of the habitat restoration grant program for the third year of the program, with an estimated allocation \$113,760. The extra allocation accounts for an additional \$13,760 expended during the second round of applications.

#### Eastern cod stocking program

At a previous meeting the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) had requested that no additional stocking of eastern cod take place until a review of genetic factors relevant to the stocking practice was carried out. The Freshwater Expenditure Committee recommended that should the genetic review support the re-commencement of the stocking program, a new application for the stocking of eastern cod should be submitted by NSW Fisheries for consideration at a future meeting. Council noted that the \$13,000 in unspent funds remaining in the eastern cod program cost centre would be returned to the Freshwater Trust.

Licence Reminder Notice

Council was advised that the reminder notice system had been implemented. All one and three year licence holders whose licences expired in April 2004 received a letter in the post in late March 2004. The program will continue with monthly mailouts as a service to anglers.

Estuarine Fish Biology-black bream (additional funding)

The Council was advised that there were insufficient funds to complete the entire luderick and black bream project. Without top-up funding, the amount of data collected would have to be limited spatially and temporally, and the results will be more general.

**Recommendation**

ACoRF supports the budgets for all of the ongoing NSW Fisheries trust fund programs, listed in Table 1, 2 and 3, as recommended by the Recreational Fishing Saltwater and Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committees.

**Moved: Lionel Jones**

**Seconded: Neil Ryan**

Carried

**Issue**

Expression of Interest for trust fund applications, new trust fund project proposals and proposals for funding through the existing Small Grants Program.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

The Recreational Fishing Trusts fund programs for the benefit of recreational fisheries. NSW Fisheries usually undertakes an advertising campaign calling for programs to be funded by the Trusts. In the past, many applications have been received by NSW Fisheries and deemed inappropriate for Trust funding by the expenditure committees and not supported.

This year a more targeted advertising campaign was undertaken. An expression of interest for applications was mailed to councils, fishing clubs and organizations and universities to encourage the submission of higher profile applications that specifically benefit recreational fishing programs and directly enhance angler catch. A poster was also developed and distributed using licence agents, Fisheries Officers and Fishcare Volunteers to target the common angler. The closing date for applications was 26 March 2004. Thirteen applications were received for funding from the Freshwater Trust and sixteen applications for funding from the Saltwater Trust.

All freshwater applications were reviewed by RFFTEC on 1 April 2004 and the following small grants programs were recommended for funding:

**Small Grants**

Lake St Clair Public Awareness and Fish Education Signs

Proponent: Singleton Fly Fishing Club

Proposes to manufacture and erect two large recreational fishing advisory signs at Lake St Clair. These signs aim to promote ethical fishing practices in Lake St Clair by providing information on stocking, freshwater bag and size limits, identification of the various species that inhabit the waterway and sustainable fishing.

Fish Cleaning Facilities & Litter prevention along the Gwydir River, Bingara

Proponent: Bingara Anglers Club

Proposes to erect three stainless steel modern fish cleaning tables and rubbish bins at public reserves along the Gwydir River near Bingara. The project aims to provide the many anglers along the Gwydir River with suitable fish cleaning facilities that promote appropriate use and the collection of litter. These tables are supported on a dollar for dollar basis by local council.

Post-construction assessment of the Tallowa Dam High Fishway – establishing a significant tagged population of fish at liberty within the Shoalhaven Catchment

Proponent: Southern Bass Fishing Club

Proposes to establish a population of tagged bass within the Shoalhaven catchment and monitor the movement of re-captured fish. This project will assist in the post-construction assessment of the Tallowa Dam fishway through improving the longevity and accuracy of the recently established collaborative project between Southern Bass, NSW Fisheries and the SCA.

All saltwater applications were reviewed by RFSTEC on 6 April 2004 and the following programs were supported for funding:

## **Large Grants**

### Second Recreational Mobile Squad

A second NSW Fisheries coastal recreational mobile squad to target recreational fishing compliance activities in northern NSW, especially in Recreational Fishing Havens, would directly benefit recreational anglers. The mobile squad aims to maintain a mobile support group with rapid response capacity - responsible for the protection of the State's coastal recreational fisheries. In principle support was provided and the program was considered as a priority for funding when sufficient monies are available from the Saltwater Trust.

### Monitoring and Research on Landed Fish at Game Fishing Tournaments in NSW

This program is an extension to the programs funded in the previous 3 financial years from the Saltwater Trust. It involves the continuation of monitoring and sampling captured fish at game fishing tournaments. Biological and scientific monitoring of catches is an important part of studying any fishery. Many research projects undertaken by a wide range of research organizations have been assisted via cooperation with game fishing tournaments in New South Wales as part of this program. It provides such important data for the purposes of management of various species some of which are recreational only species (blue and black marlin) and some of which are also caught by the commercial sector.

### Implementation of video transect and baited video to reduce netting effort in Recreational Fishing Havens

In 2003 RFSTEC funded a study to investigate how effective Fishing Havens were at increasing fish numbers and catches for recreation fishers in northern NSW. The original research methodology was to employ standard techniques such as seine netting and creel surveys. However, many recreational anglers were unhappy with the use of nets within fishing havens. The University has investigated other sampling techniques, including stationary baited video and mobile video transects. Baited video uses a video camera assemblage with a fixed bait on the end of a stationary arm. Fish are filmed gathering around the bait and a snap shot is taken every 5-15 minutes and the number of fish in the field of view are counted, from which estimates of abundance can be made. Video transects is a system based on a video camera either towed under or beside a boat using a compass bearing a differential GPS to maintain direction and sample a known distance. Initial trials of these techniques were very encouraging and the University believes that this technology will provide a very rapid, non-invasive technique for sampling fish abundance in sensitive areas.

## **Small Grants**

### Angel Rings- Australian National Sportfishing Association

The angel ring project is run by the Australian National Sportfishing Association (NSW Branch) with the support of the Department of Sport and Recreation, NSW Sporting Injuries Insurance and the Saltwater Trust. The program involves the installation of angel rings (or life buoys) at known rock fishing black spots. Funds have been allocated from the Saltwater Trust toward the expansion of this important fishing safety initiative. This project not only contributes to saving lives but also identifies regional rock fishing black spots and encourages community awareness.

All recommended funding for new trust fund programs and proposals for funding through the existing Small Grants Program is summarised in tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4: Expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Fund, for new programs, 04/05 financial year as approved by RFFTEC

Program	Proponent	2004/05
<b>Small Grants</b>		
Lake St Clair fishing signs	Singleton Fly Fishing Club	\$334
Fish Cleaning Facilities & Litter prevention along the Gwydir River, Bingara	Bingara Anglers Club	\$5,000
Fish tagging within the Shoalhaven Catchment	Southern Bass Fishing Club	\$2,800
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$8,134</b>

Table 5: Expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Fund, for new programs, 04/05 financial year as approved by RSFTEC

Programs	Proponent	2004/05
<b>Large Grants</b>		
Second Recreational Mobile Squad (in principle support only until sufficient funds are available)	NSW Fisheries	\$355,000
Monitoring and Research on Landed Fish at Game Fishing Tournaments in NSW	Pepperell Research & Consulting	\$23,500
Implementation of video transect and baited video to reduce netting effort in Recreational Fishing Havens	Southern Cross University	\$20,400
<b>Small Grants</b>		
Angel Rings	ANSA	\$4,480
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$403,350</b>

### Outcomes

Council discussed each of the recommendations and noted the benefits of each to recreational fishing.

It was noted that the application involving video sampling in recreational fishing havens was an extension of a current program investigating the effectiveness of the havens in the northern estuaries. NSW Fisheries advised that local anglers had expressed concern about the proposal to use seine nets in these areas and had requested the use of alternate methods. Video sampling is a non-destructive, non-invasive sampling technique and has been widely used in other protected areas around the world.

Council discussed the need for a second recreational mobile squad and noted that the current squad is operating very well. The coastal recreational mobile squad patrol areas from Tweed Heads to Tuross Lake, taking in 14 Fisheries District locations and most of their Recreational Fishing Havens (RFH). Seven targeted operational plans were conducted, six of which were jointly run with the Districts, including:

- Far North Coast operation targeting recreational fishers who did not comply with the General Recreational Fishing Licence and were using illegal fishing methods in the Tweed area. 31 vessels inspected - 2 cast nets and 7 crab traps seized.
- Port Macquarie / Manning River. A joint operation targeting illegal gear, bag and size limits, licences and Recreational Fishing Havens. 1,267 pipis were seized from 3 men.

The Council agreed that it would consider the second mobile squad proposal once supported by the Expenditure Committee when sufficient monies were available from the Saltwater Trust.

**Recommendation**

ACoRF supports all of the funding proposals, listed in Table 4, as recommended by the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee.

Moved: Elaine Garvey                      Seconded: Scott Mitchell                      **Carried**

ACoRF supports all of the funding proposals, listed in Table 5, as recommended by the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee.

Moved: Lionel Jones                      Seconded: Jim Harnwell                      **Carried**

**Issue**

Clarence Pilot Habitat Grant Program – Second Call for Applications.

The Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee previously supported the expenditure of \$60,000 in 2002/03 and 2003/04 for the Clarence Pilot Habitat Grant Program. The Committee's recommendation was supported by the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing and approved by the Minister for Fisheries on 3 July 2002.

An expression of interest calling for applications for the Clarence Pilot Habitat Grant Program was advertised in November 2003. RFSTEC requested that all proposals for the Fish Habitat Grant Program be presented to the Committee for consideration, prior to the allocation of funding. NSW Fisheries received 16 applications, six more than last year. The applications were assessed against the criteria for assessment as approved by RFSTEC. NSW Fisheries recommendations are included in attachment 2a and 2b, together with a map showing the location of each of the recommended project sites.

All applications were reviewed by RFSTEC on 6 April 2004 and funding of \$55,398 in 2004/05 for the six highest ranked programs was supported under the 'Clarence Pilot Habitat'. Additionally RFSTEC recommended that the balance of funding (\$4,602) from the 'Clarence Pilot Habitat' program, in 2004/05 be allocated to the seventh ranked applicant (Micalo Island Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation) following negotiation with NSW Fisheries on objectives. Recommended funding for habitat grant programs is summarised in table 6 below.

