



**Recreational
Fishing Trusts**

*Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust
Expenditure Committee*

MINUTES

20TH RFFTEC MEETING

7 December, 2004

**PENRITH PANTHERS CLUB
HOLIDAY INN
ROOM CLAVERTON 1
Mulgoa Road, Penrith**

**Twentieth Meeting of the NSW
Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee
MINUTES
7.12.04, 10:00am to 2.00pm
Penrith Panthers Club, Mulgoa Road, Penrith
Room Claverton 1, (Holiday Inn)**

Attendance

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee Members

Bruce Schumacher	Chair
Steve Rudder	Region 1
Steve Tooley	Region 3
Elizabeth Brodbeck	Region 4
Rodney Tonkin	Region 5
Debbie Lennon	Region 6
Richard Ping Kee	Region 7
Kevin McKinnon	Region 8

NSW Department of Primary Industries (observers)

Mr John Diplock, Manager, Recreational Fisheries
Mr Bryan van der Walt, Senior Fisheries Manager
Mr Cameron Westaway, Senior Fisheries Manager (Inland)
Mr Craig Watson, Fisheries Manager

Business

- Chair's introduction
- Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting (10 August, 2004)
- Action Items from previous minutes

Agenda Items

1. Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust financial report (Bryan van der Walt/ Cameron Westaway)
2. Allocation of funds to the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust (Bryan van der Walt)
3. New trust fund project proposals (Cameron Westaway / Craig Watson)
4. Review of round 3 grants for the Habitat Restoration Program (Milly Hobson)
5. Angling Research & Tournament Monitoring (Tim Park)
6. Stocking success program update (Bob Faragher / John Pogonoski)
7. Fishcare Volunteer Program update (Dee McElligott)
8. Hatchery fishing clinics and advisory programs update (Vera Fiala)
9. Recreational freshwater research priorities (Cameron Westaway)
10. Instream and Riparian Restoration-Hume Dam to Yarrawonga (Adam Vey)

Other business

- Upcoming vacancies on RFFTEC (Craig Watson)
- Freshwater trust project account reports (Cameron Westaway)
- Project milestones reports (Craig Watson)
- Recreational Fishing Licence sales (Bryan van der Walt)
- Lower Darling River Cod Kill (February 2004) - Independent Report (Adam Vey)
- Next meeting
- Date and location

Meeting close

Sydney International Regatta Centre

2.30pm - 3.15pm: Tour, Penrith Lakes Development Complex. Presentation by Penrith Shire Council on freshwater mussels research project, funded through the freshwater trust.

Chair's welcoming

The Chair welcomed members to the 20th meeting of the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) at the Claverton Room, Holiday Inn, Penrith. There were no apologies for the meeting.

Minutes of the previous meeting

Recommendation

The draft minutes of the 19th RFFTEC meeting were accepted by RFFTEC as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

Action items of the previous meeting

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

Agenda Item 1

Bryan van der Walt / Cameron Westaway

Issue

Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust financial report and revised trust fund position

Background

At the previous two freshwater expenditure committee meetings in 2004, the committee has supported a total budget of \$3.231 million for a range of compliance, research, management and education programs to improve recreational fishing in 2004/05. Some programs had substantial carryovers this financial year resulting in a total transfer of \$2.6 million from the Freshwater Trust for the 2004/05 programs. This leaves a predicted balance of \$536,000 available for new programs. This includes the increase in the Small Grants Program budget from \$20,000 to \$40,000 and funding for the inland advisory trailer. The 2004/05 financial tables have been updated and will be presented at the meeting.

Outcomes

Current Trust Fund Position

Mr Bryan van der Walt outlined the financial position of the Freshwater Trust. The Trust financial tables showed a breakdown of the budgets for all of the 2004/05 Trust funded programs, including the programs recommended for funding at the August 2004 meeting. The Committee was advised that a new cost centre had been set up for the fishing clinics programs, which would allow the Committee to track expenditure.

Outcomes continued

It should be noted that the balance of the Trust for the next 3 years remains positive but is reducing over time, as approved allocations currently exceed predicted income to the freshwater trust. As a result, cost savings will need to be made in the future to ensure the freshwater trust remains in credit.

The status of the Freshwater Trust is at follows:

Summary of current Trust Fund position

Balance at end of 2003/04	\$567,000
Predicted income 2004/05	\$2,590,000
Approved allocations 2004/05	\$2,621,000
Predicted balance at end of 2004/05	\$536,000

Recreational fishing licensing system

A number of options to improve the licensing system have been investigated, including the conversion of the current manual system to an electronic system and contracting out the electronic system to a suitable provider, similar to the Touch sales system. This will: provide for electronic data and funds transfer minimising the risk of fraud; speed up the sale of licences; ease the administrative burden on agents and staff; and provide for plastic licences and a renewal system. Recreational Management is now preparing specifications for the conversion of the current manual licensing system to a contracted electronic system through a tender process. The Department is also investigating other areas for improving the licensing system including linking the licence fees to the Consumer Price Index, removing the Tweed concession and options for the 3 day licence.

Recreational fishing trusts newsletter

A new recreational fishing trusts newsletter is being prepared for distribution to anglers. The newsletter provides an overview of the recreational fishing trusts, processes of expenditure and a snap shot of some high profile fresh and saltwater programs including FAD's, stocking, angel rings and habitat restoration. A copy of the design of the newsletter was distributed to members. The Recreational Fishing Trust newsletter will be sent out with the licence reminder notices to all fisheries offices and Fishcare volunteers for distribution to the angling public.

