

**Advisory Council on
Recreational Fishing**

Final Minutes

25th MEETING (01/2003)
9:30am, 20 February 2003

Conference Room, Cronulla Fisheries Centre
202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla

Attendance

Chair

Bruce Schumacher

Members

Elaine Garvey

Peter Goadby

Mark Umbers

Lionel Jones

Neil Ryan

Lisa Terry

Anthony Moore

Scott Mitchell

Margaret Dodson

Terry Maloney

Mel Brown

Ann Lee

Observers

John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries

Nick James, Manager Recreational Fisheries

Bryan Van Der Walt, Manager Recreational Fisheries

Susan Wildgoose, Fisheries Management Officer

Business

Welcome by Chair

Apologies – Graham Moore apologised for missing recent meetings due to the bush fires.

Minutes of previous meeting

Recommendation:

The minutes are a true and accurate record of the 24th Advisory Council meeting.

Moved: Elaine Garvey

Seconded: Ann Lee

Carried

Business arising from the minutes

Nil.

Agenda Items

1. NSW Fisheries report
2. Expenditure recommendations from the 8th RFSTEC meeting.
3. Taking of live bait by tuna boats in Trial Bay.
4. Cleaning and filleting fish in or on or adjacent to any waters.
5. Regional Services (compliance) report.
6. Freshwater fishing update, including the status of threatened species legislation relating to trout stocking.
7. Outcomes of the National Recreational Fishing Survey.
8. Research priorities.
9. Issues referred by RFSTEC.
 - Harvesting of oysters in Tuross Lake
 - Estuary zoning (Regions 7 and 8)
 - Temporary dam structure in the Bega River
10. Thredbo and Eucumbene Rivers spawning season closure renewal.
11. Kogarah Bay closure renewal.

Other Business

- Update on the Expression of Interest for the Recreational Saltwater Fishing Management Planning Committee.
- Out of session issues.
- EIS/FMS update.
- Fish Aggregating Buoys update.

Correspondence received

- Use of plastic bait bags.

Around the table

Next meeting – Tuesday 3 June 2003

Agenda Item 1

NSW Fisheries

Issue

NSW Fisheries report.

Outcomes

NSW Fisheries updates and comments considered on agenda item by item basis.

Issue

Recommendations from the 8th Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee meeting regarding expenditure from the Saltwater Trust.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The following applications were considered for funding from the Saltwater Trust by the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee on 13 February 2003.

- 1) Jetty at Silverwater boat ramp – request for a jetty to be built on the Parramatta River to aid the elderly and disabled boarding boats.
- 2) Oyster lease in Googleys Lagoon - Mr William Henry has requested that the Recreational Fishing Trusts buy-out an oyster lease in the Lake Hope/Googlies Lake area to alleviate fishing and navigational obstruction (MF02002453).

No project budgets have been provided for the above programs and only the Committee's in-principle support is sought at this stage.

Small project enhancement program:

- 3) Lake Tabourie fishing platform – The foreshore of the lake is showing signs of degradation resulting from access and a platform would provide easy access (including wheelchairs) for anglers.
- 4) Fish cleaning tables – no fish cleaning facilities exist at any of the following locations:
 - Burrill Lake
 - Lake Tabourie
 - St Georges Basin
 - Shoalhaven Heads

Deferred application:

At the seventh Committee meeting on 5 December 2002, the Committee recommended deferring the Condong Creek Riparian Project to the next meeting. There was concern that a significant proportion (\$2,016) of the \$5,000 project budget was allocated to salaries. The Committee requested more details on the salaries component as well as the relevance of the program to recreational angling.

- 5) Condong Creek Riparian Project - this project will improve fish habitat along Condong Creek, which flows into the Tweed River.

The total funds requested by each applicant are summarised below:

Title	Proponent	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Jetty at Silverwater boat ramp	Mr Abdul Harfis	-		
Oyster lease in Googleys Lagoon	Mr William Henry	-		
Lake Tabourie fishing platform	Shoalhaven City Council	\$7,000		
Fish cleaning table at Burrill Lake	Shoalhaven City Council	\$3,250		
Fish cleaning table at Lake Tabourie	Shoalhaven City Council	\$3,250		
Fish cleaning table at St Georges Basin	Shoalhaven City Council	\$3,250		
Fish cleaning table at Shoalhaven Heads	Shoalhaven City Council	\$3,250		
Condong Creek Riparian Project	Conservation Volunteers Australia	\$5,000		

The Committee's recommendations will be presented at the meeting.

Outcomes

NSW Fisheries presented an update on licence sales and the status of the saltwater trust fund. It was noted that sales between July and December 2002 were similar to that recorded during the same period in 2001. There was a marked increase in sales of all licence types during December, consistent with expectations.

NSW Fisheries received excellent feedback on the information package recently sent to all one year and three recreational licence holders to promote licence sales. The information package included a newsletter, licence reminder and new brochures for freshwater and saltwater fishing.

The Council raised the issue of a 20 year or lifetime licence. It was noted that the Expenditure Committee would review this proposal at the next budget meeting.

An expression of interest was advertised on 6 February inviting anglers and community groups to apply for funds from the recreational fishing licence to create better fishing opportunities in their local areas. Application packages and further information can be obtained from the NSW Fisheries website at www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au or by contacting the Department on (02) 9527 8411. Applications close on 4 April 2003.

Expenditure proposals:

NSW Fisheries presented the Expenditure Committee's recommendation for each proposal. The Council thoroughly discussed and considered the following recommendations and comments from the Expenditure Committee:

- 1) The application for a jetty at Silverwater boat ramp was **not supported**. It was noted that Planning NSW and the Waterways Authority have prepared the draft Integrated Land and Water Access Plan for Sydney Harbour, which has been developed to improve public access to and along the foreshores, including recreational boating access and ramps. The Expenditure Committee recommended that this application should be submitted to Planning NSW for inclusion in the Access Plan.

- 2) The request to buy-out the oyster lease in Googleys Lagoon was **not supported**, as it is a navigational issue and would not directly benefit recreational fishing.
- 3) The Expenditure Committee reviewed the budget of the Lake Tabourie fishing platform proposal. There was agreement that more details were required before a decision on funding could be made. The Committee **deferred** the proposal to the next meeting to allow further details on funding information to be obtained.
- 4) Applications for matching funding of \$3,250 (per fish cleaning table) for 2002/03 to construct fish cleaning tables at Burrill Lake, Lake Tabourie, St Georges Basin and Shoalhaven Heads were **supported** by the Expenditure Committee. It was noted that the tables would provide direct benefits to recreational fishing and that local Councils are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of fish cleaning facilities.
- 5) The Condong Creek riparian project proposal was **not supported** as it does not directly benefit recreational fishing.
- 6) The Expenditure Committee reviewed a late application for funding from the Coffs Harbour Game Fishing Club. The Club requested funding of \$2,000 from the Saltwater Trust for the printing of brochures to encourage participation. It was noted that a previous application for sponsorship of the 2003 Australian Angling Association Championships was previously not supported. The Committee **did not support** the proposal.