Table 6: *Budget and expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Fund, for the 'Clarence Pilot Habitat' program, 04/05 financial year as approved by RSFTEC*

<b>R a n k</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Proponent</b>	<b>04/05 supported budget</b>
1	Stage 2 Fish Habitat Rehabilitation	Maclean Shire Council, Clarence Landcare & Shark Creek Landcare	\$10,000
2	Ulgundahi Island Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	Yaegl Local Aboriginal Land Council	\$10,000
3	Cowan's Creek Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	Wetland Care Australia	\$10,000
4	Theo Tuck Reserve Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	BioManagement Ltd	\$6,573
5	West Micalo Island Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	Geoff Flett & Maree Kelly	\$8,825
6	East Micalo Island Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	Fred Welsh	\$10,000
7	Micalo Island Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation	Rob Schafer & Allan Byrne	\$4,602 (\$9,602 if supported by RFSTEC)
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$60,000</b>

**Outcomes**

NSW Fisheries advised that in 2003, Iluka Landcare was successful in obtaining a \$5,000 grant through the Clarence Pilot Habitat Program. The program was successful in implementing the education component of the project with Iluka Primary School, however, the vegetation restoration component of the project was not successful. Some early

plantings were removed by vandals and there had been lengthy delays occurred in gaining Council endorsement. For these reasons the project did not proceed and Iluka Landcare have forwarded a cheque reimbursing the full amount.

It was noted that the seventh ranked program for habitat restoration at Micalo Island was only allocated \$4,602 of the \$10,000 requested due to amount of funds available. The Micalo Island program is stage two of a previously funded rehabilitation project that aims to rehabilitate approximately 25-30 acres of mangrove and saltmarsh habitat and allow completion of works at this site.

It is recommended that the returned funds be reallocated to the Micalo Island project which will result in a funding allocation of \$9,602 and will allow for completion of works at this site. Support for this recommendation is still required from the Saltwater Expenditure Committee.

The recommended funding reallocation is in line with the program budget of \$120,000 to be spent over the two years of the pilot program.

**Recommendation**

ACoRF supports funding, under the 'Clarence Pilot Habitat', for all of the programs listed in Table 6, as recommended by the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee and provides in principle support for the allocation of \$5,000 to the Micalo Island program subject to the support of the saltwater committee.

Moved: Elaine Garvey

Seconded: Ann Lee

**Carried**



**Issue**

Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program – Second Call for Applications.

The Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust Expenditure Committee has previously supported the expenditure of \$300,000 over three years for aquatic habitat protection and restoration. The purpose of the fish habitat grants program is to provide “on-ground” rehabilitation for fish habitats. Projects are carried out by a range of stakeholder groups such as angling clubs, local councils, individual landholders and Rivercare and Landcare groups in collaboration with conservation staff from NSW Fisheries.

Expressions of interest for round 2 of the fish habitat grants program were called on 23/10/03. In all, 38 applications were received. The projects were ranked by NSW Fisheries Office of Conservation staff, according to criteria including the benefit to anglers, quality of application, matching funding and habitat benefit. NSW Fisheries recommendations are included in attachment 3a and 3b, together with a map showing the location of each of the recommended project sites. All freshwater fish habitat grant applications were reviewed by RFFTEC on 1 April 2004 and 14 programs were recommended for funding, which are summarised in the following table.

Table 7: Budget and expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Fund, for the Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program, 04/05 financial year as approved by RSFTEC

R a n k	Program	Proponent	04/05 supported budget
1	Skidders Creek crossing modification + revegetation, Wilsons River Catchment.	Ballina Shire Council (Peter Williams)	\$10,000
2	Cudgegong River rehabilitation, Mudgee.	Cudgegong Catchment Committee (Nicky)	\$8,805
3	Murrumbidgee River Floodplain/Wetland research project, Narrandera	Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group (Melissa)	\$10,000
4	Gloucester River Causeway modification.	Gloucester Shire Council (Dan Croft)	\$8,090
5	South Creek rehabilitation, Western Sydney	Greening Australia (Daniel Williams)	\$10,000
6	Little Lachlan Willow Removal Works, Condobolin.	Mid-Lachlan & Wallamundry Creek Water Users (Allan LeStrange)	\$10,000
7	Tooloom Creek, tributary of the Clarence River	Stephen Ross (Clarence River Wilderness Lodge)	\$3,850
8	Deua River Rehabilitation, Moruya.	Eurobodalla Shire Council (Peter Gow)	\$9,000
9	Swamp forest/wetland rehabilitation, connects to Kalang River. Bellinger Catchment, Urunga.	Jack Buttsworth	\$1,965
10	Thegoa Lagoon Rehabilitation, tributary of the Murray River	Wentworth Shire Council	\$10,000
11	Bombala River Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation.	Snowy River Interstate Landcare Committee (Errol Wilson)	\$10,000
12	Namoi & Gwydir Rivers, North of Armidale.	University of New England (Rex Glencross-Grant)	\$10,000
13	Goobarragandra River, Murrumbidgee Catchment, rehabilitation.	Riverina Highlands Landcare Network, Tumut	\$8,200
14	Duckmaloi River, Oberon.	Duckmaloi River Rivercare Group/Lithgow-Oberon Landcare (Eric Mohony)	\$3,850
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$113,760</b>

**Outcomes**

NSW Fisheries advised Council that the Freshwater Expenditure Committee had approved the renewal of the habitat restoration grant program for the third year of the three year program at a funding level of \$100,000, with an estimated allocation \$113,760. At the last meeting, the Committee requested that an additional 2 projects on the Goobarragandra and Duckmaloi

Rivers be added to the program. The extra allocation accounts for an additional \$13,760 expended during this second round of applications.

**Recommendation**

ACoRF supports funding, under the 'Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program', for all of the programs listed in Table 7, as recommended by the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee.

Moved: Ann Lee

Seconded: Lionel Jones

**Carried**



**Issue**

Update on the Fisheries Management Strategy for Recreational and Charter Fishing.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Doug Ferrell, Senior Manager - Management Planning, will provide an overview of the fishery management strategy (FMS) process and update the council on the development of the FMS for recreational and charter fishing.

**Outcomes**

The deadline for completion of the assessments under Commonwealth and NSW legislation is 1 December and 31 December 2004 respectively. The process being used to prepare the strategies is being streamlined to reflect the abolition of the Fisheries Resource Conservation and Assessment Council (FRCAC) and the Advisory Council on Fisheries Conservation (ACFC), to achieve cost efficiencies and allow legislative deadlines to be met, whilst preserving the integrity of the strategies and assessments. The following changes are being made to the process:

- Establish a fisheries assessment working group to review and provide advice on the EIS during public exhibition. The working group will comprise relevant experts (peer reviewers for the relevant assessment), agencies (NSWF & DIPNR) and stakeholders (commercial fishing, post harvest, Indigenous, recreational, conservation). The group will be chaired by the fisheries representative on the Natural Resources Advisory Council, thereby providing a link to the Natural Resources Advisory Council process.
- At the draft EIS stage, continue the arrangement whereby the relevant fishery MAC or MPC (as representatives of the fishery proponents) is consulted, and consult the advisory committees out of session.
- Limit the public exhibition period for the remaining commercial fishery EISs to the statutory requirement of four weeks (with a limited opportunity to consider late submissions). Because of the comparative challenges of consulting recreational fishers, the consultation period for the recreational EIS would need to be increased to eight weeks.
- Following public exhibition of the EIS, the relevant MAC or MPC would only be consulted out of session when considering the submissions and responses (unless a major issue warrants a meeting).
- Undertake the independent peer review of the EIS during the public exhibition period (rather than as a prior step). It is planned to retain the current steps for the abalone EIS, as its preparation is outsourced, and for the recreational fishing EIS.

The development of the fishery management strategy to manage recreational and charter fishing activities will involve extensive consultation with recreational fishers, charter fishing boat operators, other stakeholders and the broader community. Discussion papers covering the following recreational fishing issues will be released during 2004:

- review of the recreational fishing licence;
- saltwater bag and size limits;
- freshwater bag and size limits;
- fishing competitions;
- spearfishing; and
- charter boats

Stakeholders can get involved by commenting on the ideas and proposals in the discussion papers at that time. Your feedback will be used to make informed decisions on immediate and longer term actions for a sustainable recreational and charter boat fishery.

You will also be able to comment on the environmental impact statement (incorporating the draft fishery management strategy) when it is placed on public exhibition. Feedback from the discussion papers and

any management decisions thereafter made will be used to shape the content of the draft FMS, which will then be subject to the subsequent stages of the environment assessment.

A copy of the Ocean Trawl EIS (volumes 1-3) will be forwarded to the council in the near future. NSW Fisheries encourages members to review these documents and provide comments.

**Recommendation**

The council requests out of session consultation to review the draft discussion papers, prior to them being released for public consultation.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Elaine Garvey

**Carried**

**Issue**

Regional Services (compliance) report.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

a) Mr Glenn Tritton, Principal Manager – Regional Services will provide an overview of current compliance issues at the meeting.

b) *Use of exemption certificates by hire boat operators*

A problem has been identified with the use of exemption certificates by hire boat operators, which is outside the intention of the exemption. Hire boats owners with exemption fall into 3 categories - houseboats, barbeque pontoons and fishing vessels and can have widely varying carrying capacities.

- Owners have exemptions for a certain number of vessels (eg 6 vessels) but actually use a larger number of vessels as part of the business to allow for repairs, painting etc. Therefore, one exemption certificate is being used on a number of different boats;
- The fishing exemption on the vessel is for a certain number of persons on board (usually four), however, some of these vessels may carry 12 or more people (carrying capacity - as permitted by the Waterways Authority); and
- the houseboat owners are telling clients that they are permitted to use their own vessel as a tender boat, in conjunction with the houseboat, and that they are covered by the exemption.

