

Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing

Minutes

33rd MEETING (01/2005)
9:00am, Tuesday 12 April 2005

**NSW Department of Primary Industries
Cronulla Fisheries Centre Conference Room
202 Nicholson Parade, Cronulla**

Attendance

Chair

Bruce Schumacher

Members

Elaine Garvey	Estuary, Offshore Fishing
Lionel Jones	Estuarine Habitat
Scott Mitchell	Freshwater, Tackle Sales
Terry Maloney	Freshwater Fishing
Mel Brown	Underwater Fishing
Ann Lee	Freshwater Fishing
Neil Ryan	Recreational Fishing Media
Nick James	Departmental nominee

Observers

John Diplock, Principal Manager Recreational Fisheries
Bryan van der Walt, Senior Manager Recreational Fisheries
Mandi McKaig, Management Officer Recreational Fisheries

Business

Welcome by Chair

Apologies

John Dunphy, Jim Harnwell, Lisa Terry, Anthony Moore

Absent

Graham Moore

Business arising from the minutes

The Council clarified that they did not support the removal of the 3-day licence as indicated in the minutes of Agenda Item 1. The implementation of the remaining three options to improve the recreational licence system was supported. The minutes of the 32nd Meeting have been amended to reflect this position.

Minutes of previous meeting

Recommendation

The minutes are a true and accurate record of discussions at the 32nd meeting, held 9 December 2004, with the amendment outlined in business arising (below).

Moved: Elaine Garvey

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

Carried

Agenda Items

1. Recreational Fishing Trusts report (Bryan van der Walt) – for information.
2. Recommendations from the Freshwater and Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committees (Bryan van der Walt) – for recommendation.
3. Commercial fishing issues (Commercial Management) – for recommendation.
4. Freshwater fishing update (Cameron Westaway) – for information.
5. Proposed fishing closure at Audley Weir (Cameron Westaway) – for recommendation.
6. Salmon Working Group update (Darryl Sullings) – for information.
7. Shift of commercial fishing effort resulting from the creation of Recreational Fishing Havens.
8. Request for spearfishing closure at Balmoral and Edwards Beaches.
9. Standardisation of estuarine recreational trap and net identification buoys.
10. Closure renewals (for recommendation)

Other Business

Out of session items

Correspondence received

Around the table

Next meeting – Thursday 23 June 2005

Issue

Recreational Fishing Trusts status report.

BackgroundCurrent Trust Fund Position

Total income received from licence sales in 2003/04 was nearly \$9 million, which is over \$500,000 more compared to 2002/03 (\$8,394 million). The funding level to the Freshwater Trust remains at \$2.5 million in 2004/05.

At previous saltwater expenditure committee meetings in 2004, the saltwater committee has allocated a total of a \$6.91 million from the Saltwater Trust for a range of compliance, research, management and education programs to improve recreational fishing in 2004/05. Likewise, the freshwater committee has allocated a total of a \$2.9 million from the Freshwater Trust. An estimate of predicted income in the current financial year will be provided at the meeting and the predicted balances of each trust fund as at 30 June 2005.

Outcomes*Status of Recreational Fishing Trusts*

Council was advised that the total income from licence sales has increased each year since the implementation of the licence from \$8.1 million in 2001/02 to \$8.4 million in 2002/03 and \$9 million in 2003/04. Income from licence sales from 1 July 2004 to 31 March 2005 was nearly \$7.6 million, which is approximately \$1.1 million more than the income for the same period in 2003/04. If licence sales for April, May and June 2005 are similar to the previous year, then the total income in 2004/05 may reach between \$9.5 and \$10 million. The increase in income is attributable to an increase in sales of the 3 year licence. A proportion of these sales may have been made up of anglers renewing their 3 year licence that were purchased after the introduction of the general licence. Reminder notices may have also contributed to 3 year licence sales. It was noted that the licence sales income is expected to revert to a predicted \$8.5 million in the 2005/06 financial year.

The Saltwater Committee and ACoRF had allocated almost \$7 million to programs during the 2004/05 financial year, leaving a predicted balance of \$1.6 million as at 30 June 2005. Council was advised that the Saltwater Committee had recognised the importance of maintaining contingency funding in the Saltwater Trust due to the possible decrease in licence sales income in 2005/06.

At the end of the 2003/04 financial year, the balance of the Freshwater Trust was \$567,000. Allocations transferred from the Trust in the current financial year and committed funding totalled \$2,654 million. Income to the Freshwater Trust in 2004/05 is \$2.5 million, which will leave a predicted balance of \$414,000 as of 30 June 2005. Income to the Freshwater Trust next year will be \$2.5 million, which leaves a total available balance of approximately \$2.9 million for allocation in 2005/06.