Recommendation

The Council supports each of the recommendations of the Expenditure Committee, including that matching funding of \$13,000 (4 x \$3,250) for Shoalhaven Council to erect four fish cleaning tables at Burrill Lake, Lake Tabourie, St Georges Basin and Shoalhaven Heads in 2002/03 be supported from the Saltwater Trust.

Moved: Anthony Moore

Seconded: Mark Umbers

Carried

Issue

Taking of live bait by tuna boats in Trial bay.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Tuna boat operators have traditionally taken live bait in Trial Bay for many years, however activity has increased since the Commonwealth applied new management arrangements in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery forcing boats without quota to move further north for yellowfin tuna.

While taking bait some tuna boats have secured to two Waterways Authority safety buoys in the bay. These buoys are only designed to take up to 12 metre yachts and the tuna boats have broken away the headgear or cut it off. The increased activity has also reduced the availability of live bait for recreational fishers and charter boat operators working from South West Rocks.

The Commonwealth manages the tuna long line fishery outside three nautical miles and some tuna fishers are authorised to fish in State waters to take bait. The collection of bait by commercial tuna operators is addressed as part of the Ocean Hauling Fishery Management Strategy, which came into effect on 16 September 2002.

As part of the strategy, NSW Fisheries is preparing a policy to manage the harvest of bait for the Commonwealth tuna fishery in NSW waters. The policy will include a cap on the maximum number of permits to collect bait, a mandatory code of conduct for fishers using purse seine and lift nets, an observer program and a system for permit holders to record their bait harvest. Additionally, there are strict eligibility criteria for permits to collect bait, based on a vessel having a demonstrated history of participation. This approach will ensure that effort in the fishery is constrained to historical levels.

A meeting was held with the Board of Directors of the Coffs Harbour Fishermen's Co-operative on 19 December 2002, at which the Board agreed to take out a mooring licence with the Waterways Authority. The Board will fund the installation of the mooring, pay for ongoing maintenance and take out public liability at a cost of \$8,000 per annum. The Board also supported a fishing closure of 100 metres around the safety buoys in an effort to reduce local conflict.

It was recommended that further consultation on the proposed closure be undertaken with the Ocean Hauling MAC and ACoRF before a recommendation is forwarded to the Minister. If supported, the buoy and closure could be in place before the next tuna season, starting around August/ September 2003.

Outcomes

NSW Fisheries advised the Council that there were reports of conflict between recreational and commercial fishers regarding the use of these buoys. This proposal is designed to provide an alternative mooring site for commercial fishers to ensure the Waterways safety buoys are not damaged. The new buoy would be paid for by commercial fishers to ensure that there is a mooring available to commercial boats when needed.

Council members stressed that while the commercial harvest of bait species and yellowfin tuna are contentious issues and the development of appropriate management arrangements are ongoing, efforts should be made to alleviate the current conflict.

The Council expressed support for the installation of the new buoy and discussed various options to achieve a suitable outcome for recreational and commercial fishers. These included:

- a “no tying rule” for recreational fishers at the buoy, instead of a recreational fishing closure.
- a 100 metre radius exclusion zone when a commercial fishing boat is present at the buoy.
- a 100 metre radius exclusion zone around the buoy at all times, as proposed. It was noted that this would result in a closure of 200 metres in diameter.
- a 50m radius exclusion zone (100 metres diameter) around the buoy at all times.

A local agreement has been established with commercial operators to coordinate the tuna fleet during the Port Stephens Interclub Tournament, to ensure participants have the opportunity to collect baitfish. This is an example of the efforts being made by various user groups to share the baitfish resources.

As part of the 2 year Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) program, funded by the recreational fishing licence, a fish aggregating buoy will be deployed off South West Rocks in the near future. This will provide further recreational fishing opportunities in the area.

Recommendation

Council supports the installation of the buoy, with a 50 metre radius exclusion zone to all fishing.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Anthony Moore

Carried (2 against)

Issue

Cleaning and filleting fish in or on or adjacent to any waters.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Representations have been received by the department regarding the intention and wording of clause 131(2)(c), relating to the mutilation of fish in, on or adjacent to any waters.

Clause 131(2)(c) of the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* states that an angler is able to clean and fillet (mutilate) fish at a place that is a fish cleaning facility or other place specifically provided or ordinarily used for the cleaning of fish, being a place that is not in or on any waters. A copy of cl.131 is attached for information.

Concern has been expressed by anglers that it is unclear if they are able to lawfully fillet fish at public boat ramps and on ocean beaches, except if there is a designated fish cleaning table. It has been highlighted that a boat ramp is a *place ordinarily used for the cleaning of fish*, and that this should be reflected in the regulation. It is not proposed to consider ocean beaches as a place ordinarily used for the cleaning of fish. NSW Fisheries' Regional Services staff will discuss the current compliance practices associated with the cleaning and filleting of fish in, on or adjacent to any waters.

Outcomes

Mr Glenn Tritton, Principal Manager Regional Services informed the Council that the intention of this regulation is to allow anglers to clean fish at public boat ramps, which are places ordinarily used for this purpose. It was mentioned that anglers are not precluded from cleaning fish at public boat ramps if there is no fish cleaning table present. Fisheries Officers are trained to apply rules fairly and to use a common sense approach when determining if an offence has been committed.

Given the clarification of the application of the regulation it was agreed that a regulation amendment is not necessary. The NSW Fisheries Operations Manual may be amended to ensure that the enforcement policy is clear. The matter can be further addressed during the preparation of the recreational fishery management strategy.

The cleaning of fish on ocean beaches, however, is not permitted. Future educational material will clarify these issues, stressing that fish may be cleaned and filleted (mutilated) at boat ramps, but gutted and gilled only on ocean beaches.

Action item: NSW Fisheries to write to those anglers who have made representations to NSW Fisheries, to advise that the issue has been considered by the Advisory Council and to clarify that cleaning fish at public boat ramps is permitted.

Recommendation

That no changes to regulation occur concerning cleaning fish at public boat ramps. The matter to be considered during the recreational fishery management strategy.