To resolve this issue NSW Fisheries proposes that compliance plates, with the number of people exempt for that vessel and the vessel’s registration number, be issued to the owner of each hire vessel that has an exemption certificate. Such a compliance plate could be a sticker, similar to that used by Waterways. At their last meeting the Marine and Estuarine Charter Management Advisory Committee agreed that an exemption certificate should be for a certain boat, the same as arrangements for charter boats and supported the introduction of the proposed compliance plates.

**Outcomes**

Council was advised that district profiles, annual district compliance plans and the program activity reporting system form the basis of the current NSW Fisheries planning and reporting procedure. Annual District Compliance Plans were introduced in 1999/2000 and covers each district and squad in NSW.

District profiles contain extensive information concerning recreational and commercial fishing activity relevant to each district. They include information such as seasonal considerations, details concerning “high risk” illegal activity and known “hot spots”. Program priorities are set in consultation with management and effort is then apportioned across all programs relevant to each district. High risk targets are identified (based on intelligence driven compliance priorities) and appropriate actions are planned. Profiles are reviewed on a quarterly basis, with the review focussing on the results of planned operations. These plans may be adjusted to include ‘new targets’ and/or take into consideration seasonal factors, fishery trends or other ‘unknown’ factors that may require the plan to be amended.

Program Activity Reporting Summaries (PARS) form the basis for the monitoring of Fisheries Officer effort across all fishery programs and compliance trends across each program are identified. Summaries are reviewed on a quarterly basis to compare actual program effort against planned program effort.

*Number of recreational fishers checked (2002/03 financial year)*

No of coastal anglers checked	67,725
Compliance rate	84%

*Number of recreational fishers checked (July – December 2003)*

No of coastal anglers checked	31,942
Compliance rate	88%

### *Significant prosecutions/results*

The Council was advised about the results of other recent significant prosecutions involving the nine Officers funded by the Trust and other district Officers:

- Pipi gathering on NSW South Coast, near Gerroa. 100 people fined for illegally gathering more than 35,000 pipis.
- \$45,000 in fines have been issued in the past three months. Most offenders received \$500 on-the-spot fines.
- Illegal Rock Lobster fishing - Commercial fisher fined \$9,300 for lobster offences - \$2,000 for failing to attach tags to 224 lobsters and \$1,500 for providing false and/or misleading information on his daily log sheets. The fisher was also ordered to pay a total of \$5,875 in court and legal costs. Also two Port Stephens commercial fishers were fined \$12,600 for passing 32 lobsters from their boat to three recreational fishers on another boat.
- Illegal netting - Offender prosecuted for use of undersize fish trawl net (cod-end) and possessing fish illegally taken off Barrenjoey Head. Fined \$8,000 plus court costs and the fish and net were forfeited. Second offender fined \$4,000 and ordered to forfeit his \$6,000 boat for illegally possessing a commercial fishing net at Botany Bay.
- Abalone Theft - offender observed with 119 abalone of which 117 were undersized. The offender was jailed for one month, after pleading guilty.

### *Significant apprehensions/seizures*

The Council was also advised about significant apprehensions and seizures, including:

- Prawn running net & boat seizure at Lake Illawarra from two ex-commercial fishers. First offender received 4 offences and was fined \$2,000. The second offender received 4 offences and was fined \$800
- Illegal net on Clarence River. Two North Coast men were prosecuted after being found using an illegal commercial fishing net (gill net). The boat, net and trailer were seized. First offender pleaded guilty and was fined \$2,500. Second offender pleaded not-guilty - prosecution pending.

### *Prosecutions pending*

- Commercial fisher setting gear in a grey nurse shark critical habitat (Montague Island).
- Grey Nurse shark seized from Chullora Fish shop
- Abalone seizure in Eden - NSW Fisheries and NSW Water Police joint operation resulted in more than 340 abalone being seized from the home of an Eden restaurateur.
- Illegal nets near Evans River - two North Coast men will be prosecuted after being found with two illegal 150m-long meshing nets near the Evans River.
- Illegal recreational fishing charges - Possession of undersized fish and exceeding bag limits. A 65-year-old man will be prosecuted in court after being found with an illegal catch of fish and crabs in his vehicle at Maclean.
- 6,000 cockles taken at Lake Macquarie - Two Sydney men will be prosecuted after being found with more than 6000 cockles – 60 times the daily legal limit.

The council acknowledged the ongoing efforts of the compliance team. It was noted, however, that a number of anglers had mentioned that they didn't observe any Fisheries Officers at Lake Eucumbene over Easter, although there was a targeted operation at that time.

With regards to the use of exemption certificates by hire boat operators, the council supported the compliance plate proposal, as it will make the hire boat exemption certificate consistent with the existing charter boat exemption (i.e. it may only be used on 1 vessel).

### **Recommendation**

ACoRF supports the issuing of compliance plates, with the number of people exempted for that vessel and the vessel's registration number, to the owner of each hire vessel that has an exemption certificate.

Moved: Ann Lee

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

**Carried**

**Issue**

Commercial Fishing update.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Mr John Roach, Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Commercial Fishing (ACCF) has written to the Council to express concerns raised by ACCF members with regard to:

- a) The recreational bag limit for sea garfish; and
- b) Mechanisms to achieve resource sharing needs for Australian salmon.

A representative of Commercial Management will discuss these issues with the Council and provide a general update on the commercial fishing sector.

**a) Sea garfish****Issue**

Recreational bag limit for sea garfish.

**Background**

There is strong evidence that the current stock size of eastern sea garfish is relatively low, notwithstanding some uncertainty surrounding reported commercial catch statistics and the reason for the decline in catches. The Ocean Hauling Fishery Management Strategy (OHFMS) and environmental impact assessment requires that a recovery program be adopted for this species as it is believed to be overfished (objective 2.5.1 of OHFMS).

A recovery program applicable to the commercial sector has been designed to significantly reduce the adverse effects of commercial fishing on the stock. Restrictions such as year-round weekend closures, the restriction of fishers to one ocean hauling region and a change in permissible mesh size from 25mm to 28mm will contribute to reduced fishing effort. Measures to limit the activation of latent effort will also be developed in the future to ensure that harvest levels will not climb to unsustainable levels as the stock recovers.

Reports have been received of recreational fishers targeting sea garfish around the mouth of the Clarence River, and excessive quantities being retained. Due to this, ACCF members feel that a recreational bag limit should be implemented immediately to complement the commercial sea garfish recovery program. This program will also be discussed with the estuary general fishery.

ACCF request Council support for the immediate introduction of a recreational bag limit of one 10 litre bucket for sea garfish to protect declining stocks, and that further restrictions be considered as part of the recreational FMS.

**b) Australian salmon****Issue**

Mechanisms to achieve resource sharing needs for Australian salmon.

**Background**

The Ocean Hauling Management Advisory Committee has previously proposed that the Australian salmon trip limit be changed from 100kg to a 20% bycatch provision, consistent with other species in the Ocean Hauling Fishery Management Strategy. The Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing considered this proposal at their last meeting and expressed concern that inclusion of salmon in the ocean haul fishery bycatch arrangements would increase the targeting of mixed schools.



The Council believed the recent recovery of this prime sport fish to be largely driven by the current level of restrictions on the commercial harvest of Australian salmon and as such were not supportive of any change to these restrictions. In view of the Council's position ACCF has requested that Council advise of innovative and collaborative mechanisms to achieve resource sharing needs for this species.

The Minister has approved the formation of a working group to consider issues associated with the taking of salmon and tailor by commercial fishers. The working group will consist of 2 members of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing, 2 members of the Ocean Haul Management Advisory Committee and representatives from NSW Fisheries.

The ocean hauling MAC has not yet met to consider its position and select representatives for the working group. The OHMAC will meet for the first time this year after July, when the main ocean hauling season finishes. A meeting of the working group can be held shortly after that meeting if necessary.

## **Outcomes**

### ***Update on the commercial fishing sector***

#### Share Management / Allocation

Commercial fisheries (excluding Lobster and Abalone) are currently in the process of moving from a category 2 share managed fisheries to category 1 share managed fisheries. The public notice was gazetted on Friday 23rd April 2004 calling for applications for shares, and outlining the eligibility criteria for the EG, EPT, OH, OFT, OPT and OTL share managed fisheries. Closing date for applications is 14 June 2004.

#### FMS / EIS

The FMS/EIS for commercial fisheries are required to be determined by the Minister by December this year. The Estuary General, Ocean Haul and Estuary Prawn Trawl fisheries have completed this process and are now implementing requirements of the strategies.

### **Estuary General**

#### Eel Fishery

An eel management issues consultation paper was released for industry comment in November 2003. The paper canvassed proposals for estuary eel trap design, access to farm dams and the minimum legal size for long finned eels for the commercial sector. Any changes to the minimum recreational size will be addressed through the recreational FMS.

#### Discard chutes

Discard chutes are required when conducting meshing operations from 1 hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. This requirement was implemented to minimise fish mortality from predatory birds to undersized fish when released back to the water.

#### Code of Practice

A Code of Practice for the estuary general fishery is currently being progressed by Ocean Watch in consultation with NSWF and EGMAC. The Code will also include regional supplements.

#### Crab and fish trapping

NSWF and EGMAC have completed the review of the crab trapping and fish trapping endorsement structure. Changes include the way traps are marked.

#### Sea garfish

The Ocean Hauling FMS identified the sea garfish as overfished. A closure was implemented in August 2003 to the taking of sea garfish in the estuary general fishery while a recovery program is being developed in conjunction with the ocean hauling fishery.

### **Estuary Prawn Trawl**

#### Incidental Catch Ratios

The EPT Fishery Management Strategy (finalised last year) required an incidental catch ratio system to be implemented in each estuary of the fishery. Incidental catch ratio is the ratio of the target species to all other species in the catch of a trawl.

An incidental catch ratio system has been implemented for the Clarence River Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery, for the remaining estuaries (Hunter and Hawkesbury Rivers, and Port Jackson) an ICR system is still subject of consultation with the EPTMAC.

#### 'Point of sale' and 'cod end' counts

The EPTFMS also requires the implementation of maximum 'point of sale' prawn counts and 'cod end' counts to minimise trawling at times and areas where prawns are below optimum size. 'First point of sale' and 'cod end' (unsorted catch) prawn counts have been implemented for the Clarence River EPT Fishery at 180 and 200 prawns per half kilogram respectively. The Hunter River EPT Fishery is already subject to a prawn count of 150 prawns per half kilogram. Prawn counts for the remaining estuaries, again, is subject of consultation with the EPTMAC.