Action item: Committee members to provide comments on the newsletter to Recreational Management out of session.

Next meeting

Because both the Freshwater and Saltwater Trusts support joint programs, such as fish habitat restoration grants, licence awareness, fishing guides and the Fishcare Volunteer Program, the Committee proposed that both Expenditure Committees have a joint session at the major budget meetings in April 2005.

Recommendation:

The Committee supported the implementation of the proposals to improve the recreational licence system, including: 1) the conversion of the current manual licensing system to a contracted electronic system through a tender process; 2) linking licence fees to the Consumer Price Index; 3) removing the Tweed fishing licence concession; and 4) removing the 3 day licence.

Agenda Item 2**Bryan van der Walt****Issue**

Allocation of funds to the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust.

Background

In accordance with Division 3 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* the Minister for Primary Industries is required to make a determination as to the amount of funds collected through the general recreational fishing fee (implemented in 2001) that should be allocated to the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Fund.

Freshwater anglers were assured many times during consultation over the implementation of the general fee that the freshwater trust would receive a guaranteed allocation of \$2.5 million dollars per annum for five years (based on previous income from the freshwater licence implemented in 1998). This was outlined in the General Recreational Fishing Fee Position Paper and in other public documents and meetings. Accordingly, the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing supported the annual allocation to the freshwater trust of \$2.5 million for the years 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05.

Annual allocation to the freshwater trust has not been determined for the year 2005/06 and beyond. Proposals will be provided at the meeting.

Outcomes

The Committee was advised that prior to the introduction of the general recreational fishing fee, the Advisory Council supported the annual allocation to the Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust of \$2.5 million based on the income from freshwater licence sales between 1998 and 2000. In 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04, this allocation represented 30.9%, 29.8% and 27.8% of the total licence sales income, respectively. The Committee was also presented with an analysis of freshwater and saltwater fishing effort based on the National Recreational and Indigenous Survey conducted in 2000/01. The analysis showed that approximately 76% (or 982,727 anglers) fished in saltwater habitats and 24% (or 312,366 anglers) fished in freshwater habitats. Therefore, in the last 3 financial years, the Freshwater Trust has received slightly more than this estimate (around 29%) of total income from licence sales.

Outcomes continued

The Committee was advised that the advice from both expenditure committees would be forwarded to the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing and that the Council will make a recommendation to the Minister on the allocation of funds to each Trust. RFSTEC has recommended that the Freshwater Trust allocation be adjusted to 25% of licence sales based on the results of the National Survey.

Mr Rodney Tonkin discussed the option of increasing the fixed revenue of \$2.5 million per annum to \$2.8 million per annum, for additional habitat restoration programs in freshwater. The expenditure committee supported this viewpoint.

Recommendations

RFFTEC recommended

- that the fixed revenue of \$2.5 million per annum be increased to \$2.8 million per annum.

Agenda Item 3**Cameron Westaway / Craig Watson****Issue**

New trust fund project proposals

Background

New general freshwater proposals and small grants funding proposals have been received. These projects will be considered by members at the meeting. Successful applicants will be required to report to the expenditure committees on a regular basis in the approved format.

Outcomes

Seven new proposals for funding from the Freshwater Trust have been submitted to NSW DPI for consideration by the Committee. These are summarised in the table below.

RFFTEC requested that funding applications outside of the small grants program be deferred until the budget meeting in April 2005, so that projects may be viewed in context of other proposals received at that time and the overall trust fund budget position. The Committee discussed the two small grants applications - Hastings research project by Hastings Council and the development of a guide for freshwater crayfish in north eastern NSW. The Hastings River research project was supported by the Committee as it showed direct benefits to recreational bass anglers in the mid north coast. NSW DPI noted that consultancy fees and other operating costs for the population study (\$4,600) could be funded through the existing Anglers Catch Research Program.

Outcomes continued

Extra funding for the anglers catch program can be considered at a future meeting if a shortfall is apparent as a result of this additional project work. The field guide for crayfish was not supported by the Committee as it was not considered beneficial for the common angler.

Recommendations

RFFTEC recommended

- that the Hastings Council's Bass Population study be supported and incorporated as part of the existing Trust funded Tournament Monitoring Program. Funding of \$4,600 for the Hastings study will be provided from the existing Tournament Monitoring Program budget.

New applications for funding, 04/05 financial year

Small grants

Project Title	Proponent	Description	Freshwater funding request	Recommendation
Hastings River Australian Bass population study	Mid North Coast Fly Rodders / Hastings Council	To monitor the status of bass populations in the Hastings River and to establish guidelines for future restocking activities	\$4,600	Project supported. Funding of \$4,600 for the Hastings study will be provided from the existing Tournament Monitoring Program budget.
A field guide to freshwater crayfishes in north eastern NSW	Southern Cross University	Complete a taxonomic key for crayfishes in north eastern NSW and develop a taxonomic and photographic ebook.	\$5,000	Not supported.