Moved: Anthony Moore

Seconded: Ann Lee

Carried

Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002

131 Mutilation of fish

(1) A person must not mutilate any fish of a class specified in clause 9 (Prohibited size fish) in or on or adjacent to any waters in any manner other than by gutting or by removing the gills or scales.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(2) A person (other than a commercial fisher) does not commit an offence under subclause (1) if the person establishes that the person:

(a) mutilated the fish in the course of preparing the fish for immediate consumption, or

(b) mutilated the fish in the course of preparing the fish for immediate use as bait, or

(c) mutilated the fish at a place that is a fish cleaning facility or other place specifically provided or ordinarily used for the cleaning of fish, being a place that is not in or on any waters, or

(d) mutilated the fish in accordance with a permit issued by the Director.

(3) A person must not deliver or consign for sale any fish of a class specified in clause 9 (Prohibited size fish) that has been mutilated in any manner other than by gutting or by removing the gills or scales.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(4) This clause does not apply to the delivery or consignment for sale of fish propagated, hatched or reared by the holder of an aquaculture permit under the authority of that permit or of any other fish that have already been lawfully sold.

Issue

Regional Services (compliance) update.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

A general overview of NSW Fisheries' current education and compliance programs related to recreational fishing will be provided.

Outcomes

The Council suggested that compliance boats and vehicles should be more visibly marked to deter illegal activity. NSW Fisheries advised that new, larger compliance signs are currently on order. It was also noted that more educational and compliance signs have been constructed in the last 2 years than ever before.

The Principal Manager Regional Services gave an overview of significant recent apprehensions and prosecution outcomes. These include:

- Lake Macquarie – 590 metre mesh net seized from a recreational fisher.
- Botany Bay – harvesting cockles – offender is facing Kogarah local court next week.
- A commercial fishing net being used near a Recreational Fishing Haven in the Clarence River was confiscated – 184 live, undersized whiting were seized and released alive. The offender has been charged with a number of offences, including obstructing Fisheries Officers.
- 169 shucked abalone seized on the south coast – offender convicted and fined \$2000; all dive gear etc forfeited to the Crown.
- A fisher was caught at Putney in late 2002 with a 150 metre mesh net and various fish species – convicted and fined \$1750 and a 2 year good behaviour bond – if this person appears in court again for fisheries related offences during that time he will be brought before the court again and may face a prison term.

Motion: That numbers checked and compliance rates be made public.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Terry Maloney

Carried

Action item: ACoRF write to the Director to request that details of compliance activities, such as the number of anglers checked and compliance rates be publicised.

Recreational fishing mobile squad – Recruitment is progressing well with one officer appointed and remaining squad members being appointed in the near future.

Action Item – Regional Services to provide an update on the recreational fishing mobile squad at the next meeting.

The Council expressed strong support for this initiative and suggested public relations exercises should occur to advise the public about the establishment and operation of this squad.

Action Item – Minister's involvement to be sought in media launch with photo opportunities to promote awareness of the recreational fishing mobile squad - to occur when recruitment finalised, to be arranged through media unit.

For information.

Issue

Freshwater fishing update, including the status of threatened species legislation relating to trout stocking.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The NSW Government strongly supports the State's trout and native fish recreational fishery with a comprehensive stocking program. There are no plans to ban trout stocking – quite the opposite in fact. Each year the NSW Government carries out an extensive freshwater fish stocking program, releasing 7.8 million fish last year.

Species such as Atlantic salmon, brown, brook and rainbow trout, as well as native fish species like Australian bass, golden and silver perch and Murray cod are all bred by the NSW Government's hatcheries at Grafton, Narrandera, Jindabyne, Ebor and Port Stephens. They are released into streams, rivers, lakes and impoundments across the whole state to create high quality recreational fishing.

As well, the recreational fishing fee supports the dollar for dollar fish stocking program with \$200,000 of angler funds available each year to stock fish from private hatcheries, in areas where groups such as angling clubs and local councils want them. This program constantly creates new fisheries, and improves existing fisheries for the State's freshwater anglers.

The NSW Government is proud of the fact that the trout fishery and the tourism it attracts to regions like the Snowy Mountains, brings around \$70 million and up to 700 jobs to the economy. That is why the Government continues to support a strong stocking program. To ensure this highly successful program remains sustainable, sensible environmental standards are upheld.

Last year NSW Fisheries did suspend stocking in a small number of waterways known to have the Booroolong frog, the spotted tree frog and the Macquarie perch. These waterways accounted for well under one per cent of the total area stocked by the NSW Government. This was a precautionary measure, taken while further work was being done on the possible impacts of trout on endangered species.

The Fisheries Scientific Committee is currently in the process of documenting activities that could impact on threatened species if not properly managed. The listing of an activity as a "key threatening process" is simply a recognition that special rules are required in order to ensure the natural environment is not affected through poorly thought out activities.

In relation to fish stocking (including trout stocking) it has been known for many years that sensible management rules needed to be in place to ensure that stocking occurs in a responsible way. The Government does not anticipate significant changes to these rules in the foreseeable future.

In October last year, the Minister for Fisheries met with Michael McManus, the Country Labor candidate for Burrinjuck (who is also a member of the Yass branch of the Monaro Acclimatisation Society) and Steve Whan, Country Labor candidate for Monaro. As a result of this meeting in principle agreement was given to a resumption of stocking in local trout streams. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has issued a permit to allow the resumption of trout stocking in the Goobragandra River, Gilmore Creek and the Turon River.

On the 3 December 2002 trout stocking resumed in the Goobarragandra River with the release of 10,000 trout fry. The Tumut Branch of the Monaro Acclimatisation society and local Fisheries Officers will monitor Gilmore Creek, which may be stocked this year, depending on the water level being appropriate. The Turon River is not suitable for stocking this year due to low water levels.

To ensure proper involvement of anglers NSW Fisheries will continue to consult in detail with anglers and acclimatisation society branches about their stocking needs.

The Fish Stocking Fishery Management Strategy and Environmental Impact Statement is being developed and will provide a comprehensive management policy for freshwater fish stocking.

The Freshwater Management team will provide an update on freshwater recreational fishing issues, including stocking, to ACORF at this meeting.

Outcomes

Stocking

- A record number of Murray cod were stocked this season.
- A total of 24 sites were stocked with bass, which is higher than ever before.
- Some minor changes were necessary re: stocking numbers/locations due to the drought conditions.
- A total of over 6 million fish, including Murray cod, golden perch, Australian bass, silver perch, trout cod, Atlantic salmon, rainbow trout, brown trout and brook trout, were stocked.
- Bass stocking in Tallowa Dam – The Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee advised the Council that locals have expressed concern that bass numbers are suffering due to a lack of stocking and asked if stocking could resume. It was mentioned that chemical tagging techniques could be used to assess the effectiveness of the fishway in Tallowa.