#### Code of Conduct

OceanWatch is currently developing a code of conduct for the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery.

#### **Ocean Trawl**

##### FMS/EIS

Environmental assessment of the Ocean Trawl Fishery is currently being prepared. Public exhibition of this document is expected mid year (June / July).

#### Closures

A closure to prawn trawl nets has been introduced off Crowdy Head to protect juvenile king prawns.

#### **Ocean Haul**

##### Operation in the ocean hauling fishery during the upcoming 2004 beach hauling season.

Ocean hauling fishers have been issued new codes of conduct for ocean beach hauling operations and boat based/purse seine operations. Following a review of the codes of conduct, several changes have been made to facilitate enforcement of operating standards in the fishery. The codes of conduct are used to summarise the broad principles under which fishers operate and specific requirements are contained in legislation, closures or licence conditions.

#### Update of Transfer Guidelines for the Ocean Hauling Fishery

New guidelines to determine eligibility upon the transfer of a fishing business relating to Ocean hauling Class C (purse seine) endorsements have recently been approved. Guidelines for Class A and B endorsements had been in place since April 2000. As a business's status in relation to these guidelines is to be used as the basis for share allocation, an updated version of the transfer guidelines for the fishery incorporating recent changes and clarifying the old guidelines has been produced to avoid confusion.

#### Proposed restricted fishery for access to bait resources in NSW waters by Tuna vessels

In August 2003 the Minister approved drafting of a regulation giving effect to a new restricted fishery covering bait gathering for own use in Commonwealth Tuna fishing operations. A meeting of the Baitfish Working Group was held on 18 December 2003 and options for development of a restricted fishery covering the collection of bait for tuna fishing were discussed.

#### **Ocean Trap and Line**

##### FMS/EIS

Environmental assessment of the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery is currently being prepared. Public exhibition of this document is expected later in the year (August / September).

#### Grey Nurse Shark Protection

Despite new critical habitat rules regarding the use of hook and line fishing, tagging studies now indicate there is a current population of less than 500 grey nurse sharks. In the coming months, a summary of submissions, review of protection options, a socio-economic study and latest research findings will be released for the consultation process to improve protection for the species.

#### **Lobster**

## FMS/EIS

An environmental assessment of the lobster fishery is currently being prepared. Public exhibition of this document/s is expected late this year (August).

### Total Allowable Commercial Catch Setting and Review

The Lobster and Abalone Fisheries are subject to a total allowable commercial catch that is determined each year by an independent committee (Total Allowable Catch Setting and Review Committee). The TAC Committee are meeting in April and May to review submissions from NSW Fisheries (research, management and compliance), industry, and other interested stakeholders to establish the total allowable commercial catch for the 2004 / 2005 fishing period for the lobster fishery.

#### **a) Sea garfish**

There is no recreational bag limit on garfish as it is categorised as a common baitfish species at present. The council was advised that the draft recovery plan for this species has been completed and includes a closure on the taking of sea garfish in the estuary general fishery, to protect feeding fish.

The council acknowledged that restrictions on the recreational harvest of garfish are necessary, however, they believe that a bucket limit would be impractical. There was general support for a bag limit of 20, consistent with the general bag limit for other species.

It was confirmed that a review of the recreational bag limits will be undertaken in the near future. The council agreed that it would be best to address this issue during the formal review process – to enable broader consultation and to also reduce the costs associated with printing/re-printing all NSW Fisheries literature that includes recreational bag and size limit information.

#### **b) Australian salmon**

It was highlighted that recreational fishers generally target salmon for sport (catch and release). A survey conducted in WA showed that the value of salmon to the recreational sector far exceeds the commercial value.

ACoRF confirmed that it does not endorse any change to the by-catch provision for salmon. Members do not think market forces could be driving this request, as the market is adequately supported by south coast commercial fishers.

The council suggested that the position of grassroots anglers should be conveyed directly to the Minister and not through a sub-committee. As a result, the council resolved not to nominate representatives to the working group.

## **Recommendations**

### **a) Sea garfish**

Write to the ACCF to advise that the garfish bag limit will be formally addressed during the review of recreational bag limits.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

**Carried**

### **b) Australian salmon**

Write to the Minister to advise that the council does not support any change to the commercial by-catch provision for salmon and therefore will not nominate representatives for the proposed working group.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Neil Ryan

**Carried**

**Issue**

Hawkesbury River Prawn Trawl weekend and public holiday closures.

**Background**

The Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery Management Strategy (EPT FMS) provided for immediate closures to trawling on weekends and public holidays in the estuary prawn trawl (EPT) fishery. These closures were implemented in all estuaries in the EPT fishery (including the Hawkesbury River) on 17 January 2003. EPT Fishers are permitted to trawl until midnight on Friday nights and start trawling at midnight on Sunday nights.

Hawkesbury EPT fishers have requested a review of the times of this weekend and public holiday closure. Mr Graeme Hillyard, Hawkesbury River representative on the EPT Management Advisory Committee, has requested to address the Council on this issue.

According to Mr Hillyard the current closures have created severe economic hardship on fishing families at the mouth of the river reducing incomes by up to 40% per annum. Additionally, Mr Hillyard has indicated the consumers of both bait and seafood are suffering the loss of access to fresh product. As a result Mr Hillyard is seeking the Council's support for a proposal to amend the closure times.

Mr Hillyard believes that this proposal will result in a lower financial impact on commercial fishers, provide fair access for all users of the river and maintain the same area boundaries as the three closure times previously operating. Council's views are sought on the following proposal.

From the mouth of the river to Juno Point:

Closed from 10am Saturday until sunset Saturday

Closed from 10am Sunday until sunset Sunday

Closed from 10am public holidays until sunset public holidays.

From Juno Point to the Wiseman's Ferry ferry closure:

Closed from 6pm Friday until 6pm Sunday

Closed from 10am until 6pm public holidays.

From the Wiseman's Ferry crossing to the closure at the Colo River junction:

Closed from 6pm Friday until 9pm Sunday

Closed from 10am until 9pm public holidays.

**Outcomes (information presented by Mr Hillyard)**

The council was advised that commercial operators do not want to remove these closures, but are pursuing an outcome which will reduce economic loss to this regional fishery. It was mentioned that fishers are now risking lives to work on dangerous, bad weather days as they cannot afford further days off.

Mr Hillyard informed the council that both the Nature Conservation Council and Environment Australia have concluded that there is no environmental reason for these closures - they are existing closures initiated by commercial fishers concerned with the safety of water skiers. Another reason given was to make operating arrangements consistent with other estuary prawn trawl fisheries.

It was stated that the majority of the Hawkesbury River EPT catch goes to the recreational fishing sector, however, sometimes anglers cannot buy bait in the area due to the weekend/public holiday closures. Squid fishers (around Patonga) work from about 5:30am to 10:00am. Mr Hillyard stated that the majority of anglers do not commence fishing until after 10am and that 99% of the squid caught goes to the recreational sector.

Figures estimating the economic loss suffered by EPT fishers as a result of the closure were distributed to members for information. Mr Hillyard also stated that an extensive research study conducted by Mr Tony Underwood has found that “there is no difference between trawled and non-trawled areas”. The results of this study will be published in the near future.

The council clarified that the closure was introduced purely to reduce the level of conflict between commercial and recreational fishers using the same area, from daylight to 10am. Therefore, members are concerned that any change to the operating hours will re-open conflict issues that were resolved by the current closure.

Mr Hillyard noted that the prawn trawl fishers are willing to compromise and would be happy to consider a counter proposal that addresses the issues raised.

Following Mr Hillyard’s presentation and departure from the meeting, the council discussed the proposal in greater detail. Members queried the accuracy of some of the information provided by Mr Hillyard in support of this proposal.

Council resolved that the closures are still necessary to avoid conflict between the sectors.

**Action item** – Write to Mr Hillyard (330 Blackwall Road, Woy Woy, NSW, 2256) to advise of this outcome. A draft letter is attached with the minutes, for approval.

#### **Recommendation**

The council does not support any change to the existing closure times in the Hawkesbury River prawn trawl fishery as the proposal would increase conflict on the River

Moved: Elaine Garvey

Seconded: Neil Ryan

**Carried**

**Issue**

Update on the proposed expansion to Port Botany.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Port Botany expansion was placed on public exhibition from 28 January to 29 March 2004 by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR). The EIS considers, among other things, the effect of the expansion on aquatic ecology, fishing and aquaculture.

NSW Fisheries has received an extension to provide comments on the Port Botany Development EIS and is currently developing a detailed submission to DIPNR to ensure this significant development will take into account the interests of all fisheries stakeholders and is considerate of impacts on the marine environment. In our submission NSW Fisheries will be requesting that the Port Botany Development address a number of recreational fishing issues including the concerns raised by the Council and the saltwater trust committee.

The NSW Government announced a Commission of Inquiry would be established to ensure the proposal is subject to rigorous environmental scrutiny and enable further public participation in the assessment process. The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Craig Knowles, announced the inquiry would consider:

- The justification of the proposal;
- The terrestrial and marine environment;
- The hydrodynamics of Botany Bay;
- The acoustic environment;
- Air and water quality, including groundwater;
- Safety, both in terms of shipping navigation and the operations of Kingsford-Smith Airport;
- Local and regional traffic, road and rail networks;
- Local and regional infrastructure, including the implications on container movements and growth within NSW;
- Recreational opportunities in and around Botany Bay, in particular Foreshore Beach and Reserve;
- The cumulative impacts of the proposal in the context of the total port environs taking into account any relevant strategy for Botany Bay; and
- Social and economic implications of the development, including the implications to the State of not proceeding.

**Outcomes**

The council expressed concern that recreational fishing may be excluded from a large area around the development site. NSW Fisheries confirmed that ACoRF's previous submission on this issue, including a request for compensation if recreational fishing access is restricted, has been re-iterated in the department's EIS submission. The point was raised that if recreational fishing access is going to be restricted as part of this development, a suitable trade-off (eg financial compensation or the declaration of Port Jackson as a RFH) should be negotiated by the recreational fishing sector.