General projects

Project Title	Proponent	Description	Freshwater funding request	Recommendation
Identification of Travelling Stock and other reserves of importance to recreational anglers,	Department of Primary Industries	To identify public reserves of value to recreational anglers and to preserve the access status for fishing, through relevant authorities.	\$30,000	Deferred to budget meeting
Population structures and the genetic implications of stocking native fish	University of Sydney	To preserve the genetic diversity within two fish species and to inform on the genetic implications of stocking	\$60,000 over 3 years, \$20,000 p.a	Deferred to budget meeting
Conservation genetics and management implications for perch and bass	Macquarie University	Assess the populations genetic structure of perch and bass within NSW (four fish species) and to recommend on zones for broodstock collection and stocking.	\$60,000 over 3 years, \$20,000 p.a	Deferred to budget meeting

New applications for funding, 04/05 financial year

General projects (continued)

Research and monitoring for an introduced freshwater crayfish species	Southern Cross University	Co-ordinate research programs at Southern Cross University to identify dynamics of population of introduced freshwater crayfish species.	\$14,353 over 3 years, \$4753 year 1 \$4,800 years 2 & 3	Deferred to budget meeting
An education program for an introduced freshwater crayfish species	Southern Cross University	Prepare freshwater crayfish educational material and conduct a series of community workshops / training days on crayfish identification.	\$15,000 over 3 years, \$5,000 p.a.	Deferred to budget meeting

Issue

Update on Habitat Grant Program

Background

Expressions of interest for Round 3 of the fish habitat grants program were called in July 2004. Advertisements were placed in local and statewide media. Advertisements were also targeted to areas that have not yet received funding, in particular the Far West region (eg. Bourke and Broken Hill). A mail out to all fishing clubs and local councils in NSW also took place.

The closing date for applications was 29 October 2004. Projects received have been assessed by DPI Office of Conservation staff, according to specific criteria. These criteria include: benefit to recreational anglers, quality of application, matching funding and habitat benefit. An internal project review meeting took place in November. Applications recommended for approval with total recommended funding and an in kind contributions will be discussed at the RFFTEC meeting.

The success of the Freshwater Habitat Grant program to date indicates an increasing number of community and angling groups are interested in rehabilitation of aquatic habitat. A presentation will be given showcasing some of the completed projects from Round 1.

Outcomes

Milly Hobson provided an overview on Round 1 and 2 projects. So far 11 of the 13 Round one projects have been completed. Final project reports for these programs have been distributed to Committee members. Twelve of the 13 projects from Round two are well underway and milestone reports have been submitted for the information of Committee members.

The expression of interest for Round 3 of the Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program closed on the 29th October 2004. A total of 25 applications were received. These were reviewed by conservation and aquatic habitat rehabilitation staff and were ranked in order of priority. Criteria for ranking include: benefits to recreational anglers, extent of habitat rehabilitation, value for money, community involvement, involvement of lead environmental agencies and public access. The majority of applications were of a very high standard in terms of aquatic habitat outcomes and value for money. The 26 (or 25) applications received in round 3 represented a total \$190,394 in funding with in-kind contributions totalling \$482,926. In all, 14 projects have been recommended for funding in Round 3. All recommended proponents show matching funds as in-kind support and/or as monetary contributions. A map of the recommended project sites was distributed to members.

Outcomes continued

These projects represent a good geographical distribution of the applications received in Round 3. There are several projects that are being recommended in areas that have not previously received funding in Rounds 1 and 2.

The Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group (MWWG) has not been able to undertake their monitoring program on fish movement after flood events in River Red Gum floodplain ecosystems (funded during Round 2) because of drought. The group has submitted an alternative project for the Committee's consideration, namely the Twynams Lagoon rehabilitation project – Hay. Conservation and aquatic habitat rehabilitation staff support this new project. The MWWG are seeking that funds previously approved in Round 2 (\$10,000) be transferred to the Twynams Lagoon rehabilitation project – Hay in Round 3. Should RFFTEC approve funding for this alternative project, the Round 2 project allocation budget would need to be adjusted accordingly.

The Committee endorsed the 14 projects for funding proposed by Office of Conservation and approved the transfer of \$10,000 in pre-allocated funds from the MWWG flood events project (Round 2) to the MWWG Twynams Lagoon rehabilitation project (Round 3). Thus the new allocations for Round 2 and 3 are amended from \$113,760 to \$103,760 and \$100,080 to \$110,080, respectively. A list of recommended projects and funding levels are shown in Table 1. Table 2 summarises funding arrangements for supported programs in Rounds 1-3.

In Rounds 1 and 2 funding in the order of \$213,000 has been approved, with matching funding in excess of \$450,000 committed as cash and in-kind support from project proponents. The projects approved represent the rehabilitation of approximately 80 hectares of floodplain and wetland habitat, 40kms of riparian vegetation and fish passage reinstated for more than 60km of river. However of the 134 applications received during the 3 rounds, funding was only available for 40 projects and many suitable applications have needed to be turned down.

To address this issue, the Committee may wish to consider expanding the program next year or to build more flexibility into it by offering some grants at higher amounts. This will allow a greater choice for groups, increase opportunities for on-ground works and provide for larger scale projects to take place. A range of different grant options available for groups would be beneficial as some on-ground works projects require larger sums of money to achieve desired outcomes. Additional funding could be sought for large scale projects through established funding bodies e.g. Catchment Management Authorities, Environmental Trust, Natural Heritage Trust Envirofund etc. to add value to freshwater trust funds. A campaign to improve the awareness of the program would be conducted, with a view to increasing the number of applications from fishing clubs and from far western, highland and Murray river areas.

Outcomes continued

NSW DPI will submit an application to RFFTEC at the April budget meeting regarding options for extending the Habitat Grant Program beyond 2004/05.

A copy of the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers magazine, which aims to promote and assist community involvement in fish habitat repair projects across the State, was circulated to members.