A draft research/management priorities list was circulated to Council. During the year ACoRF have identified research priorities to address various management issues. A list of these priorities has been compiled to guide applicants and to assist the expenditure committees during the consideration of applications. The list will be continually updated as new issues arise and other knowledge gaps become apparent.

For information.

Issue

Recommendations from the freshwater and saltwater trust expenditure committees.

Background

The Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee met on Wednesday 6 April and the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee on Thursday 7 April 2005. Applications for ongoing NSW DPI programs and new internal and external applications for funding from the trusts will be considered by the relevant expenditure committee at that time. Trust expenditure recommendations resulting from these meetings will be presented for discussion and consideration by the Council.

Outcomes

This year, the Saltwater and Freshwater Expenditure Committee meetings were held at the same time with a combined session to review joint programs funded by both Trust Funds. The Chairman advised that the joint session worked extremely well and allowed for interaction between the 2 Committees. Back to back expenditure committee budget meetings will continue to be held in the future.

Summaries of recommendations from the Freshwater and Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committees were discussed by the Council (see Tables below 1-5). Council also noted the recommendations for the small grants programs in 2005/06 (see Table 6).

Recommendations

That the budgets for programs in Tables 1-6, as recommended by the Saltwater and Freshwater Expenditure Committees, be supported by the Freshwater and Saltwater Trusts for 2005/06 and beyond.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

Carried

That the research priorities for expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater and Freshwater Trusts are supported (subject to ongoing development).

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Terry Maloney

Carried

Table 1: Budgets for NSW DPI programs jointly funded by Recreational Fishing (Saltwater and Freshwater) Trusts in 2005/06 as recommended by RFSTEC and RFFTEC

Program	Saltwater Trust 2005/06	Freshwater Trust 2005/06	Total
Recreational Fishing Licence Administration – involves the maintenance of an extensive licence sales network of 1100 agents and web and IVR sales systems.	\$650,000	\$250,000	\$900,000
Contingency funding for a new electronic licence administration system – involves the conversion of the current manual paper licence system to an electronic system to provide for electronic data, funds transfer and plastic licences.	\$210,000	\$90,000	\$300,000
Fishing Promotion – this radio and newspaper media campaign raises awareness of fishing rules and aims to encourage responsible and sustainable fishing practices.	\$50,000	\$21,000	\$71,000
Fishing Workshops – involves a series of workshops (clinics) held in the Sydney metropolitan area, Government hatcheries and regional centres. The program includes clinics for special needs groups and non-English speaking communities.	\$87,694	\$63,048	\$150,742
Fishing Guides – involves printing and distribution of 200,000 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Guides and 100,000 Freshwater Fishing Guides.	\$100,000	\$40,000	\$140,000
Fishcare Volunteers - provides face-to-face sustainable fishing education to the community and support to community programs, such as fishing workshops and school visits. Includes funding for a state co-ordinator's position and 5 education officer positions including a new part-time position to be based at Newcastle.	\$667,570	\$208,682	\$876,252
Tournament monitoring – research monitoring of angler catch at selected fishing competitions to assess fish populations and success of stockings.	\$167,000	\$142,000	\$309,000
Fish Habitat Restoration – grants program for councils, landowners and other community groups for allocations on a region-by-region basis for the rehabilitation of fish habitat.	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$400,000
Recreational Angling Database - the database collects licence holder information which is maintained for research and sending reminder letters.	\$56,000	\$24,000	\$80,000
Licence Reminder Notice - mailing out of licence reminder notices (with advisory material) to one and three year licence holders to ensure anglers renew their licences as they expire.	\$76,650	\$32,850	\$109,500
Sub Total	\$2,264,914	\$1,071,580	\$3,326,494

Table 2: Revised existing services budget for 2005/06 as recommended by RFSTEC

Program	Allocation
Nine existing coastal DPI Fisheries Officers - 9 Officers are based at Clarence, Hastings, Port Stephens, Hunter, Sydney North and South, Illawarra, Batemans Bay and the Far South Coast Offices to enhance the level of compliance and advisory services in recreational fisheries.	\$1,053,475
ACoRF Consultation - The Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing provides advice to the Minister on recreational fishing issues.	\$16,500
Gamefish Tagging - involves the ongoing management and coordination of the distribution of gamefish tags to anglers.	\$120,000
Recreational Publications - this program will involve the production and distribution of advisory material, such as rules summaries, sticky measuring rulers, plastic measures and information brochures, that informs the public about recreational fishing rules, responsible fishing and other essential fishing information. This function was previously funded by the Department.	\$310,025
Total	\$1,500,000