Council will be updated once a formal response to the department's submission has been received.

**Recommendation**

For information.

**Issue**

Request for a seasonal closure on the taking of fish in Doon Doon Creek.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

On 18 September 2003 an urgent section 37 permit was issued to the Australian Bass Association to relocate Australian bass from Doon Doon Creek to Clarrie Hall Dam located directly upstream. Recent rains had caused Clarrie Hall Dam to overflow creating a mass upstream (summer) migration of Australian bass. As a result an estimated 2000 fish were stranded and struggling to survive in the two pools below the dam wall.

These stranded fish had become targets for anglers whom were retaining large numbers of bass, well above the legal bag limit for this species. The Australian Bass Association with the assistance of the Tweed Shire Council Water Unit successfully relocated 1246 Australian bass from Doon Doon Creek to Clarrie Hall Dam during September to December 2003.

To prevent future loss of Australian bass through illegal activities during the migration period Tweed Shire Council and the Australian Bass Association have requested the area of Doon Doon Creek from the Clarrie Hall Dam wall down to the Tweed River (about 2km) be gazetted as catch and release only for the period of August to October inclusive.

NSW Fisheries regional compliance staff have advised that a total fishing closure would be more effective in protecting stranded fish from anglers who will take more than their legal bag limit. NSW Fisheries regional conservation staff are supportive of a seasonal closure to protect stranded fish in this area. Such a closure would provide an interim solution until adequate environmental flows can be negotiated in the long term. However, for this closure to be effective NSW Fisheries will need a commitment from the Tweed Shire Council and the Australian Bass Association to continue their relocation efforts, under a section 37 permit, during migration periods. A map of the area will be distributed at the meeting to assist discussion.

**Outcomes**

Although the council acknowledged the compliance staff's reasoning for a total fishing closure in the area, they are not supportive of a total fishing ban. The majority of members believe that a catch and release fishery, in conjunction with relocation efforts, would be more appropriate.

Members requested further consultation with Tweed Shire Council, the Australian Bass Association and regional Fisheries Officers, to seek more detailed information about the issue and gain feedback about the proposal to introduce a catch and release closure in the area of Doon Doon Creek, from the Clarrie Hall Dam wall down to the Tweed River, for the period of August to October inclusive.

**Recommendation**

Information noted. A recommendation will be made at the next meeting.

**Issue**

Closure renewals.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

A number of closures relating to recreational fishing are due for renewal in the near future. Information regarding the following closures is attached:

- a) Brunswick River and tributaries
- b) Recreational bag limit on yabbies
- c) Nambucca River
- d) Richmond, Wilson Rivers & tributaries
- e) Tuross River/Lake
- f) Jervis Bay
- g) Myall Lake & River and Boolambayte Lake & Creek
- h) Bellambi Point
- i) Crooked River
- j) Killick Creek
- k) Minnamurra River
- l) Shell Harbour
- m) Werri Creek
- n) Coffs Harbour
- o) Korogoro Creek
- p) Port Kembla
- q) Burrill Lake

Copies of the current closure notifications will be provided at the meeting.

**a) Brunswick River and tributaries****Issue**

Renewal of the Brunswick River fishing closure due to expire on 27 May 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Brunswick River closure was first implemented in the 1960's to eliminate conflict between commercial and recreational fishers.

The current closure provided the following:

*Schedule 1* – prohibits the use of nets of every description except certain recreational prawning and crabbing nets from the whole of the waters of the Brunswick River.

*Schedule 2* – prohibits the use of all nets except the landing net in ocean waters adjacent to the entrance to Brunswick River and is an addition to Schedule 1.

*Schedule 3* – prohibits the use of all nets except the landing net on weekends from the whole of the waters of the Brunswick River.

The Tweed Heads Fisheries Office supports the renewal of Schedules 1 and 2 of the closure in their current form. The office advises that Schedule 3 should be deleted to allow recreational nets on weekends. The only commercial activities that occur in Brunswick River are crab trapping and eel trapping as commercial nets are prohibited. Removing this Schedule would allow the use of the hoop or lift net by appropriately endorsed commercial fishers on weekends also. The Estuary General Management Advisory Committee has been consulted out of session and no comments were received.



**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**b) Yabbies****Issue**

Renewal of the fishing closure on the recreational bag limit for yabbies due to expire on 3 June 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The recreational bag limit for yabbies was first introduced in June 2000 to prevent overfishing and deter unlicensed fishers from illegally catching and selling yabbies.

The current closure prohibits the taking of yabbies, (other than by a commercial fisher), by all methods of fishing, from all inland waters of NSW, with the exception that a person (not being a commercial fisher) may take or have in their possession not more than 200 yabbies on any day.

The closure was renewed in June 2002 for a period of two years. The closure has been effective in controlling fishing pressure on yabby stocks in inland waters. The Principal Manager Regional Services and the Senior Fisheries Manager (Inland) support the renewal of the closure in its current form. The bag limit for yabbies will be reviewed during the development of the recreational fisheries management strategy.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General, NSW Fisheries.

**c) Nambucca River****Issue**

Renewal of the Nambucca River fishing closure due to expire on 17 June 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Closures were first introduced in the Nambucca River and Warrell Creek in the 1950's. The current closure (attached) provides the following:

*Schedule 1* – prohibits the use of all nets except the prawn net hauling, recreational prawn nets and the landing net from the waters of the Nambucca River and Warrell Creek from 6am Saturday to 6am Monday in each week and from 6am to 6pm on any weekday Public Holiday to reduce conflict between commercial and recreational fishers and to allow for other recreational activities on weekends and public holidays.

**Note:** Commercial fishers have previously requested that the time period be changed from “6am Saturday to 6am Monday in each week, and from 6am to 6pm on any weekday Public Holiday” to “6pm Friday to 6pm Sunday in each week, and from 6am to 6pm on any weekday Public Holiday” as the current arrangements mean missing Tuesday's Market in Sydney. The Estuary General Management Advisory Committee (EGMAC) has supported the change of times.

*Schedule 2* – prohibits the use of all nets except the dip and scoop net, hoop net and the landing net from specified areas of the Nambucca River Entrance Waters to conserve fish stocks allowing fish free passage.

**Note:** The Coffs Harbour fisheries office suggests moving the boundary of this closure to “from a line drawn across the creek upstream of the Scotts Head Boat Ramp” (about 10 metres) as the recreational public have trouble with the location of the current boundary - the region 3 EGMAC Representative

supports the change.

*Schedule 3* – prohibits the use of all nets and traps except the landing net from specified waters of Warrell Creek. This closure was originally implemented to conserve valuable bass and perch breeding grounds above the weir in the creek, however the weir was demolished in 1990 and the closure amended to the current notification without objections at the time.

*Schedule 4* – prohibits the use of eel traps from specified waters of Warrell Creek, to share the resource between recreational and commercial fishers.

*Schedule 5* – prohibits the use of meshing nets except when used by the method of splashing from the Nambucca Arm and Taylors Arm from 15 May to 31 August each year to protect spawning bass stock.

The Coffs Harbour Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure with changes to the time period in Schedule 1 and changes to the boundary in Schedule 2 as noted above.

#### **Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure, including the recommended changes, for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

#### **d) Richmond, Wilson Rivers and tributaries**

##### **Issue**

Renewal of the Richmond River, Wilson River and their tributaries closure due to expire on 1 July 2004.

##### **Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Closures have been in place in the Richmond and Wilson Rivers since the early 1970's to reduce conflict between user groups, to protect fish stocks and to reduce navigational hazards.

In 1998 several closures in the Richmond River area that had existed for many years were reviewed, updated and consolidated into one closure notification for the entire area. Extensive consultation with stakeholder groups was carried out at the time and involved input from many Fisheries Officers.

On 1 May 2002 a section of the Richmond River and its tributaries was closed to commercial fishing due to the implementation of the Recreational Fishing Haven. The current closure provides the following:

*Schedule 1* prohibits the use of all commercial nets from specified waters of the Richmond River on weekends to reduce conflict between recreational and commercial fishers.

*Schedules 2 and 6* can be removed, as they are now obsolete due to the introduction of the recreational fishing haven.

*Schedule 3* prohibits the use of all nets except recreational nets and the meshing net when used by the method of splashing in specified waters of the upper Richmond River, to reduce conflict over the summer holiday months and to protect fish stocks. This closure only applies from 1 December to 31 March in each year.

*Schedule 4* prohibits the use of all prawn nets except recreational prawn nets from the same specified waters as Schedule 3. This closure only applies from 1 March to 31 July each year.

*Schedule 5* prohibits the use of meshing nets except when used by the method of "splashing" from specified waters of the upper Richmond River to protect spawning Australian bass stocks from 1 May to 31 August in each year.

*Schedule 7* prohibits the use of nets of every description except the landing net from the waters of Ballina Quays, as the area is unsuitable for netting.

*Schedule 8* prohibits the use of nets of every description except the hoop or lift net and the landing net from the upper Wilson River to protect fish stocks.

*Schedule 9* prohibits the use of all traps except the eel trap from the upper Richmond River to protect fish stocks.

*Schedule 10* prohibits the use of all traps from the lower Richmond River to reduce navigational hazards.

*Schedule 11* prohibits the use of nets of every description except the landing net from Prospect Lake and Chickiba Lake.

*Schedule 12* prohibits the use of all methods of fishing except the dip or scoop net and a single rod and line or handline from the waters of Shaw's Lagoon.

*Schedule 13* prohibits the use of all nets except the dip or scoop net, hoop or lift net and the landing net from a specified area of North Creek (approximately 300m). This area is part of the recreational fishing haven.

***The Richmond Fisheries Office recommends the following:***

Schedules 2 and 6 of the closure can be removed, as they are now obsolete due to the introduction of the Recreational Fishing Haven.

Schedule 1 – the description of the waters be amended so that it does not overlap with the recreational fishing haven and that the time period be extended to include a closure on public holidays to bring the Richmond River into line with other estuaries. Consultation with the Estuary General Management Advisory Committee is yet to occur on this issue.