Recommendations

RFFTEC recommended that:

- the projects listed in table 1 be funded for the third round of the habitat grants program at a total funding level of \$110,080;
- that funding for the Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group (MWWG) flood events / ecosystems monitoring program (Narrandera – round 2) be transferred to MWWG Twynams Lagoon rehabilitation project (Hay – round 3) and
- that the second round habitat grants allocation be amended from \$113,760 to \$103,760 according to the change of projects by the MWWG

Table 1: Projects recommended for funding – Habitat Grants Program (Round 3)

Applicant	Title	Location	Proposal Summary	Funds Sought (\$)	Applicant Contribution (\$ + in-kind)	Comments	Recommended to RFFTEC Committee	Priority Ranking	funded \$\$	Inkind
Nidgerly Weir Trust	Bogan River Fish Passage Enhancement	Bogan Catchment near Brewarrina	Enhance fish passage past Nidgerly weir using a rock ramp fishway. 150km of unimpeded fish passage will be created.	\$8,600.00	\$35,800.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	1	\$8,600.00	\$35,800.00
Greening Australia	South Creek riparian revegetation and resnagging	Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment	Restore riparian vegetation following removal of a weir, including re-snagging along 7km of South Creek.	\$10,000.00	\$36,400.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	2	\$10,000.00	\$36,400.00
Murrumbidgee Wetlands Working Group	Murrumbidgee River Billabong (Twynams Lagoon) rehabilitation	Murrumbidgee Catchment west of Hay	Reinstate a wetting and drying cycle to a permanently inundated Billabong of 6.5ha. To enhance riparian vegetation including water stressed river redgum populations.	\$10,000.00	\$14,405.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	3	\$10,000.00	\$14,405.00
Conservation volunteers Australia	Old Man Creek Habitat Rehabilitation	Murrumbidgee Catchment west of Wagga wagga	Restoration of fish habitat along Old Man Creek. Works are to include resnagging to provide habitat and encourage natural scouring of silted pools. Tubestock reveg. along banks. Native aquatic plants will also be grown and transplanted into areas devoid of aquatic veg.	\$10,000.00	\$19,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	4	\$10,000.00	\$19,000.00
PF & BJ Conallin Farming Enterprises	Habitat Rehabilitation of the Wakool and Edwards Rivers	Lachlan and Murrumbidgee catchments near Deniliquin	Riparian rehabilitation, weed management, fencing, replanting resnagging - 30ha	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	5	\$8,000.00	\$10,000.00
Molong fishing Club/Cabonne Shire Council	Molong Creek habitat rehabilitation	Macquarie River Catchment near Molong	LWD habitat rehab, weed removal approximately 1.5 km habitat rehabilitation within Molong Creek including some public access areas. Molong fishing club involved.	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	6	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
Mid-Lachlan and Wallamundry Creek Water Users	Goobang, Bumbuggin and Little Lachlan Creeks willow removal	Lachlan Catchment near Condoblin	Willow maintenance and tube stock reveg. At previous willow removal project sites which were funded in round 1 and 2 of the Freshwater Fish Habitat Grant Program.	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	7	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00
Wetland care Australia	West Coraki wetland rehabilitation	Richmond Catchment near Coraki	Provide fish passage and flooding between the wetland and the freshwater section of the estuary, with works applying to in excess of 68ha.	\$10,000.00	\$19,580.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	8	\$10,000.00	\$19,580.00

Table 1 (continued): Projects recommended for funding – Habitat Grants Program (Round 3)

Applicant	Title	Location	Proposal Summary	Funds Sought (\$)	Applicant Contribution (\$ + in-kind)	Comments	Recommended to RFFTEC Committee	Priority Ranking	funded \$\$	Inkind
NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers	Freshwater Fisher - special publication	Will be distributed throughout NSW	Publication and distribution of a special edition (already prepared) of a NSW Council of freshwater anglers magazine which aims to promote and assist community involvement in fish habitat repair projects across the state. Although this project is not technically on-ground works it will assist greatly in the promotion of aquatic habitat rehabilitation as a tool for the improvement of native fish species. It will also encourage and assist recreational fishing groups to become involved in these types of projects, especially groups who are unsure about getting started. This project has statewide significance.	\$2,980.00	\$7,226.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	9	\$2,980.00	\$7,226.00
Byron Shire Council	Brunswick River fish passage remediation	Brunswick Catchment in Mullumbimby	The project aims to remove an old causeway and replace with a bridge at a high priority location on the Brunswick River. Approximately 25km of unimpeded fish passage within the Brunswick River will be created.	\$10,000.00	\$140,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	10	\$10,000.00	\$140,000.00
Glen Innes Severn shire	Severn River fish passage remediation	Border Rivers Catchment near Deepwater	The project aims to remove a barrier to fish passage- replace pipe crossing with boxed culvert. In excess of 33km of unimpeded fish passage will be created within the Severn River by removing the defunct crossing. In addition approximately 5km of riparian zone will be eradicated of weeds.	\$10,000.00	\$10,125.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	11	\$10,000.00	\$10,125.00
Parramatta City Council	Parramatta River fish passage remediation	Parramatta river catchment, Sydney	The aim of this project is to provide fish passage at Kiosk Weir within the Parramatta River. This is one of 4 fishways proposed for the Parramatta River. The combined result of the 4 fishways will open up an extra 5 kms of river, and enable the movement of fish from freshwater to saltwater environments. Sydney Bass have been involved with this project over the last 2 years.	\$10,000.00	\$30,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	12	\$5,000.00	\$30,000.00

Table 1 (continued): Projects recommended for funding – Habitat Grants Program (Round 3)