Table 3: Budgets for NSW DPI programs funded by Recreational Fishing (Saltwater) Trust as recommended by RFSTEC

Program	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) – involves deployment of 15 FADs along the NSW coast to enhance offshore sport and game fishing opportunities.	\$135,000	\$136,000	\$175,000	
RFSTEC meeting expenses - expenses associated with RFSTEC meetings.	\$30,000			
Small Grants - enables fishing clubs, councils and other community members to submit saltwater proposals for small, local or regional projects aimed at enhancing recreational fishing.	\$50,000			
Coastal Recreational Mobile Squad - comprised of three Fisheries Officers with rapid response capacity. Responsible for the protection of the State's coastal recreational fisheries.	\$425,889			
Artificial Reefs Management – involves deployment of artificial reefs in 3 Recreational Fishing Havens, including Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay and St George's Basin. Involves obtaining necessary approvals, undertaking environmental assessments, 'Reef Ball' construction, stakeholder consultation, site selection and deployment.	\$155,000	\$115,000		
Artificial Reefs Research – will investigate the effects of deploying artificial reefs ('Reef Balls') on local fish populations by examining species composition, size range and catch rate.	\$153,792	\$146,239	\$69,282	
Estimating and maximizing the post-release survival of key angler-caught fish in NSW - research to estimate the short-term post-release survival rates and key factors contributing towards the mortality of recreational line caught fish using angling events and aquarium experiments.	\$67,049 (1/2 year)	\$199,586	\$160,704	\$126,903 (1/2 year)
Sub Total	\$1,016,730	\$596,825	\$404,986	\$126,903

Table 4: Budgets for NSW DPI programs funded by Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust as recommended by RFFTEC

Program	2005/06
Enhanced Departmental Fish Production – enhanced production of recreational fish species including trout, salmon, Australian bass, Murray cod, golden perch and silver perch at Government hatcheries for stocking in inland waters.	\$335,000
Dollar for Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program – angling clubs, councils and community groups can apply for dollar-for-dollar funding to increase the numbers of Murray cod, golden perch and Australian bass stocked in NSW, with fish purchased from private enterprise.	\$225,000
Freshwater Recreational Management – employment of an inland recreational fisheries manager responsible for the co-ordination of the community and government fish stocking programs, small grants program, community liaison and correspondence with fishing groups.	\$161,000
Inland Fisheries Officers - six additional inland fisheries officer's positions at Inverell, Bathurst, Wellington, Cooma/Jindabyne, Albury and Buronga, to enhance the overall effectiveness of inland compliance in NSW.	\$625,000
Small Grants Program - enables fishing clubs, councils and other community members to submit freshwater proposals for small, local or regional projects aimed at enhancing recreational fishing.	\$30,000
Stocking Success Program – this research program provides estimates of mortality and survival rates of stocked fish, the contribution of stockings and percentage returns to the angler.	\$160,000
Inland Conservation Managers – employment of two inland conservation managers, responsible for management of the habitat grants program, recovery planning for threatened species, impact assessment, coordinating the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Native Fish Strategy and community liaison.	\$298,000
RFFTEC Meeting Expenses - expenses associated with RFFTEC meetings.	\$20,000
Impoundments Access Program – development of a guidebook on rivers, including stocked waterways to assist anglers and encourage them to visit quality fisheries established in these waterways as a result of stocking recreational fish species.	\$30,000
Identification of Travelling Stock and other reserves of importance to recreational anglers – will assist in the preservation of recreational angler access to rivers and streams and the publication of access points for recreational anglers.	\$30,000
Subtotal	\$1,914,000

Table 5: External programs to be funded by Recreational Fishing (Saltwater) Trust as recommended by RFSTEC