Schedule 3 – the prawn net (hauling) be added as a permitted method and a comment be added to the time period stating that the prawn net (hauling) is not permitted to be used in March as outlined in the following schedule.

Schedule 8 – that the upper Richmond River be added to this closure "All waters of the Richmond River and tributaries upstream of Norco Weir at Casino". This would not affect commercial or recreational fishers, as the area is freshwater.

Schedules 11 & 12 – that the two schedules be amalgamated into one schedule. This change would permit the use of the dip and scoop net in Prospect Lake and Chickiba Lake and allow recreational fishers to use more than one rod and line in Shaw's Bay (these areas are all part of the recreational fishing haven).

Schedule 13 – remove the schedule as the area is now a recreational fishing haven the closure only prohibits the hand hauled prawn net and the push and scissor net from an area of the River approximately 300 m in length.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of schedules 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10 of the current closure as well as the amalgamation of schedules 11 & 12 and the implementation of the recommendations of the Richmond Fisheries Office above for a period of 5 years, unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**e) Tuross River/Lake**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Tuross River/Lake fishing closure due to expire on 1 July 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Over recent years, a number of netting closures have been introduced into Tuross Lake to restrict commercial fishing activities, prevent the decline of fish stocks and reduce user conflict.

There are currently six schedules to the current closure:

Commercial fishing has been prohibited in Tuross Lake/River since it became a recreational fishing haven on 1 May 2002. As a result, schedules 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the closure are no longer applicable and should be removed.

Schedule 3 prohibits the use of all nets except specified recreational nets and the landing net from 1 December to 30 April each year in specified waters and tributaries of the Lake, to reduce conflict between recreational and commercial fishers and to prevent navigational hazards in the entrance waters of the Lake. The only recreational net prohibited is the hoop or lift net.

Schedule 5 prohibits the use of all nets, except the landing net in the specified waters and tributaries of Tuross River to protect Australian bass stocks in the upper Tuross River.

The Montague Fisheries Office supports the removal of schedules 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the closure. Schedules 3 and 5 are to remain due to preventing navigational hazards and protection of Australian bass stocks.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of schedules 3 and 5 of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General, NSW Fisheries.

**f) Jervis Bay**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Jervis Bay (Currumbene Creek) fishing closure, which is due to expire on 8 July 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Jervis Bay fishing closure was introduced in the early 1980's to prevent conflict between commercial and recreational fishers and to protect scallops from being overfished. The current closure includes four schedules:

Schedule 1 prohibits the taking of scallops by commercial fishers that do not hold a scallop endorsement in the waters and tributaries of Jervis Bay to prevent overfishing.

Schedule 2 prohibits the use of meshing nets in the waters and tributaries of Jervis Bay to avoid user conflict.

Schedule 3 prohibits the use of nets except the landing net in the waters of Currumbene Creek to avoid conflict between commercial and recreational fishers.

Schedule 4 prohibits the use of meshing nets in the waters of Currumbene Creek from 1 June to 31 August each year to protect spawning Australian bass stocks in the upper reaches of the creek.

The Jervis Bay Marine Park was declared in January 1998 and a zoning plan for the marine park commenced on 1 October 2002. Sanctuary and habitat protection zones have been established within the Bay and Currumbene Creek, which prohibit high impact commercial fishing activities such as meshing and trawling. As a result, schedules 2 and 4 are no longer applicable and should be removed from the closure.

The Shoalhaven Fisheries Office supports removing schedules 2 and 4 of the closure and retaining schedules 1 and 3. There are currently no commercial fishers that hold an endorsement to take scallops in Jervis Bay, however it is possible that commercial fishers could take scallops for sale in the future.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the removal of schedules 2 and 4 from the closure and the renewal of schedules 1 and 3 for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General, NSW Fisheries.

**g) Myall Lake & River and Boolambayte Lake & Creek****Issue**

Renewal of the Myall Lake and River and Boolambayte Lake and Creek fishing closure due to expire on 8 July 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Closures have existed in the Myall and Boolambayte Lakes, Rivers and Creeks prior to the 1970's to conserve and protect fish and prawn stocks. The current closure provided the following:

*Schedule 1* – prohibits the use of nets of every description except the landing net from the whole of the waters of the Myall River, upstream of the Pacific Highway Bridge, Bulahdelah. This closure was introduced to protect Australian bass and estuary perch populations in upstream waters.

*Schedule 2* – prohibits the use of all nets except the landing net from the waters of Boolambayte Creek upstream of its confluence with Boolambayte Lake. This closure was introduced to protect Australian bass and estuary perch populations in upstream waters.

*Schedule 3* – prohibits the use of all nets (when used for the taking of prawns only) except certain recreational nets from the whole of the waters of Myall Lakes, including Boolambayte Lake north of the confluence of Myall River with the Bombah Broadwater. This closure was originally introduced as a request by local commercial fishers aiming to catch a better class of prawns.

*Schedule 4* – prohibits the use of meshing nets except when used by the method of splashing from the upper reaches of Myall River from 15 May to 31 August in each year to protect spawning Australian bass and estuary perch stocks.

The Port Stephens Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure in its current form and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**h) Bellambi Point****Issue**

Renewal of the Bellambi Point fishing closure, which is due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Bellambi Point fishing closure was introduced in the early 1980's to prevent conflict between fishers and boat users. The closure provides protection for boat owners who regularly use the boat ramp as a launching site.

The closure prohibits the use of fish and lobster traps within specified waters around Bellambi Point.

The Illawarra Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the fishing closure in its current form. The closure has been effective in reducing conflict between boat users and fishers in this area.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General, NSW Fisheries.

**i) Crooked River****Issue**

Renewal of the Crooked River closure due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The closure in the Crooked River has existed prior to the 1980's to conserve and protect fish stocks and to share the resource. The current closure prohibits the use of all nets except certain recreational nets from the whole of the waters of the Crooked River.

The Shoalhaven Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure in its current form and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**j) Killick or Crescent Head Creek****Issue**

Renewal of the Killick or Crescent Head Creek fishing closure due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Killick or Crescent Head Creek closure has been in existence since prior to the early 1980's and was originally implemented to reduce conflict between commercial and recreational fishers and to eliminate the navigational hazards to vessels entering and leaving the waterway.

The current closure prohibits the use of nets of every description except the dip or scoop net, hand hauled prawn net and the landing net from the whole of the waters of Killick or Crescent Head Creek, together with waters of the South Pacific Ocean.

The Hastings Fisheries Office has not received any objections or complaints relating to this closure. However, the Office has advised that the National Parks and Wildlife sign referred to in the closure no longer exists. The Office has requested that a post be placed 1km north along the beach from the confluence of Killick Creek and the South Pacific Ocean, and the closure wording be amended accordingly. This will not change the actual area of the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure, including changes recommended by the Hastings Fisheries Office, for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**k) Minnamurra River****Issue**

Renewal of the Minnamurra River fishing closure due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Minnamurra River closure has been in force since prior to the 1980's as the River is small and contains limited fish and prawn populations. The area is also a very popular recreational fishing location.

The current closure prohibits the use of nets of every description, except the dip or scoop net and the landing net, from the whole of the waters of Minnamurra River.

The Illawarra Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure in its current form and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**l) Shell Harbour**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Shell Harbour fishing closure due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Shell Harbour closure was originally implemented in the interests of recreational fishers and for the safety of the general public who use the Harbour for swimming. The closed waters of the Harbour are also used as a safe anchorage for fishing boats that are permanently moored in the waters. The current closure prohibits the use of nets of every description, except the landing net, from the whole of the waters of Shell Harbour.

The Illawarra Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure in its current form and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

The southern fish trawl management advisory committee member and the two local ocean trawl fishers who hold endorsements to operate in NSW waters have been consulted on the renewal of this fishing closure. They advised that they agree with the renewal of the closure in its current form. The Ocean Haul fishery is currently being consulted.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**m) Werri Creek**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Werri Creek fishing closure due to expire on 5 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Werri Creek closure has been in force since the early 1980's and was originally introduced to avoid conflict between recreational and commercial fishers. The creek is a popular area with recreational fishers and tourists. Additionally, the creek is frequently closed to the sea and due to its size is not suitable for commercial netting.

The current closure prohibits the use of nets of every description, except the dip or scoop net, hand hauled prawn net and landing net, from the whole of the waters of Werri Creek.

The Illawarra Fisheries Office supports the renewal of the closure in its current form and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**n) Coffs Harbour****Issue**

Renewal of the Coffs Harbour Entrance, Coffs Harbour and Coffs Harbour Creek fishing closure due to expire on 6 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Coffs Harbour is subject to intense boating activity and recreational fishing. Floats and ropes attached to traps and lobster pots in the past provided navigational hazards and interfered with angling lines.

Closures were put in place for Coffs Harbour to provide safe navigation within the Harbour and its entrance, as well as to protect Coffs Harbour Creek from commercial fishing. The current closure provided the following:

*Schedule 1 & 2* - prohibit the use of traps of every description from specified waters of Coffs Harbour Entrance and Coffs Harbour. These closures have been in force since 1984 to improve navigation conditions at the entrance waters.

*Schedule 3* – prohibits the use of nets of every description except the dip or scoop net, hand hauled prawn net, push or scissors net and the landing net from the whole of the waters of Coffs Harbour Creek. This closure was originally reduced in 1973. The creek runs through the middle of Coffs Harbour itself and is very popular with recreational fishers. The creek is not suitable for commercial fishing activities due to its shallow nature.

*Note:* Schedule 3 of the closure is inconsistent with the Solitary Island Marine Park Zoning Plan in that it permits the use of certain recreational fishing nets within Coffs Harbour Creek. A marine park zoning plan overrules any other fishing controls that are inconsistent with the plan. The Marine Park Manager for Solitary Islands Marine Park has requested that Schedule 3 be removed.