Applicant	Title	Location	Proposal Summary	Funds Sought (\$)	Applicant Contribution (\$ + in-kind)	Comments	Recommended to RFFTEC Committee	Priority Ranking	funded \$\$	Inkind
Wentworth Shire council	Thegoa lagoon fish passage	Thegoa Lagoon @ Wentworth	Construct fish passage at the western end of Thegoa lagoon. Will allow fish and flows back into the Lagoon. Project funded in round 2 to look at design options. This second stage of the project aims to carry out the on ground works as required to re-establish fishpassage throughout the lagoon system.	\$10,000.00	\$40,000.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	13	\$5,000.00	\$40,000.00
Narrandera Fishing and Bowling club	Lake Talbot Research	Murrumbidgee River catchment near Narrandera.	Investigate the number and types of fish lost each year when Lake Talbot is drained at the conclusion of the irrigation season. Assist with developing proper screening mechanisms. Public access area and will improve rec. fishing opportunities in the area.	\$10,000.00	\$14,080.00	Project recommended for funding by local CM.	Yes	14	\$10,000.00	\$14,080.00

Table 2: Summary of funding arrangements for supported projects in rounds 1, 2 & 3 – Habitat Grant Program

Round of funding	1	2	3	Total
Number of projects funded	13	13	14	40
In-kind contribution	\$217,000	\$235,170	\$392,116	\$844,286
Freshwater Trust allocation	\$93,871	\$103,760	\$110,080.	\$307,711

Issue

Angling Research and Tournament Monitoring update

Background

Mr Tim Park will brief the Committee on the progress of the Tournament Monitoring Project and provide summary reports detailing catch composition, catch rate per unit effort, average length and length frequencies for events attended.

This year the project has endeavoured to increase feedback to the angling public though providing summary reports to some of the events. In response to a request from RFFTEC at a previous meeting, the population structure of Murray cod in Lake Mulwala based on tournament survey results will be reported on.

A review of the project in November will provide a list of the events to be covered in the coming year; this will be outlined for discussion.

Outcomes

The Angling Research and Tournament Monitoring Project has been collecting fishery data from freshwater tournaments since mid-year 2000. The program was established to collect catch, effort and fish size information at fishing tournaments to determine the quality of recreational fishing, as well as for use in stock assessment and to determine the success of current management strategies. Data is collected directly from fishers to allow their direct involvement in the process. Originally, the program was directed at freshwater fisheries but has now been expanded to cover saltwater events. Since the program's inception in 2001, 39,000 angler days of effort have been collected. Regular sampling is taking place at more than 40 freshwater events each year, equivalent to 5,300 angler days of effort. NSW DPI staff are increasingly involving Fishcare Volunteers in the collection of catch statistics. A matrix of events is being established to cover all drainage systems and major catchments, mindful of historic data already collected. Tournament reports have been prepared for several Basscatch and western drainage events. Event summaries have also appeared recently in NSW Fishing Monthly magazine.

An overview of tournaments attended within the Murray Darling Basin and related catch composition data was provided. Results of these tournaments, detailing species caught, average length of fish caught, total number of fish recorded, species composition, number of anglers contributing data, total number of fishing hours recorded and catch rate per unit of effort were discussed. Within the wild Murray cod fishery at Lake Mulwala, catch data obtained over the last 10 years appears to show a relatively stable population and good levels of recruitment back into the fishery.

For information.

Issue

Stocking success program

Background

The stocking success program aims to assess the survival and growth of stocked trout and native fish and to identify their contribution to the recreational catch. The results of samplings in Pejar Dam and the Oberon fishery will be discussed as will the fish marking and sampling of the Guy Fawkes River. In addition, sampling of the marked fish from Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne will be discussed with results indicating the success of the stocking program over the last four years.

Outcomes

Mr Bob Faragher presented a summary of the results of stocked waterways sampled between August and November 2004 (Thredbo and Eucumbene Rivers, Guy Fawkes River, Pejar Dam, Lake Oberon, Lake Jindabyne [Snowy Mountains Trout Festival]). With respect to the Thredbo River, large numbers of 2 year old finclipped fish were sampled compared to the previous year. It is estimated that 65% of 2 year old fish and 32% of 3 year old fish in the rainbow trout population were derived from the Gaden hatchery. A similar pattern has been observed from sampling in Gang Gang Creek (tributary of Lake Eucumbene), where a high percentage of hatchery spawned fish have been identified. Results from the Snowy Mountains Trout Festival show that catch per unit effort in 2003 remains high. The results appear to indicate that the current stocking regime for Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne (as per the Snowy Lakes strategy) appears to be effective in maintaining the Snowy Mountains Trout Fishery.

Results from sampling the Guy Fawkes River confirm the presence of a breeding population of brown trout near the top of the catchment but very poor survival of stocked rainbow trout (marked with a harmless dye).

Publications produced during the course of the course of this program during the last 4 years were discussed. Reports for Dunns Swamp and Rylstone Dam, Lakes Centenary, Mannus, Albert and Wyangan, Guy Fawkes River, Hastings River, Macquarie River, Oberon Dam, Pejar Dam, Wauchope, Wollomombi River and Snowy Lakes Strategy are being prepared and will be distributed for the information of the Committee when finalised. These reports will also be placed on the Department's website.

For information.

Issue

Fishcare Volunteer program update

Background

The Fishcare program is now being co-ordinated from the Cronulla Fisheries Centre through the recreational fisheries branch. There are presently 339 volunteers operating in NSW. The next south western intake of volunteers is scheduled for January 2005. Volunteers from this training will filter back into existing networks at Wagga Wagga, Cowra, the Snowy Mountains and Bathurst.