Programs	Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Enhancing recreational fisheries through the responsible and optimal stocking of mulloway into NSW estuaries – involves stocking mulloway in Botany Bay and northern estuaries including the Tweed and Richmond Rivers, with the aim to evaluate the ecological impacts of mulloway stocking.	University of NSW	\$62,009 (1/2 year)	\$103,518	\$103,518	\$52,509 (1/2 year)
Direct Purchase of mulloway fingerlings from hatchery	University of NSW	\$36,750			
Mercury in striped marlin - research to identify the current mean level of mercury in striped marlin and to assess the potential risk(s), if any, to consumers.	Australian Maritime College	\$14,250			
Monitoring and research at gamefishing tournaments – ongoing program to organize, coordinate and report on biological research and sampling at major game fishing tournaments in NSW.	Pepperell Research and Consulting Pty Ltd	\$24,500			
Rock Fishing Safety Awareness Campaign – education campaign aimed at promoting rock fishing safety. Involves media releases in local Korean and Vietnamese media, angling media, Metropolitan media and SBS Television; distribution of rock fishing advisory material with DVD/video; and seminars about the dangers of rock fishing.	Department of Sport and Recreation	\$88,000			
Historical insights into coastal NSW fish populations and their fisheries – involves investigation of historic accounts of fish populations and habitat along coastal NSW by detailed research of early literature and records.	Pepperell Research and Consulting Pty Ltd	\$18,000			
Subtotal		\$243,509	\$103,518	\$103,518	\$52,509

Table 6: External programs to be funded by Recreational Fishing (Freshwater) Trust as recommended by RFFTEC

Program	Organisation	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Distribution of threatened frog species within the Styx River catchment and its tributaries – will determine the distribution of Stuttering Frog and Glandular frog within the Styx River and its tributaries.	University of Newcastle	\$8,750		
Conservation genetics and management implications for perch and bass - will assess the population genetic structure of perch and bass within NSW and recommend zones for broodstock collection and stocking.	Macquarie University	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Subtotal		\$28,750	\$20,000	\$20,000

Table 7: Summary of small grants programs to be funded from the Trusts in 2005/06

Program	Proponent	2005/06
Saltwater Trust		
Mylestom Boat Ramp upgrade	Bellingen Shire Council	\$4,500
Development of a strategic long-term scientific program to assess recreational fisheries in NSW	NSW DPI	\$5,000
Boat Ramp Light at Moira Parade Hawkes Nest	Great Lakes Council	\$3,000
Fishing Platform, Darawank Memorial Park Reserve	Great Lakes Council	\$3,000
Provision of an Annual Report for the Gamefish Tagging Program	Pepperell Research and Consulting Pty Ltd	\$5,000
Wooli Fish Cleaning Table Improvements	Clarence Valley Council	\$1,900
Freshwater Trust		
Feasibility study into providing water for Lake Albert	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$5,000
Investigation into the genetic structure of Murray cod pre- and post-stocking within the Murray Darling basin	Dr Brett Ingram	\$5,000
Improve fish passage in the Fish River above Oberon Dam	Central Acclimatisation Society – Oberon Branch	\$1,325

Issue

Commercial Fishing issues.

Background

At the last meeting, the Council requested further information and discussion on the following issues:

1. Method of prawn counts in the Hawkesbury River EPT fishery

An incidental catch ratio system and maximum 'point of sale' prawn counts and 'cod end' counts, designed to minimise trawling at times and areas where prawns are below optimum size, have been introduced in the EPT fishery. During discussions at the last meeting regarding prawn count trials as an indicator to whether prawn size per kilo is sufficient, Council queried how this would be monitored in the Hawkesbury River, as there is no prawn trawling closure in place in this river. It was asked if the Hunter River would be used as a guide?

The Council requested Commercial Management to provide information on the method of prawn counts in the Hawkesbury River at this meeting.

2. Proposed Myall River Closure

The Estuary General MAC has proposed the introduction of a seasonal, nighttime (sunset to sunrise) closure from 1st October – 1st March each year in the Myall River Broadwater, to reduce conflict between recreational and commercial fishers. This closure would restrict anglers from using 6 metre (20 foot) hand hauled prawn nets and push or scissor nets at night, between Sandy Point and Stony Point in the Broadwater of the Myall River, over the 5 month period.

The Council was asked to support this proposal at the last meeting, however, no consultation had been undertaken with local recreational fishing clubs regarding this issue. Information was requested from NSW DPI to enable the Council to determine the full extent of the issue at the next meeting, prior to further consideration.

3. Mullet hauling in the Richmond River Recreational Fishing Haven

The Council has requested information on the mullet hauling shot in the Richmond River Recreational Fishing Haven, including details of the catch and confirmation that the Co-op has contributed funds for bass stocking in the area, as previously agreed.