The Coffs Fisheries Office supports the renewal of schedules 1 and 2 of the closure and state that they have not received any complaints about the closure.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the removal of schedule 3 and the renewal of schedules 1 and 2 of the closure for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**o) Korogoro Creek****Issue**

Renewal of the Korogoro Creek (Hat Head) fishing closure due to expire on 12 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Korogoro Creek closure has been in force since prior to the early 1980's to reduce conflict between recreational and commercial fishers. The Creek is also only a small waterway. The current closure prohibits the use of nets of every description, except the landing net, from specified waters of Korogoro Creek.

The Hastings Fisheries Office has recently received complaints from recreational fishers regarding this closure. In its current form, the closure does not prohibit the use of commercial nets from ocean waters to the boat ramp, which is located near the confluence of the Creek.



The entrance to the Creek is used by commercial fishers to manoeuvre nets inside the Creek entrance for ease of boxing and transportation.

The Hastings Fisheries Office recommends that the closure be amended so that the use of commercial nets is prohibited from ocean waters to the boat ramp. Closed water authorities can be issued by the Senior Fisheries Officer for commercial fishers to travel through the closed waters to ocean waters with appropriate nets and with conditions.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of the closure, including changes recommended by the Hastings Fisheries Office, for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**p) Port Kembla**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Port Kembla fishing closure due to expire on 12 August 2004.

**Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

Closures have been in place Port Kembla, including Port Kembla Harbour, since 1984, due to water pollution and to protect species of reef fish. The current closure provided the following:

*Schedule 1* - prohibits the use of an otter trawl net (prawns), otter trawl net (fish) and Danish seine trawl net (fish) from the whole of the waters west of a line drawn from the most eastern extremity of Red Point south to the most eastern extremity of Windang Island. This closure has been in force since 1984 due to complaints from recreational fishers about the damage that trawl nets were causing to the breeding grounds of several species of fish.

*Schedule 2* - prohibits the use of nets of every description, except the landing net, from the whole of the waters of Port Kembla Harbour (outer harbour). This closure has been in force for many years because the outer harbour forms an excellent haven for reef fish in ocean waters. A small number of commercial fishers were using mesh nets in the waters of the outer harbour, catching a considerable number of groper.

*Schedule 3* – prohibits all methods of fishing from the waters of the Inner Harbour of Port Kembla. The closure of Port Kembla Inner Harbour has been in force for many years due to water pollution.

The southern fish trawl management advisory committee member and the two local ocean trawl fishers who hold endorsements to operate in NSW waters, have been consulted on the renewal of this fishing closure. The local fishers supported the renewal of Schedules 2 and 3 of the closure but suggested that Schedule 1 be amended to allow trawling between May and August each year.

**Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of all 3 schedules of the closure in their current form for a period of five years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

**q) Burrill Lake**

**Issue**

Renewal of the Burrill Lake fishing closure due to expire on 19 August 2004.

### **Background (provided by NSW Fisheries)**

The Burrill Lake fishing closure has been in place for many years to reduce conflict between recreational and commercial fishers on weekends and public holidays and to prevent navigational hazards at the entrance to the Lake. The current closure contains two schedules:

*Schedule 1* prohibits the use of nets except specified commercial and recreational prawning nets on weekends and public holidays in all of the waters and tributaries of the Lake.

*Schedule 2* prohibits the use of nets except specified recreational prawning nets at the entrance to the Lake. The only recreational net prohibited is the hoop or lift net.

Commercial fishing has been prohibited in Burrill Lake since it became a recreational fishing haven on 1 May 2002. As a result, schedule 1 of the closure is no longer applicable and should be removed.

Burrill Lake is currently subject to a *Caulerpa* closure, which prohibits the use of nets of every description other than a landing net in the whole of the waters of Burrill Lake upstream of OL74/027. Schedule 2 of the Burrill Lake closure overlaps with the *Caulerpa* closure.

The Batemans Bay Fisheries Office supports the removal of schedule 1 of the closure and the renewal of schedule 2 of the closure, with changes to the description of the waters so that this closure and the *Caulerpa* closure do not overlap.

It should be noted that the boundaries of schedule 2 should be changed back to the original waters if the *Caulerpa* closure is removed in the future.

### **Recommendation**

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of schedule 2 of the closure as described above for a period of 5 years unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

### **Outcomes**

The council considered each closure and supported renewal of the following closures, as outlined:

- a) Brunswick River – *Supported.*
- b) Recreational bag limit on yabbies – *Supported.*
- c) Nambucca River – *Supported.*
- d) Richmond, Wilson Rivers & tributaries – *Supported.*
- e) Tuross River/Lake – *Supported.*
- f) Jervis Bay – *Supported.*
- g) Myall Lake & River and Boolambayte Lake & Creek – *Supported.*
- h) Bellambi Point – *Supported.*
- i) Crooked River – *Supported.*
- j) Killick Creek – *Supported.*
- k) Minnamurra River – *Supported.*
- l) Shell Harbour – *Supported.*
- m) Werri Creek – *Supported.*
- n) Coffs Harbour – *Supported.*
- o) Korogoro Creek – *Supported.*
- p) Port Kembla – *Supported.*

The council noted that Schedule 3 of this closure prohibits all methods of fishing from the waters of the Inner Harbour of Port Kembla, due to longstanding water pollution issues. It was mentioned that consideration should be given to turn this area into a catch and release only fishery, to enable recreational fishing activities whilst maintaining a closure on the retention of fish caught in the inner harbour.

q) Burrill Lake – *Supported.*

**Recommendation**

The council supports the renewal of these closures in their current form for a period of five years, unless sooner varied or revoked by the Director-General.

Moved: Neil Ryan      Seconded: Terry Maloney      **Carried**

The council recommends that consideration be given to amend Schedule 3 of the Port Kembla closure to allow catch and release fishing only in the inner harbour.

Moved: Scott Mitchell      Seconded: Elaine Garvey      **Carried**

**Issue**

Findings/current information regarding the NSW Fisheries dusky flathead research project.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

The flathead research program update, requested by the Council's Nature Conservation Council representative, was scheduled to be presented at meeting 28 of the Advisory Council. The estuarine fisheries scientist was unable to attend and the update was re-scheduled for this meeting.

*Project Title: Stock assessment and reproductive biology of dusky flathead in NSW*

*Principal Investigator: Dr Charles Gray*

*Funding Source: NSW Fisheries (FSC2000/056)*

**Objectives:**

1. Assess the size composition of estuarine commercial catches of dusky flathead in NSW.
2. Derive the age composition of commercially harvested dusky flathead in NSW.
3. Determine the reproductive cycle and the size and age at first maturity of dusky flathead in NSW.
4. Assess catch and effort trends from available data.

Dusky flathead is an important finfish species harvested by commercial and recreational fishers in NSW estuaries. In 1999/00, a reported 194 tonnes of dusky flathead were landed commercially, valued at approximately \$700 thousand to fishers. Over the past 5 years the reported annual commercial catch of dusky flathead has increased and there is concern over the status of the resource. The bulk of the commercial catch is taken in mesh nets in estuaries where flathead nets are permitted to be set. Little data exists on the recreational fishery for dusky flathead in NSW.

Because of concerns over the long-term sustainability of the resource, the minimum legal length of dusky flathead was increased from 33 to 36cm in July 2001. A continued assessment of the dusky flathead stock is required to assess the impacts of this change in regulation. Stock assessments rely on a variety of data, including catch and effort and size and age compositions of catches. Whilst we have a historical record of commercial catch levels, there is much less information on size and age compositions of catches. Sampling of size and age compositions and landings was done in 1995 and 1997 and began again in 2001 and will continue through 2002. Four major ports are being targeted for sampling: Clarence River, Wallis Lake, Tuggerah Lake and Lake Illawarra.

The reproductive condition of dusky flathead will also be assessed in each of the 4 estuaries on a monthly basis throughout 2001 and 2002. Information on the status of gonad development and the size and age of fish will be collected. This data will be used to determine the size and age that dusky flathead become sexually mature and it will also tell us when spawning occurs throughout the state.

Dr Charles Gray, Principal Scientist, Scientific Services will present further information on this research program.

**Outcomes**

NSW Fisheries presented the Council with an update on the flathead research program. Council was advised that a lack of resources has, at present, placed the project on hold. Consequently summer sampling and gonad analysis is still required to complete this important research. Council members indicated that this research project should be completed and the results made available. Due to this Council requested that NSW Fisheries apply for saltwater trust funds to complete the project.

**Action Item** – NSW Fisheries to submit an application for funds from the recreational fishing saltwater trust to complete the project “*Stock assessment and reproductive biology of dusky flathead in NSW* “. This application is to be marked “as recommended by ACoRF”.

**Recommendation**

For information

**Issue**

Recreational fishing gear research update: (i) estimates of the fate of released angler-caught fish and (ii) the selectivity of recreational prawn-catching gears.

**Background (NSW Fisheries)**

Matthew Broadhurst from the NSW Fisheries Conservation Technology Unit will present summaries of experiments done in the following research programs:

**(i) estimates of the fate of released angler-caught fish**

*Project Title: Using recreational anglers to estimate and maximise the survival of released line-caught fish*

*Experiment Title: The 2004 Botany Bay Research Challenge: an experiment to assess the survival of fish released by recreational anglers*

*Principal Investigator: Dr Matt Broadhurst and Dr Charles Gray*

*Funding Sources: NSW Fisheries and the Saltwater Trust*

**Experiment summary**

The regulation of recreational hook-and-line fisheries in NSW mostly involves legal lengths and daily bag limits. It is assumed that the majority of released fish survive. However, a lack of information on the fate of most species makes it difficult to estimate the benefits of current management. Our aims in this study were to use a recreational angling event in Botany Bay to provide a first estimate of the immediate and short-term survival and physical damage sustained by key fish species after being released by recreational anglers. This would provide relevant information for recreational management should changes to recreational prawn gear be considered.

The study was done in Botany Bay between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of February and involved approx. 80 recreational angling boats, 10 marshal boats and 6 moored sea cages. All fish were hooked and released into the sea cages on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February (between 06:00 and 15:00) by the participating anglers who were divided into two groups.

Anglers in group 1 (approx. 70 boats) were asked to present the largest 2 live individuals of five key species (dusky flathead, bream, sand whiting, trevally and luderick) to researchers at designated 'stations' throughout the day. The researchers tagged the fish, collected data on the capture process and then gave the fish back to the anglers, who transported them to the sea cages. These fish represented individuals that would normally be held onboard vessels in a catch-and-release competition.