Motion: The Council supports the resumption of bass stocking in Tallowa Dam.

Moved: Mark Umbers Seconded: Neil Ryan **Carried**

Hatcheries

Dutton hatchery lost a number of fingerlings and there has been concern about the health of the broodstock due to the drought. NSW Fisheries believes most issues could be addressed by improving aeration and technical support. An independent study undertaken to consider these issues suggests that the current difficulties could be alleviated with the introduction of a re-circulating system. This could be installed for approximately \$200,000. The Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee passed a motion to write to the Minister requesting that the Government consider purchasing and installing a re-circulating system.

The aquaculture representative indicated that a re-circulating system could increase the risk of a whole system crash. However, a re-circulating system is seen as a tool to improve the management of the hatchery. It was recognised that additional staff might be needed to manage potential risks.

Motion: The Council write to Minister to request consideration of a re-circulating system at Dutton Hatchery.

Moved: Lionel Jones Seconded: Scott Mitchell **Carried (2against)**

Narrandera hatchery has experienced temporary water allocation problems due to the drought, which has led to consideration of ways to maximise the efficiency of water use. New fry pond techniques have increased the production potential of the hatchery.

Threatened Species Legislation

Trout stocking was suspended or restricted in a small number of streams due to the threatened species legislation requirements. Stocking has been identified as a key threatening process. NSW Fisheries obtained a permit from National Parks and Wildlife Service to stock trout in the Goobragandra River, Gilmore Creek and Turon River.

Preliminary research on the impacts of stocking trout on the Booroolong frog indicates that trout prey on this frog. However, it is believed that the initial population reduction was most likely due to the outbreak of a virus in the 1980s. The Council expressed concerns over the methods of the research and suggested that a more thorough study was required. NSW Fisheries confirmed that further research is being undertaken as part of the effects of stocking freshwater trust project.

Freshwater Stocking Environmental Impact Statement and Fisheries Management Strategy

Regional meetings have occurred. Stakeholder comments and input from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Management Planning Committee have been included in the draft FMS. Economic, social and environmental issues are currently being assessed. The draft EIS will go through the formal consultation process, including the Advisory Council and the Fisheries Resource Conservation and Assessment Council, prior to the public exhibition and consultation stage. This EIS/FMS is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2003.

Commercial carp/yabby fishery

There have been low returns in recent times and the viability of the commercial fishery has been questioned. The Government has decided to extend the carp production incentive scheme to make it more viable for operators to catch large quantities of carp. As part of this scheme, NSW Fisheries is considering options such as a pay by the month arrangements, to provide further encouragement during the drought.

NSW Fisheries is currently considering options to apply more commercial fishing effort to carp, including allowing carp and yabby licences to be split. The Council expressed concern that this could increase the level of effort applied to yabbies, and change the ratio of commercial fishers to compliance officers thereby increasing the potential for illegal activities. NSW Fisheries confirmed its intention is to increase targeted carp fishing, and that existing carp and yabby licence holders are not catching carp in any significant quantities, placing most of their effort onto yabbies.

River Blackfish

River Blackfish have recently been protected statewide.

Murray Cray

The closed season (September to April) has been implemented and well received. The bag limit has been halved from 10 to 5 (possession limit of 10); size limit is 9cm, with only 1 over 12cm to protect breeding females.

Catfish

Catfish are protected in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

Fishing guides

Recreational fishing guides for 2002-03 have been sent to 1 and 3 year licence holders.

Fishcare Volunteer Program

This program is proving very popular, with over 340 freshwater volunteers across the state at present.

Recent events conducted/attended by Fishcare volunteers:

- 5 fishing clinics at NSW Fisheries' hatcheries.
- 8 fishing competitions.
- 4 Fishcare training courses.
- Schools program.

Lake Hume/Mulwala

Victorian anglers have made representations for reciprocal licences during the review. NSW is a net importer of anglers and is not supportive of such a licence. A review of the submissions needs to be considered during the decision making process. The issue is ongoing.

Consideration of the introduction of a size limit for yabbies

NSW Fisheries provided preliminary advice to the Council regarding a proposal to introduce a size limit for yabbies. It was stated that a size limit would not be introduced without good reason and that it should be supported by research or strong evidence that demonstrated its need. It was also mentioned that proposed size limits may be introduced on a site by site basis, not statewide.

This proposal will be raised at a future Advisory Council meeting to allow further consideration.

Issues raised:

- a bag limit already applies to recreational fishers.
- the introduction of a size limit for yabbies could wipe out the recreational bait market.
- research is needed to prove a size limit would be beneficial.

Motion: The Council does not support the introduction of a size limit for yabbies without research or strong evidence that supported its need.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Terry Maloney

Carried

ACoRF noted the status of by-catch exclusion rings for yabby traps with advisory information being prepared by NSW Fisheries in conjunction with NPWS. This is being phased in to allow yabby trap manufacturers to modify the traps to include exclusion rings.

For information.

Issue

Outcomes of the National Recreational Fishing Survey.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

A national recreational fishing survey was conducted in Australia in 2000-01. The goal of the survey was to obtain fisheries statistics on non-commercial components of Australian fisheries. The survey obtained estimates of the level of participation, fishing effort and catch by recreational fishers. The survey also sought information on the economic activity associated with fishing and the attitude of recreational fishers to prominent fisheries issues. The results of the NSW component of the national survey will be presented to the meeting with a particular emphasis on saltwater fishing.

A significant proportion of the NSW population was surveyed (9,100 households) and a large number of recreational fishers identified (3,700 fishers). A high proportion of these fishers (90 per cent) accepted a diary and participated in the survey for its duration. The resulting recreational fishing database is one of the most comprehensive sets of statistics to be collected on the NSW recreational fishing sector, recording 16,100 fishing trips. These data will be used to support and guide the management of recreational fishing in NSW.

In line with expectations, the NSW recreational fishery involved a large number of people (1 million fishers), using a diverse range of fishing methods to harvest finfish, crustaceans and molluscs from all of the State's regional areas and water body types. Recreational fishers harvested a substantial number of fish (approximately 13 million) of more than 200 different species, with the top 30 species constituting the bulk of the catch. Fishing in freshwater accounted for 24 per cent of the State effort.

While the catch of individual fishers was not large (about 2 fish per event), the recreational sector as a whole has the potential to impact aquatic resources. The recreational catch of some common estuarine species is greater than the commercial catch, but for the majority of species the commercial catch is substantially greater than the recreational catch. Recreational fishers spend substantial sums of money in pursuit of their sport and this expenditure is likely to be important to regional economies.