4. Use of hoop nets from sunset to sunrise by recreational and commercial fishers.

The Council was advised at the last meeting that a closure on the use of hoop nets from sunset to sunrise has been introduced as part of changes to crab and fish trapping in the estuary general fishery. This closure had not been considered by Council and was not considered or supported by the recreational fishing sector, however it affects both commercial and recreational fishers. Implementation of changes to mud crab and fish trapping in the estuary general fishery that affect recreational fishing requires consideration and a recommendation from ACoRF.

The following changes to the use of fish and crab traps in the estuary general fishery became effective from 1 December 2004:

- Fishers with a mud crab endorsement and/or fish trapping endorsement may use hoop nets (previously only fish trappers could use them).
- These fishers are still restricted to using a total of 10 traps or hoop nets.

- Crab trap and hoop net buoys will now be marked with the fisher's licence number rather than the LFB number. This is to facilitate compliance of trap numbers.
- Hoop nets are now permitted for use during day light hours only.

Whilst legislative changes were implemented and endorsed by the commercial fishery, the amendment to clause 48 (1)(b) of the regulation also affects recreational fishers. The Chair requested a full briefing from commercial management at this meeting. The Council also requested a compliance moratorium on the nighttime use of hoop/lift nets by recreational fishers until the issue is considered further. As a result, an advisory period of 6 months (until 31 May 2005) on enforcing the provisions of clause 48 (1)(b) was introduced for recreational fishers.

Another unintentional consequence of this change is the effect it has on inland fishers, particularly recreational cray fishers, who would also be restricted from using hoop nets at night. Hoop nets have traditionally and legally been used at night on the inland for many years to take Murray crayfish in, for example, the Hume, Riverina and Yass Districts.

Dianna Watkins, Principal Manager, Commercial Fisheries, will discuss these issues in greater detail and provide a general commercial fishing update at the meeting.

Outcomes

1. Method of prawn counts in the Hawkesbury River EPT fishery

Commercial management confirmed that the Hawkesbury River fishery can be closed during winter months if results of the prawn count indicate that a closure is required. It was also mentioned that the current prawn counts are a preliminary step in the management of estuary prawn stocks and that further/alternate proposals are being considered by the EPT MAC.

Council members believe that prawns recently caught in the area are small and that the counts are not being adhered to. The Department is aware of these concerns and are closely monitoring the situation.

2. Proposed Myall River Closure

The local NSW DPI Fisheries Officers have advised that they are aware of the situation regarding access to prawns in the broadwater, however, they have never received any complaints about this particular issue. The Officers provided information indicating that a closure is not warranted at this stage.

Consultation was also undertaken with local recreational fishing clubs (Bulahdelah Fishing Club and Taree RSL Golf & Fishing Club), who did not support the proposed closure.

Based on feedback from NSW DPI Fisheries Officers and local fishing clubs, the council did not support the proposed closure.

3. Mullet hauling in the Richmond River Recreational Fishing Haven – post-meeting (out of session) feedback regarding the resumption of sea mullet hauling in the Richmond River recreational fishing haven.

The Minister previously approved of commercial fishers with appropriate endorsements being issued permits to allow them to resume hauling for sea mullet in the recreational fishing haven of the Richmond River during the 2004 travelling season.

In compensation to allow resumption of commercial fishing, fishers agreed to a section 8 closure to all commercial net fishing from Tatham Bridge to the Norco Weir at Casino (27km

of the river). Commercial fishers also agreed to pay 10c per kilogram of fish landed as a levy to a maximum of \$5,000 annually for environmental projects in the Richmond River.

In all six permits were issued for three crews from Ballina and three from Tweed Heads. Permits were restricted to the use of hauling nets for the taking of sea mullet only between the months of April and July inclusive.

Only three crews from Ballina used their permits to take mullet during last year's travelling season. The Ballina Fishermen's Co-operative has advised that approximately 60 tonnes of mullet were captured, which returned approximately \$108,000 to fishers. While this catch is well down on previous years, commercial fishing records indicate that very large catches were taken further down the coast then dwindled north of Hat Head. Due to the high value of the Australian dollar processors/exporters only paid \$2.30 per kg for females. The co-operative on sold whole male fish to the public for \$10 for 5kg.