Outcomes

Since the August meeting, 15 field events have been undertaken and 2,253 public contacts made. Volunteers have also addressed angling clubs and other groups to ensure the distribution of up-to-date fisheries information. Fishcare Volunteers also ran the Forbes Carp-a-thon in November 2004. Consolidation of the Fishcare program is continuing. Any inactive volunteers are being asked to increase their commitment or consider exiting the program. There are presently 339 volunteers operating in NSW with an activity rate of 78%. This is expected to increase over the busy Christmas/New Year fishing season. Fish handling and first aid training has been made available for those volunteers that have committed over 200 hours to the program. Volunteers have assisted in research activities (e.g. angler surveys), habitat restoration (e.g. removal of weeds, clean ups etc.), school visits and provided the Education Officer with administrative assistance, where required.

The three mobile education units on the coast continue to operate successfully under the management of the Education Officers. The units are being used at fishing events, community days, schools visits and fishing clinics and have been extremely well received by the general community. The Minister recently approved funding for the fourth unit for inland NSW events to be funded by the Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust.

Ms McElligott introduced Mr Tim Hennessey, Fishcare Volunteer, Penrith Lakes Complex. Mr Hennessey expressed gratitude for the funding support through the freshwater trust, which has provided rods and reels for use by children at the fishing clinics program at the Lakes, held each Tuesday and Sunday. Catch and release fishing is the only form of fishing allowed (except carp which are not returned to the water if caught) and barbless hooks must be used. In addition to these regular clinics, a series of fishing clinics for juniors are run during the Christmas school holiday period. These have been extremely successful with an estimated 150 children attending the program.

Outcomes continued

Species caught include catfish, Australian bass and carp. Four other large events are held at the lakes during the year. These are the Penrith City Council "Activate" event, a "Spring into the Lakes" fishing day held in September, an Open Fishing Event held in April and an Australia Day Fishing Event. The "Bluey on Wheels" fishing information advisory trailer has been used at these events and has been well received by the general community. Other community events attended include trout fish-outs held during the winter period at pools in Emerton and Blacktown, assisting with tournament monitoring research at Wiseman's Ferry and attending the fisheries information stand at the Sydney International Boat Show and Royal Easter Show. RFFTEC expressed appreciation to Mr Hennessey for his commitment to improving fishing opportunities for anglers in western Sydney.

For information.

Agenda Item 8**Vera Fiala****Issue**

Hatchery fishing clinics and advisory programs update

BackgroundFishing clinics

In 2004/05 the Department will continue to run fishing clinics, including those for special needs groups and multicultural communities. A new cost centre has been set up for the fishing clinics program to facilitate tracking of expenditure and transparent financial reporting. An update on the development of the fishing clinics program will be provided to the Committee.

Fishing guides

The recreational fishing guides have been updated after a review, including detailed comments from the Trust subcommittee. 100,000 Freshwater Fishing Guides have been produced and mailed directly to Fisheries Offices, Fishcare Volunteers and licence agents for free distribution to anglers across the State.

Licence advertising

Inland licence advertising commenced this year at the start of the trout fishing season. Another round of advertisements was placed in conjunction with the Murray Cod season opening. A summer campaign is planned in newspapers across the State, in Fishing World, Fishing Monthly and the BIA handbook. As in previous years, complimentary editorial is sourced where possible.

OutcomesHatchery fishing clinics

The clinic review report and draft program will be finalised early in 2005. Sponsorship will also be sought to boost the Trust allocations. The Committee was advised that two disabled fishing clinics have been conducted in Sydney over the past three months and that eight are planned over the Christmas school holiday period.

Freshwater Fishing guides

One hundred thousand copies of the guide have been published and distributed to agents, Fishcare volunteers, fisheries offices and recreational management. The up-dated guides were thoroughly checked by recreational management staff and the Trust subcommittee. The Committee was provided with a sample of the new Freshwater Fishing Guide and the new 90cm freshwater sticky ruler showing pictures of fish species with bag and size limits.

NSW DPI advised that a survey of agents would be carried out next year to determine quantities of saltwater and freshwater guides, brochures and sticky rulers for each agent, to minimise wastage of unwanted advisory material.

Licence advertising

During the summer fishing period an extensive advertising campaign will be run to encourage responsible fishing and to promote the fishing licence, including advertisements in regional and Sydney-based radio stations, in peak metropolitan and regional newspapers and major fishing magazines. For each campaign a departmental media release will be issued. The 2004/05 advertising campaign is similar to the successful campaign run in 2003/04.

For information.

Agenda Item 9

Cameron Westaway

Issue

Freshwater research priorities

Background

The Director-General of DPI has requested input from Primary industries stakeholders into research priorities that will guide DPI science and research over the coming decade. A Directions Statement has been developed to set out:

- An analysis of key strategic issues and relevant national and State trends
- A review of the Department's current research capacity, areas of strength and competitive advantage; and
- A plan for the future, including a framework for investment, proposed priorities for research in NSW, actions to deliver those priorities including methods of service delivery and a reinvestment plan.

Concurrent with this process, Recreational Management branch will be holding internal discussions with fisheries scientists to discuss future research requirements and priorities. Discussions will include the need for extra research for high priority species such as Murray cod and Australian bass as well as the research requirements set out in the draft fish stocking FMS. The FMS proposes an extensive research plan to fill existing information gaps identified in the key areas of genetics, environmental impacts of stocking and the efficacy of stocking. The results of the preliminary risk assessment, results of the National Recreational Fishing Survey, the findings of the illegal fishing review and the actions of the Indigenous Fisheries Strategy will also be discussed.

Many of these issues will form part of the recreational fishing environmental assessment and FMS requirements. This should ensure that funding applications that come to RFFTEC in the future can be assessed against key priority areas.