A copy of the Survey of Recreational Fishing in NSW – Interim Report was sent to council members on 17 December 2002, for information. An update will be presented at the meeting.

Outcomes

NSW Fisheries highlighted key outcomes of the survey. It was found that fishing participation in cities is less than other coastal areas in each state. In NSW, 17.1% of the population participated in recreational fishing. In Sydney/ACT the proportion of the population that went fishing was 13.1%, compared with, for example, 30.1% in the Snowy Mountains region. Although Sydney recorded the lowest participation rate compared to other coastal regions, it has the largest number of recreational fishers (over 480,000 fishers) by virtue of its population size. Almost half the State's recreational fishers lived in Sydney. The Hunter (131,348 fishers), Mid North Coast (74,441 fishers) and Illawarra (73,686 fishers) follow in importance as recreational fishing communities.

Anglers averaged 7 fishing days per year, which is about half the number of fishing days found during previous surveys. Days fished by each angler ranged from 1 to 169 days per year. Approximately 50% of the fishing was done by just over 10% of the anglers. Almost 24% of the NSW male population went fishing while about 10% of females fished during the

survey period. Recreational fishing activity was greatest in estuarine waters (47% of total events). Fishing in coastal waters (28% of events), freshwater rivers (15% of events) and lakes and dams (10% of events) followed in importance.

The information collected allows estimates of recreational fishing effort to be calculated. Catch per unit effort estimates in NSW:

- 2.2 fish caught per angler each fishing day/event,
- 0.7 fish caught per angler for each hour fished.

Interstate patterns in fishing effort indicated that about 1.5 million fishing events were undertaken in NSW by fishers from other states, while NSW fishers conducted about 500,000 fishing events in states other than NSW. These data indicate that NSW was a net importer of recreational fishing effort. NSW mainly imported fishing effort from Victoria (about 750,000 events), but exported fishing effort to Queensland (about 400,000 events).

About 200 species were reported in recreational catches from NSW. Flathead, bream, whiting, European carp, tailor and luderick were the most prominent species (by weight). Generally, these species were relatively abundant and broadly distributed, particularly in coastal and estuarine waters adjacent to large urban populations. While the key recreational species tended to be popular finfish that were targeted for their edible or sporting qualities, other groups of aquatic animals were also harvested in substantial numbers by recreational fishers. Prawns were harvested in greater numbers than any other recreational species, while yabbies and blue swimmer crabs were harvested in larger numbers than most finfish species.

The study also sought information on the economic activity associated with recreational fishing, ie. the expenditure of fishers during the course of fishing. Recreational fishers in NSW spent more than \$550 million on fishing related items during the survey year. NSW recreational fishers reported in excess of 50 different expenditure items related to their fishing activities. These items ranged from the obvious (fishing gear) to the more obtuse (4WD vehicle/camping gear). In every case, anglers were asked to nominate the proportion (%) of the expense that should be attributed to fishing. The attribution varied from 100% in the case of fishing gear to 1-2% for more obtuse items.

Boat and trailer (\$276 million) was the largest individual expense for NSW anglers. These items accounted for approximately 50% of the total expenditure of NSW fishers. Vehicle and other travel costs related to fishing (\$118 million), accommodation for fishing related trips (\$54 million) and fishing gear (\$46 million) followed in importance. More than \$26 million was spent on the charter/hire of boats and \$12 million on bait/ burly/ ice. This expenditure pattern may reflect the fishing opportunities and characteristics of NSW recreational fisheries.

The Council was impressed with the scope of the survey and is interested in obtaining further information, when available. The draft report is currently with the Commonwealth Government. A hard copy of the report will be provided to members when finalised.

Action Item – NSW Fisheries to provide the Council members with a copy of the final report and summary document, when available.

For information.

Issue

Research priorities.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

Some time ago the Chief Scientist of NSW Fisheries sought priority areas for research from each Management Advisory Committee, Advisory Council and Departmental Team as the first step in developing a Strategic Research Plan. Approximately 300 research priorities were initially identified by advisory councils and management advisory committees, representing recreational and commercial fishing, conservation and aquaculture interests.

The identified priorities have been divided into categories and refined to reduce duplication. There is now a list of just over 200 research priorities, which was distributed at the last meeting for information and further consideration. The advisory council was asked to consider the new list and identify the programs they believe to be the highest and lowest priority to their sector. It was agreed that this should be done separately by each member, by assigning each research priority a rating of between 1 and 10 (10 being the highest). Members were reminded on 31 January 2003 to forward their research priorities to the chairperson for collation prior to this meeting.

Outcomes

The Chairman confirmed that some members had submitted their recreational fishing research priorities and requested that other members do so as soon as possible.

The research priorities developed by the Council will be collated by the Chairman and submitted to the Chief Scientist.

Issue

Issues referred by RFSTEC.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee has referred three issues to the advisory council for information.

1. Harvesting of oysters in Tuross Lake

During a NSW Fisheries compliance report at a recent meeting, RFSTEC members expressed concern that commercial oyster growers were stripping native oysters from Tuross Lake. The committee resolved that NSW Fisheries should investigate this claim and report back to the Committee and the Advisory Council.

NSW Fisheries' Regional Services has investigated the situation. There is one commercial oyster farmer who is lawfully able to collect oyster spat from Tuross Lake, under a spat collection permit issued by NSW Fisheries' Aquaculture section. The Aquaculture section has confirmed that the permit expires on 31 May 2003 and proper consideration will be given to the concerns raised prior to any renewal.

2. Estuary zoning (Regions 7 and 8)

The committee discussed that recreational fishers on the South Coast are concerned about the estuary zoning scheme in Regions 7 and 8. The fishers believe the recently implemented scheme is resulting in lateral shifts in effort.

NSW Fisheries informed the committee that the zoning scheme implementation process has been completed and that the final zoning rules came into effect on 16 September 2002. This restricts commercial fishers to operating their endorsements in estuaries and ocean beaches located within one of the State's seven regions identified for estuary general fishing.

Prior to the implementation of estuary zoning, licensed fishers could operate in estuaries up and down the entire NSW coast at any time. The zoning scheme provides for better regional management of the estuary general fishery and aims to reduce conflict.

While there may be some change in fishing activity as fishers adjust to these changes, there will not be a net increase in effort in the fishery.

This process has been a requirement of the estuary general fishery management strategy and has been subject to extensive consultation.