Anglers in group 2 (11 boats) had a researcher onboard and were asked to fish continuously throughout the day for all species. Immediately after being caught, fish were tagged by the researcher, placed in onboard tanks and transported by marshal boats to the sea cages. Group 2 fish represented individuals that would normally be released immediately because they are under minimum size restrictions or over bag limits.

Two days after all fish were hooked (by both groups of anglers) and released (into the sea cages), appropriate numbers of control fish were caught (using a seine), tagged and transported to the sea cages in the same way as the angler-caught fish. All fish were then monitored for 10 days.

A total of 124 and 232 fish were caught by group 1 and 2 anglers, respectively. The key species in group 1 were bream and trevally and their adjusted survival rates (i.e. accounting for mortalities to control fish) were 91.7 and 55.3%. For group 2 fish, bream, trevally and snapper dominated catches, with adjusted survival rates of 72.3%, 97.8% and 68.8%, respectively. Dusky flathead were also caught in group 1, but incurred a high mortality that was attributed to the effects of being confined in the cages. We therefore removed their data from analyses. We will be designing more appropriate holding cages for flathead in future experiments.

All of the data will be analysed closely to determine the main factors that contributed towards the observed mortalities. These analyses should provide direction for the future development of modifications to recreational fishing practices that maximize the survival of released fish.

### **(ii) the selectivity of recreational prawn-catching gears**

*Project Title: Reducing the discarding of small prawns in NSW's commercial and recreational fisheries*

*Experiment Title: Atypical size selection of school prawns, *Metapenaeus macleayi* by three recreational fishing gears in south eastern Australia*

*Principal Investigator: Dr Matt Broadhurst*

*Funding Sources: NSW Fisheries and the FRDC*

#### Experiment summary

Recreational fishers use simple, hand-operated fishing gears (called haul, push and scoop nets) to target juvenile and sub-adult prawns (between 8 and 25-mm carapace length – CL). This occurs in more than 120 coastal lagoons and estuaries in NSW. During 2000 / 2001, a recreational fishing survey estimated that these fishers caught and retained approx. 11 million individuals of at least three species (school, king and greasyback prawns). Although the gears used to catch these prawns are regulated by several restrictions that include legal mesh sizes (20 mm for scoop nets and between 30 and 36 mm for haul and push nets), no formal studies have been done to quantify their size-selectivity - the proportions of different sizes of prawns that are retained or escape. These estimates are essential to determine the fishing mortality of juveniles and therefore enhance the effective exploitation of stocks.

Our aims in this study were to provide this information for school prawns caught by existing recreational fishing gears and new sizes and configurations of mesh. The meshes examined included the (i) conventional-sized diamond-shaped mesh used in all gears, (ii) 30-mm mesh in scoop nets and (iii) 40-mm diamond and (iv) 23-mm square-shaped mesh in all gears. During three separate experiments, wild-caught prawns were placed in purpose-built tanks and pond enclosures, monitored for stress and then fished with the different gears. Prawns that escaped through meshes in these test gears were then collected from the enclosures and counted.

The results showed that nearly all of the meshes examined had wide selectivities and retained at least some proportion of school prawns across all of the sizes sampled (between 6 and 24 mm CL). The conventionally-used 20-mm scoop and 30-mm haul and push nets retained 50% of school prawns at sizes of 7.99, 13.42 and 14.58 mm CL, respectively. Assuming that school prawns approach sexual maturity at 18 mm CL, we conclude that up to 37% of mature individuals could escape from the conventional haul and push nets and none from the scoop net. Mesh size in the scoop net would need to be increased to 30 mm to allow some mature individuals to escape. Owing to their popularity (i.e. used by > 93% of fishers), any increase in the size of mesh used in scoop nets is likely to significantly reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile and mature prawns in NSW.

### **Outcomes**

NSW Fisheries presented the Council with an update on the recreational fishing trust funded project "*Using recreational anglers to estimate and maximise the survival of released line-caught fish*" and the FRDC funded project "*Reducing the discarding of small prawns in NSW's commercial and recreational fisheries*".

#### **(i) estimates of the fate of released angler-caught fish**

A recently-completed national recreational fishing survey estimated that more than 8.9 million bream, 6 million flathead and 1.5 million snapper, mulloway and trevally were released from recreational hook-and-line fisheries during 2000/01. These numbers are of considerable concern, because they have the potential to represent high levels of unknown mortalities.

The regulation of recreational hook-and-line fisheries in NSW mostly involves legal lengths and daily bag limits. It is assumed that the majority of released fish survive. A lack of information on this latter issue (survival of released fish) for most species makes it difficult to estimate the benefits of current management. A recent review prioritised several species as potentially susceptible to high levels of mortality after release from capture by recreational hook-and-line fisheries.

Despite the above concerns, there are very few scientific data available on the post release survival rates for line-caught fish in NSW. Our aims in this study were to use a recreational fishing event to quantify the immediate and short-term survival and physical damage sustained by key fish species. The 2004 Botany Bay Research Challenge was the first angling event in the two year project. NSW Fisheries presented preliminary results from this event to the Council.

While there was considerable variation between species in the observed rates of mortality, the estimated individual (between 2.2 and 44.7%) and total (24.3%) percentages of fish dying as a result of being hooked and then released are comparable to those recorded in previous studies done in overseas recreational fisheries. More detailed investigation of the independence of various parameters (such as hook type, size and location, exposure to air and handling, etc) on mortality are required to isolate the main factors responsible for contributing towards the observed results. Such analyses should provide direction for the future development of modifications to recreational fishing practices that maximize the survival of released fish.

#### **(ii) the selectivity of recreational prawn-catching gears**

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Council noted that in addition to the size-selectivity of recreational prawn nets anglers visually select the prawns they wish to catch. Commonly anglers will avoid catching prawns they consider too small to eat. Furthermore, small prawns caught by recreational fishers are seldom discarded, as they are used as bait.

**Recommendation**  
For Information.

### **Other Business**

- Gag Hooks - a new development in recreational fisheries that are currently being trialed around the world. Gag hooks have a short length of wire above the hook that aims to prevent fish swallowing the hook. Trials on snapper in New Zealand have proved effective with low incidence of deep hooking mortality.

*An example of the gag hook was distributed at the meeting. Information noted.*

- Sea Acres Nature Reserve, Port Macquarie - NSW Fisheries has received a submission from Mr William Bevan requesting a marine protected area adjacent to Sea Acres Nature Reserve, Port Macquarie. Mr Bevan claims that the food source for Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers needs protection. He also cites the diversity of rock species present in the area including molluscs, crabs and seaweeds and recommends that use of this area be limited to angling, scuba diving and snorkelling with spearfishing and commercial gathering prohibited.

*NSW Fisheries has responded to Mr Bevan indicating that presently assessments of NSW bioregions, including the Manning Shelf bioregion (which encompasses the Port Macquarie region), are being reviewed to determine potential candidate marine protected areas. NSW Fisheries would like the Council to note this proposal is currently being considered by the Marine Parks Authority as part of the assessment of the Manning Shelf bioregion.*

### **Out of session items**

- Proposal to undertake a second stocking of mulloway fingerlings in Botany Bay.
- Atlantis Divers request to create an artificial reef off the northern beaches of Sydney.
- Amendments to the Threatened Species Conservation Act and Subsequent amendments to the Fisheries Management Act.
- Amendment and renewal of the Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lakes (including Munmorah and Budgewoi Lakes) closure notifications.
- Section 8 Closure to protect Murray crayfish stocks in Blowering Dam.

### **Recommendation**

*The Council ratified its out of session support for these items.*

### **Correspondence received**

- Standards Australia has written to the Council to request representation on a technical committee to develop Australian Standards for degradable plastics.

*Bruce Schumacher has been nominated to represent the council on the technical committee.*

- Letter from Plastral Fidene - regarding biodegradable fishing bait bags. The letter outlines the benefits of the bag and advises that Markwell's Bait in Brisbane is currently using the bags to pack bait. Examples of the bags are provided for the council's information. It should be noted that the Department of Environment and Conservation have prohibited the use of plastic bait bags in the Royal National Park.

*Progress noted.*

- Letter from the RFSTEC region 7 representative expressing concern about the effect of plastic lures on fish. Soft plastics have increased in popularity and are very effective in catching flathead. The region 7 representative has recommended changes in the current bag and size limit regulations of dusky flathead.

*Issue to be considered as part of the FMS/review of recreational bag limits consultation.*



### **Around the table**

- The council believes that Pro-Am committees should only meet to discuss major issues that are initiated by the local Fisheries Office. It was also mentioned that any recommendation made by a Pro-Am committee should be considered by the Advisory Council on Commercial Fishing and ACoRF, prior to a formal recommendation being made to the Minister.
- The underwater harvesting representative expressed concerns regarding the total exclusion of spearfishers in sanctuary and habitat protection zones in marine parks.

*A preliminary check of spearfishing restrictions in the sanctuary and habitat protection zones for North Solitary Island and North West Rock, which forms the Central Section of the Solitary Islands Marine Park, indicates that **spearfishing is permitted in the habitat protection zone surrounding North Solitary Island and North West Rock, including the Grey Nurse Shark key habitat area.***

*Detailed information will be obtained from the Marine Parks Authority regarding spearfishing restrictions in the sanctuary and habitat protection zones of each marine park and provided to the underwater representative at the next meeting.*

Proposed agenda items for next meeting (requested by members):

- Recreational Fishing Haven research update (Anthony Moore).
- Baitfish program update (Michael Lowry).
- Standardised recreational trap identification (particularly crab traps/hoop nets).
- Swansea Bridge closure – Lionel Jones stated that people regularly fish from the bridge, in contravention of an existing Roads and Traffic Authority closure. It was suggested that a NSW Fisheries closure may be needed to prohibit fishing from the bridge.
- Freshwater fishing update (Cameron Westaway)
- Update on developments with the Department of Primary Industries.

**Next Meeting** – Thursday 8 July 2004.