Outcomes

A new Director-General's message, calling for comments from stakeholders on the general priorities that will guide DPI science and research in NSW over the next decade has been advertised. Comments are invited from all interested stakeholders and the closing date is 17 December 2004. The Directions Statement and comment form can be found on the DPI website.

A freshwater research planning meeting was held on 24th November to review current freshwater research programs, identify freshwater research knowledge gaps and discuss a strategic framework for future research within identified priority areas, to assist decisions on allocation of resources. Opportunities for value adding to existing freshwater research will be explored and implemented, where possible.

There is a need to develop a research plan to clearly outline the benefits to recreational fisheries that would result from each priority area and each project within those priority areas. The plan will be developed in a format that can be easily extended to universities, councils and fishing clubs to ensure proponents submit projects in the future that are relevant to the needs of anglers, within the identified priority areas. The plan will be used by RFFTEC and RFSTEC to guide their decisions on investment in recreational fisheries research. RFFTEC were highly supportive of this initiative.

Recommendation

RFFTEC supported the development of a freshwater research priority plan in a format that can be easily extended to stakeholders to assist the community in preparing trust fund applications that are relevant to the needs of anglers.

Issue

Living Murray Instream and Riparian Restoration-Hume Dam to Yarrawonga

Background

The Living Murray Implementation Program is an initiative of the Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) to introduce a suite of operational and structural works to improve the health of the River Murray System. Between 1976 and 1987 nearly 25,000 snags were removed from the River Murray between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga as a part of a river management program.

DPI has prepared the *Living Murray Hume Dam to Yarrawonga Instream and Riparian Restoration Plan 2004*. The plan outlines the selection of priority sites for restoration taking into account statistical, biometric and cost benefit analysis using NSW DPI snag mapping data and fish monitoring data. DPI staff at Albury developed a methodology and designed GIS/GPS hardware interface to capture data on woody habitats (habitat mapping). This data will be used in conjunction with feedback from stakeholders to commence large-scale rehabilitation of the Murray River between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga.

Outcomes

NSW DPI is currently preparing the Living Murray Hume Dam to Yarrawonga Instream and Riparian Restoration Plan 2004 for public exhibition. Selection of priority sites takes into account statistical, biometric and cost benefit analysis using snag mapping and fish monitoring data. Staff at the Hume Fisheries Office have recorded GPS data on woody habitats within the subject reach. This data is being interfaced with a GIS mapping program. The data will be used in conjunction with feedback from the general public to commence large-scale rehabilitation of the Murray River between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga.

The restoration aims to achieve an incremental increase in the number of large bodied native fish such as Golden Perch, Murray Cod and the threatened Trout Cod. The monitoring component of the program is multifaceted and designed to deliver accountable and robust data to assist in adaptive management and measuring fish occupancy within the reach as a result of the restoration activities. Initial fish sampling has yielded some interesting results and fish habitat associations have been employed within the scope of the plan to select priority sites for restoration. In 2005 NSW DPI will develop and implement works programs in view of the restoration plan.

For information.

Issue

Lower Darling River Cod Kill (February 2004)- Independent Report

Background

In February 2004 an extensive kill of Murray Cod occurred in the Lower Darling River between Menindee and Pooncarie. The deaths occurred over 160km of river and coincided with the recommencement of regulated flows from Lake Wetherill (Menindee) after a period of no flow in the river.

The Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources commissioned the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre to prepare an *Independent Review of the February 2004 Lower Darling River Fish Deaths*. The review includes some qualification of the size, the cause and ecological significance of the kill.

Outcomes

Mr Adam Vey discussed the outcomes of the review at the meeting. Mr Vey noted that the fish kills occurred in the Lower Darling River over 160km of river between Menindee and Pooncarie in February, where an estimated 3,000 fish died. The fish kills coincided with the resumption of regulated flows from Lake Wetherill, after a period of no flow in the river. An independent report was commissioned to determine the ecological significance of the fish kill and to recommend on management guidelines to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence in the future.

Investigations have identified that the kill was species exclusive, affecting large Murray cod only. The likely cause of the kill was a combination of high water temperatures (at the time of the kill, the ambient air temperature exceeded 40°C and the water temperature exceeded 30°C), low levels of dissolved oxygen (water quality readings post kill showed a low level of dissolved oxygen in the water), chemical toxicity and turbidity. Future management guidelines include collection of baseline data, more rigorous water quality monitoring, identification of remnant pool distribution and the development of a fish kill response plan.

The Lower Darling River area will be restocked with Murray cod this year through the dollar for dollar scheme.

For information.

Other business

Issue

Upcoming vacancies on RFFTEC - Craig Watson

Outcomes

A selection panel to improve the rigour and transparency of the committee selection process has evaluated applicants' skills and experience and recommended a shortlist of suitable applicants for the Minister's final selection and appointment. A decision on new appointees is pending.

Issue

Freshwater Trust account reports

Outcomes

Freshwater trust quarterly project account reports were distributed to the Committee at the meeting. The project statements outline project costs attributed to capital works, operating expenses, salaries and overheads for freshwater programs.

Issue

Project milestone reports

Outcomes

Project milestone reports were presented to the Committee at the meeting. These reports detail the progress of trust fund projects including the objectives and activities since the last meeting and any variations to projects. The final report for the program 'Mapping of Bass Habitat in the Macleay, Hawkesbury and Shoalhaven Rivers" was distributed to members.

Issue

Recreational Fishing Licence sales

Outcomes

A report of monthly licence sales since the implementation of the licence is provided with the agenda paper for the information of the Committee.