3. Temporary dam structure in the Bega River

A temporary sand barrage (or sand weir) has historically been constructed on the Bega River near the tidal limit at Jellat Jellat to prevent 'saline intrusion' and to pond freshwater for irrigation. The barrage is typically constructed during very low river flows and/or when the river mouth is closed and water levels rise in the estuary. The barrage is washed away by moderate flows in the Bega River system.

The barrage is constructed under a Crown Lands Licence (No. 193125, File No. NA92H81) issued by the Department of Land and Water Conservation. This licence restricts the site of the barrage to a particular area.

At least 10 of the 16 or so freshwater fish species that occur in the Bega River system migrate between freshwater and saltwater. The peak upstream migration period of these

species is Spring/Summer (Oct-Jan) which can also be a peak time of water use for irrigation and for barrage emplacement.

Although fish communities in the lower Bega River system appear reasonably healthy from available data (NSW Rivers Survey), the barrage has the potential to block fish passage to almost the entire freshwater part of the Bega River system when it is in place, thereby affecting recruitment and the health of populations of freshwater fish.

The Healthy Rivers Commission undertook an extensive investigation into the management of the Bega River. A protocol for the management of the sand barrage was developed, which allows the barrage to be in place for a specified period of time after which it must be breached to facilitate fish movement. This protocol was accepted and adopted but the severity of the current drought has not allowed the protocol to be implemented.

Under the current drought conditions the estuary entrance is also closed and a breach in the sand barrage would cause a flow of saltwater upstream into the enclosed freshwater section.

With only six to eight weeks of water left in the Brogo Reservoir there is insufficient water to adhere to the protocol procedures. These procedures require an additional 20ML/day of water released from Brogo Reservoir to coincide with breaching of the barrage to prevent this saline intrusion. As a result the sand barrage will not be breached again until there is sufficient rain.

Outcomes

1. Harvesting of oysters in Tuross Lake

Information noted.

Action item: NSW Fisheries will advise the Council of the status of the spat collection permit at the next meeting.

2. Estuary zoning (Regions 7 and 8)

There have been some minor adjustments in commercial fishing activities as a result of the introduction of Recreational Fishing Havens, which was expected. It was acknowledged that in general the recreational fishing sector is very pleased with the buy-out of commercial fishing effort and the creation of the havens.

NSW Fisheries and Council members agreed that feedback from anglers relating to fishing in Recreational Fishing Havens, particularly Lake Macquarie and St Georges Basin, indicates that fishing quality and catches have improved significantly.

3. Temporary dam structure in the Bega River

While concern was expressed about the impact of the temporary dam structure on fish migration, the Council agreed that the area is experiencing the worst drought in years and that it is not possible to breach the structure at this time. In accordance with protocol procedures, the dam structure will be breached as soon as environmental conditions are suitable.

For information.

Issue

Renewal of the Thredbo and Eucumbene Rivers Spawning Season Closure due to expire on 26 April 2003.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The Snowy Lakes Trout Strategy was implemented by the Minister in 2001 for a period of five years on advice from the Snowy Mountain Lakes Management Strategy Working Group. The Strategy addresses management arrangements for Lake Eucumbene, Lake Jindabyne and Tantangara Reservoir. A closure notification detailing the fishing season, gear, bag limits, size limits and possession limits identified in the Strategy was implemented as part of the Strategy.

Currently the closure provides the following:

Schedule A prohibits the taking of fish by all methods in all tributaries of the Eucumbene River upstream of the dam wall from 1 May to the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend each year. The schedule further prohibits the taking of fish by all methods except one attended rod and line with not more than two hooks from the flowing waters of the main channel of the Eucumbene River upstream of the dam wall to the flying fox from 1 May to the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend each year.

Schedule B prohibits the taking of fish by all methods from the signposted 2.4km reach of Thredbo River at Gaden Trout Hatchery all year. The schedule further prohibits the taking of fish by all methods except one attended rod and line with not more than two hooks from the whole of the waters of Thredbo River except for a signposted 2.4km reach at Gaden Trout Hatchery from 1 May to the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend each year.

The Gaden Fisheries Office has advised that they support the renewal of the closure, which works in conjunction with the general trout closure (both closures are attached).

The Snowy Mountain Lakes Management Strategy Working Group held a review meeting on 2 November 2002, which endorsed the continuation of the Snowy Lakes Trout Strategy for the full five year period.

NSW Fisheries recommends the renewal of this closure for a period of three years to coincide with the expiration of the Snowy Lakes Trout Strategy.

Outcomes

Scott Mitchell is a member of the Snowy Mountain Lakes Management Strategy Working Group and advised the Council that the working group has thoroughly considered this issue and supports the existing closure. It was noted that fishing had been excellent in these rivers and streams since the closures were put in place.

Concern was expressed with the increasing use of stationary power (synthetic) baits in the rivers and streams, which are restricted to the use of artificial flies and lures only. Baits are permitted in Lake Eucumbene but not in the rivers and streams. The use of natural/artificial baits increase instances of gut hooking fish, which reduces the likelihood of the fish surviving when caught and released.

The Council requested that this issue be addressed urgently – NSW Fisheries advises that the matter of synthetic baits should be addressed through the recreational fishery management strategy.

Recommendation

1) The Council supports the renewal of this closure for a period of 3 years.

Motion: Scott Mitchell Seconded: Ann Lee **Carried**

2) The Council recommends that synthetic or artificial baits such as power baits should be banned in fly and lure only rivers and streams.

Moved: Scott Mitchell Seconded: Peter Goadby **Carried**

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT 1994

Section 8 Notification - Fishing Closure

Thredbo and Eucumbene Rivers

Spawning Closure

I, Edward Obeid, prohibit the taking of fish by the methods of fishing described in Column 1 of schedules A and B of this notification, from the waters described in Column 2, during the period specified in Column 3, respectively, of those schedules, from the date of publication of this Notification for a period of two years, inclusive. Fishing will be further subject to the 'conditions' as set out by this Notification.

- (1) For the purposes of this Notification:
 - (i) A rod is deemed to be attended if it is within ten (10) metres and in the sight of the person in possession of that rod.
 - (ii) An artificial lure or artificial fly, whether fitted with one or more hooks, is deemed to be a single hook.
- (2) No person must be in possession of any rod and line with hooks other than artificial flies or artificial lures attached, in on or adjacent to the waters permitting fishing activity in Schedules A and B of this Notification.
- (3) No person must be in possession of more than one rod and line with hooks attached, in on or adjacent to any of the waters permitting fishing activity in Schedules A and B of this Notification.