Issue

Lake Albert water supply

Outcomes

Water levels at Lake Albert are not being replenished despite rainfall in the area as Wagga Wagga Council have diverted some drainage gullies away from the lake as a flood prevention measure. There is concern that fish populations in the Lake could be put at risk if water levels continue to recede. NSW DPI and other government agencies and community groups met with Council on the 11th and 15th to discuss this issue. Council has advised that a number of contingencies are in place to address the water supply issue.

Issue

Eastern cod recovery plan

Outcomes

Copies of the Eastern cod recovery plan were distributed to members.

Issue

Stocking of salmonids in the Styx River

Outcomes

In assessing the 2004/2005 trout stocking proposals, DPI staff identified that a number of existing stocking sites in the Styx River catchment are within 5km of threatened frog species. The provisions of the draft fish stocking fisheries management strategy allow for salmonid research stocking under specific circumstances. In the case of the Styx River, it has been determined that fish releases will continue in the Styx and Serpentine Rivers and Back Creek and will cease in Little Styx River. A general research survey of frog species will be undertaken in the Styx catchment. This will facilitate future comparative studies into the effect of stocking on listed species and the effectiveness of the 5km buffer zone. A proposal for the first stage of work will be presented to RFFTEC for consideration at the budget meeting in April.

Issue

Illegal fishing reporting card

Outcomes

Rodney Tonkin queried the status of the illegal fishing report cards. NSW DPI advised that the laminated cards would not proceed until such time as the fishers watch hotline service is upgraded to a 24 hour call service. NSW DPI has submitted a funding request for this to take place.

Issue

Tallowa Dam high fishway installation

Outcomes

Mr Steve Tooley queried the status of the Tallowa dam high fishway project. The potential project manager for the fish lift has informed that that the fishway is no longer a priority for installation.

Action item: Sharon Molloy to investigate this issue and to report back to Steve Tooley on the current status of the high fishway project.

Issue

Impoundments access guide

Outcomes

An impoundments access guide is being compiled for freshwater anglers. It is an A-Z list of stocked reservoirs open to the public for fishing and contains information on species caught, stocking history, facilities and services at dams etc. A draft has been completed and is currently being reviewed. It is anticipated that the guide will be published jointly with the Australian Fishing Network in early 2005 to ensure the information remains current.

Issue

Potential closure of stock reserves around Orange

Outcomes

Mr Rodney Tonkin expressed concern over a potential closure by the Department of Lands of reserves providing waterway access within the Canobolas Regional Parklands. This may preclude public access from a number of reserves currently used by recreational anglers, such as Golden Gully Reserve, the Belubula River Reserve, Bakers Sharft Reserve, Central Mullion Reserve, Fourth Crossing Reserve, Lewis Ponds & Emu Swamp Creek Reserves. The period for public review of the proposed closure expires on 17 January 2005. NSW DPI noted that it is difficult to deal with the issue of angler access through reserves on an ad hoc basis. A clear identification of all reserves of value to recreational anglers is needed to ensure a coordinated approach in seeking assurances for their long-term status through the relevant authorities. RFFTEC will consider a funding proposal on this issue at the budget meeting in April. Notwithstanding, NSW DPI will discuss the importance of maintaining angler access through Canobolas Regional Parklands through the Department of Lands, prior to the closing date for public comment.

Action item: NSW DPI to contact Department of Lands to seek assurances for continued angler access through the Canobolas Regional Parklands and associated reserves.

Issue

Trust fund position in Albury

Outcomes

Kevin McKinnon queried the status of the trust funded compliance officer position at Albury. NSW DPI advised that the District Fisheries Officer position at Albury is a core-funded and the Fisheries Officer position is funded by the freshwater trust. The Fisheries Officer position is currently vacant and an expression of interest to fill this position will be conducted early in 2005.

Next meeting

7 April 2005 at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre (with an overlapping session with the Saltwater Expenditure Committee to discuss jointly funded programs).

The meeting concluded at 2.00pm.

Freshwater Mussels Research Project, site inspection, 2.20pm – 3.00pm

A tour of the International Regatta Centre, Penrith followed the RFFTEC meeting. Associate Professor Shelley Burgin (University of Western Sydney) and Mr Geoff Hunter (Penrith Council) discussed the progress of the freshwater mussels research project and an inspection of survey sites was conducted. The University of Western Sydney in conjunction with Penrith City Council and the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation will undertake the project. Funds of \$5,000 will be provided from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust in the first year of the program. The study will involve reintroducing 1,500 freshwater mussels from Lake Burragorang into the Penrith Lakes Complex with the aim of improving ecosystem health and water quality for recreational fish species. The water quality in Penrith Lakes impacts particularly on Australian bass, which is stocked by NSW DPI and by the Penrith Lakes Development Corporation through the dollar for dollar stocking program.

RFFTEC Meeting – 7 December 2004

ACTION ITEMS

Item	Agenda Item Number	Agenda Item Title	Action	Team responsible	Status
1	1	Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Financial Report	Committee members to provide comments on the Recreational Fishing Trusts newsletter.	RFFTEC	Completed
2	Other business	Tallowa Dam High Fishway Installation	Sharon Molloy to investigate this issue and to report back to Steve Tooley on the current status of the high fishway project.	Office of Conservation	Completed
3	Other business	Potential closure of stock reserve at Lake Canobolas	NSW DPI to contact Orange Shire Council to seek assurances for continued access through the stock reserve at Lake Canobolas for recreational fishing.	RecMgt	Completed. Letter forwarded to Council on this issue.