**The Hon Edward Obeid OAM, MLC
Minister for Mineral Resources
Minister for Fisheries**

Schedule A
Spawning Season Daily Bag and Possession Limit

Specified Waters of the Eucumbene River

<i>Column 1</i> Methods	<i>Column 2</i> Waters	<i>Column 3</i> Period
By means of all methods.	All tributaries of the Eucumbene River upstream of the dam wall, including the main channel of the river upstream of the flying fox, but not including those waters described below.	1 May each year until the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend, inclusive.
By means of all methods, except one attended rod and line with not more than two hooks, being artificial flies or artificial lures, attached, in accordance with the condition attached to this schedule.	The flowing waters of the main channel of the Eucumbene River upstream of the dam wall to the flying fox and including the Providence Portal. (The waters prescribed are exclusive of the backed up waters of Lake Eucumbene).	1 May each year until the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend, inclusive.
<p>Condition: A daily bag limit of 1, provided the fish is at least 50cm in length and possession limit of 2, during the time period specified above, comprised of a single species or a combination of the species Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), brook trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>), brown trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>) and rainbow trout (<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>), in the area specified above which permits fishing activity. For other fish species no bag and possession limits apply unless specified in the Table to Division 3, or protected under Division 1 (Clause 5), of the <i>Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 1995</i>. Once the daily bag limit and possession limit has been reached catch and release fishing may be undertaken.</p>		

**Schedule B
Spawning Season Daily Bag and Possession Limit**

Specified Waters of the Thredbo River

<i>Column 1</i> Methods	<i>Column 2</i> Waters	<i>Column 3</i> Period
By means of all methods.	The signposted 2.4 km reach of Thredbo River at Gaden Trout Hatchery.	All year.
By means of all methods, except one attended rod and line with not more than two hooks, being artificial flies or artificial lures, attached, in accordance with the condition attached to this schedule.	The whole of the Thredbo River except for a signposted 2.4km reach at Gaden Trout Hatchery.	1 May each year until the Queens Birthday Public Holiday weekend, inclusive.
<p>Condition: A daily bag limit of 1, provided the fish is at least 50cm in length and possession limit of 2, during the time period specified above, comprised of a single species or a combination of the species Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), brook trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>), brown trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>) and rainbow trout (<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>), in the area specified above which permits fishing activity. For other fish species no bag and possession limits apply unless specified in the Table to Division 3, or protected under Division 1 (Clause 5), of the <i>Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 1995</i>. Once the daily bag limit and possession limit has been reached catch and release fishing may be undertaken.</p>		

Note: All notified trout streams, including the above waters, are closed to fishing from the June Long weekend to the October long weekend.

Both the Eucumbene and Thredbo Rivers are classified as blue ribbon streams as defined in trout schedule A of the general trout closure notice.

Issue

Renewal of the Kogarah Bay closure due to expire on 10 May 2003.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

The closure was implemented in 2001 for a two year period to ease pressure on the seagrass beds, to enable cockle stocks within Kogarah Bay to improve and to appease the concerns of residents. Local residents and Kogarah Council were concerned about the vulnerability of shellfish to over exploitation around the Kogarah Bay area.

The closure prohibits the recreational taking of bivalve molluscs: pipis, cockles and whelks by all methods of fishing from the whole of the waters of Kogarah Bay, Georges River. A copy of the closure notice is attached for information.

The Sans Souci fisheries office advises that the closure has been successful in protecting the pipis, cockles and whelks and easing pressure on the seagrass beds. Prior to renewal of the closure, NSW Fisheries will consult with local angling groups.

Outcomes

The closure has been effective and NSW Fisheries has not received any negative feedback to date. Local angling groups will be consulted on this issue.

It was confirmed that these waters are now a Recreational Fishing Haven and as such, the "Note" at the bottom of the closure (ie Note: This closure does not apply to commercial fishers who hold a hand gathering endorsement in the estuary general restricted fishery) should be removed.

Recommendation

The Council supports the renewal of this closure.

Motion: Terry Maloney

Seconded: Lisa Terry

Carried

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT 1994
Notification Under Section 8 – Fishing Closures
 Kogarah Bay and its Tributaries
 (Recreational Harvest)

I, Edward Obeid, prohibit the recreational taking of bivalve molluscs: pipis, cockles and whelks by the methods of fishing specified in Column 1 of the Schedule below. This prohibition will be effective for a period of two (2) years from the date of publication of this notification.

The Hon Edward Obeid OAM, MLC
Minister for Mineral Resources
Minister for Fisheries

Schedule
Kogarah Bay, Georges River North

<i>Column 1</i> Methods	<i>Column 2</i> Waters
All methods.	The whole of the waters Kogarah Bay, Georges River north of a line extending from Tom Uglys Point east to the St George Motor Boat Club.
Closed waters: The area covered by this notification includes the foreshore extending from the mean high water mark, to ten (10) metres horizontally seaward from the mean low water mark.	

Note: This closure does not apply to commercial fishers who hold a hand gathering endorsement in the estuary general restricted fishery.

Other Business

Update on the Expression of Interest for the Recreational Saltwater Fishing Management Planning Committee

An Expression of Interest for membership of the saltwater planning committee was sent to all current recreational fishing representatives on NSW Fisheries' advisory councils and committees in January 2003, calling for nominations for four recreational fishing positions and one charter boat position. The committee will assist with the development of the fishery management strategy for recreational and charter fishing.

Applications closed on Friday 17 January 2003. 16 applications were received, 13 for the recreational fishing positions and three for the charter boat position. Membership is currently being finalised and applicants will be advised when the process is finalised.

The Council noted the status of the saltwater planning committee.

Ratification of previous out of session issues

NSW Fisheries advised that the Council had considered a number of proposals, relating to expenditure from the Saltwater Trust and closures, out of session in 2002/03 including:

- Funding of \$100,000 from the fisher buy-out loan for signage publicising recreational fishing havens.
- Funding of \$500,000 from the fisher buy-out loan for the creation of the Clarence River recreational fishing haven.
- Funding of \$111,260 in 2002/03, \$111,648 in 2003/04 and \$52,721 in 2004/05 from the Saltwater Trust for a recreational tagging and scientific program of luderick.
- Funding of \$15,000 from the Saltwater Trust in 2002/03 for the Gamefish Tagging Program-new tag development.
- Funding of \$10,000 from the Saltwater Trust in 2002/03 for the Recreational fishing platform at Ford Park, Yamba.
- Funding of \$65,000 from the Saltwater Trust in 2002/03 for distribution of the saltwater rules brochure.
- Funding of \$13,000 from the Saltwater Trust in 2002/03 for the striped marlin economic survey.
- Funding of \$75,020 from the Saltwater Trust in 2002/03, \$54,645 in 2003/04 and \$40,460 in 2004/05 for the University of NSW to investigate the impact of restocked mulloway fingerlings in NSW estuaries.
- Renewal of the following closures:
 - ⇒ Hunter River recreational prawning
 - ⇒ Evans River Nets and Traps
 - ⇒ Murray Cod closure
 - ⇒ Lady Denman Reserve "Fish Enclosure"
 - ⇒ Toonumbar Dam and Norco Weir (Richmond River)
 - ⇒ Botany Bay and tributaries, including Georges River and Cooks River (amendment)
 - ⇒ Bellinger and Kalang Rivers
 - ⇒ Shoalhaven/Crookhaven Rivers

Recommendation

That the Council ratifies the out of session support for these issues.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

Carried

EIS/FMS update (Information provided by Peter Turnell/Andrew Goulstone)

The background information for the recreational and charter boat fishing environmental impact statement (EIS) is being compiled within the context of draft environmental assessment guidelines prepared by Planning NSW and with the benefit of the National Survey data. The background information will include a description and review of existing recreational fishing and charter fishing activities. It is important that this information accurately reflects how the activity is carried out, as it provides the basis for identifying any significant environmental risks or issues that may need to be addressed in the draft fishery management strategy (FMS).

The draft FMS will form part of the EIS for recreational and charter boat fishing (ie. it will be a chapter within the EIS documentation) and as such will also need to contain the matters prescribed in the guidelines issued by Planning NSW. At present, these guidelines are in draft form and Council is being asked to review the draft and provide advice on the key issues or potential high risk areas that it believes may arise during the EIS process. A copy of the draft guidelines will be distributed to Council members at the meeting.

During Council's review of the draft environmental assessment guidelines it would be beneficial if members could identify the types of information that may be needed to prepare the FMS/EIS and advise NSW Fisheries on any possible sources of such information.

NSW Fisheries advised the Council that departmental representatives met with Planning NSW in mid-February to consider and develop the draft guidelines for the recreational FMS/EIS. Planning NSW will provide the revised draft guidelines in the near future. The guidelines will be forwarded to Council members as soon as possible.

Action item: NSW Fisheries to forward the draft guidelines to Council members when available.

Fish Aggregating Buoys update

The Council was advised that the program is progressing well and has received very positive feedback from anglers. NSW Fisheries is working closely with recreational and commercial fishers, charter boat operators and Fisheries Officers to determine suitable locations for the buoys. Fishing clubs have been assisting with the deployment of the buoys.

Fish aggregating buoys were deployed east of South Solitary Island off Coffs Harbour on 13 February 2003 and east of Point Perpendicular off Jervis Bay on 19 February 2003. It is planned to deploy buoys off Terrigal, South West Rocks and Sydney later this summer.

Locations and GPS coordinates of the buoys have been provided on the NSW Fisheries website for easy access by recreational fishers. This information is also available from local NSW Fisheries Offices. The locations of the buoys are as follows:

GPS COORDINATES (WGS84)

Byron Bay	28.35.122 S	153.38.336 E
Coffs Harbour	30.14.435 S	153.21.439 E
Forster	32.14.270 S	152.36.950 E
Port Stephens	32.46.021 S	152.15.253 E
Terrigal	33.26.933 S	151.34.206 E
Jervis Bay	35.05.535 S	150.50.987 E
Batemans Bay	35.44.574 S	150.20.315 E
Narooma	36.06.915 S	150.09.816 E

Sydney and South West Rocks FAD coordinates will be announced following deployment.

Correspondence received

Use of plastic bait bags

Correspondence has been received raising concern about the use of plastic bait bags and the need for more environmentally friendly bait packaging.

The NSW Government has commenced development of a fishery management strategy for recreational fishing. The FMS will provide an integrated plan for sustainable recreational fishing practices in the State and will provide an opportunity for consultation with anglers and the broader community. This process will help to identify any environmentally damaging processes resulting from recreational fishing, including the impact of pollutants like plastic bait bags, and consider options to mitigate impacts.

The new recreational fishing guides for 2002-2003 advise anglers to properly dispose of rubbish and other water pollutants. The brochures are a key part of the NSW Government's commitment to helping the community and anglers take care of the aquatic environment. The guide also refers anglers to the National Code of Practice for Recreational and Sport Fishing. These concerns have been referred to the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing for consideration.

NSW Fisheries actively encourages the reduction of fishing related waste. An example of current efforts to educate the fishing public about responsible fishing practices, is the "Get Hooked – it's fun to fish" program, which is an initiative aimed at primary school students. This special education kit provides information about fish, their habitat and the importance of responsible fishing practices, addressing topics such as "You're the solution to water pollution", which outlines the importance of clean waterways to aquatic life and "Don't leave your tackle behind", which illustrates the impact of rubbish on aquatic life and habitat.

The Council believes that information regarding the disposal of all fishing related rubbish, including fishing line and bait bags, should be a priority for all future educational material.

It was noted that the adoption of biodegradable bait bags by wholesalers/retailers may not be economically viable at present. This issue is based on commercial considerations and is beyond NSW Fisheries' role to dictate the type of packaging used for bait products, fishing gear etc. Lisa Terry advised the Council that biodegradable bait bags may be being trialed in Queensland. NSW Fisheries will contact Queensland Fisheries Service to find out further information.

Around the table

- New designs for the recreational fishing licence, for example, credit card sized licences, are being developed.
- The Artificial Reef Working Group meeting has been postponed to enable NSW Fisheries' policy on this issue to be further developed.
- The Marine Fish Stocking Working Group meeting has been postponed while further consideration is given to the mulloway stocking research program, which is designed to address the impacts of marine stocking. This information is essential for an assessment of marine stocking and development of associated policy.
- Lionel Jones commented that fishing has been excellent in Lake Macquarie recently.
- Large numbers of razor clams have appeared in Lake Macquarie recently. Information on the clams was requested by Concerned Anglers Group.

- The spearfishing representative mentioned that there have been 3 reports over the past 18 months of aggressive grey nurse sharks threatening and taking fish from divers.
- Angel Rings – The Council was informed that the deployment of Angel Rings funded from the Saltwater Trust was stalled due to concerns over liability. The Council expressed concern that a volunteer group should be forced to accept liability for deploying life saving equipment.

Recommendation:

That Council seek advice regarding Government accepting responsibility for liability issues related to Angel Rings.

Moved: Ann Lee

Seconded: Elaine Garvey

Carried

Action item: The Chairman write to the Minister seeking advice regarding liability issues for Angel Rings.

Next meeting – Tuesday 3 June 2003.