The following outcomes have been achieved as part of the commitment by commercial fishers:

- The Ballina Fishermen's Co-operative advanced \$2,500 and applied to the Freshwater Trust \$ for \$ fish stocking program and stocked the river above the Norco Weir with 10,650 bass fingerlings.
- Prior to the season commercial fishers conducted a free mullet cook up for the public and raised \$1100 by donations for the Ballina Hospital Cancer Unit.
- Commercial fishers donated 150kg of mullet to the Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Community.
- All local media coverage was positive including one 6.00pm television news story. No complaints from the public either by telephone or in writing were received.
- In addition to the \$2,500 for stocking, commercial fishers will give \$5,000 to Wetland Care Australia (Fish Unlimited Program) to restore fish habitat, in conjunction with work being undertaken by the Jali Aboriginal Land Council of Cabbage Tree Island in the Richmond River.

4. Use of hoop nets from sunset to sunrise by recreational and commercial fishers.

It was confirmed that this originated as a commercial estuary (i.e. saltwater only) issue and members believe that any changes should not impact on legal freshwater recreational fishing activities, such as using hoop/lift nets to target crayfish at night (May-August each year).

The Council discussed the following options regarding the future use/setting of hoop/lift nets by recreational fishers at night:

1. That no restrictions apply in either saltwater or freshwater;
2. No unattended nets in saltwater (tidal waters);
3. No unattended nets in either saltwater or freshwater (as per amended/current regulation).

Members supported option 2 above i.e. that hoop/lift nets must be attended at night when used by recreational fishers in tidal waters (i.e. saltwater) only. This would result in inland/freshwater recreational fishers being unaffected by the change.

Recommendations

Proposed Myall River Closure

The Council does not support the proposed introduction of a seasonal, nighttime (sunset to sunrise) closure from 1st October – 1st March each year in the Myall River Broadwater.

Moved: Mel Brown

Seconded: Lionel Jones

Carried

Use of hoop nets from sunset to sunrise by recreational and commercial fishers.

The Council recommends that cl.48 of the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* be amended to reflect that hoop/lift nets used from sunset to sunrise in tidal waters must be attended by recreational fishers.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Elaine Garvey

Carried

Issue

Freshwater fishing update.

Background

The 2004-05 stocking program is underway and will approach the record 2003-04 season of 8.3 million stocked fish. A record 543,000 Murray cod have already been produced at our Narrandera hatchery and stocked in impoundments throughout the state. Drought has had an impact on the salmonid stocking program with a number of streams in the Monaro and Central districts not suitable for stocking. Pejar dam was not stocked due to low water levels and heavy algal blooms. One possible positive impact of the drought has been the fall in carp numbers in rivers below the major impoundment systems. The discovery of Noda virus at the Port Stephens facility halted the government's bass stocking program and may impact on next season's dollar for dollar bass stocking program.

Cameron Westaway, Senior Manager, Inland will present a general update on freshwater fishing to the Council, including the stocking program, the impact of drought, Noda virus in bass, freshwater fisheries research priorities, access issues and conflict between recreational and commercial yabby fishers.

Inland closure issues

1. Proposal to prohibit the taking of Murray crayfish in Blowering Dam during the 2005 season.

Blowering Dam is an important part of the Murray crayfish fishery, however, water levels in the dam are extremely low at present. Crayfish are slow growing and large catch rates may impact on the fishery for up to ten years. The proposed closure is supported by the local Fisheries Officers and has been supported by anglers through widespread consultation.

2. Proposal to remove Schedule 6 of the NSW General Inland Waters closure.

The proposal to remove Schedule 6 from the General Inland Waters closure is proposed to bring the Darling River in line with other areas where yabby traps are allowed and will assist in dealing with a resource conflict between commercial and recreational fishers on Lake Wetherell near Menindee.

The proposed amendment to Schedule 6 is supported by the Local District Fisheries Officers, Mark Hauser (Far West) and Steve Ward (Macquarie). Consultation with local anglers indicates support for the amendment. The Senior Fisheries Manager (Inland) will travel to Broken Hill in early May to hold further discussions with anglers.

Outcomes

The fingerlings for Pejar Dam were relocated to another site on this occasion due to the unfavourable conditions. The Council believe there should be sufficient checks in place to prevent this happening in the future. The Department advised that conditions are always checked prior to stocking, however, the water quality at Pejar Dam deteriorated rapidly prior to the stocking event. It was confirmed that reserve stocks will be distributed to these areas when the drought conditions lift.

A project proposal has been put to the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) for identification of travelling stock reserves (TSRs) and other reserves of importance for angler access. It was confirmed that conditional access was recently negotiated for anglers at Lake Crakenback, which is a public lake wholly contained within private land.

A draft freshwater research plan has been developed with the assistance of NSW DPI research staff and presented to RFFTEC and ACORF for consideration.

There has been some concern from anglers regarding commercial yabby fishing in Lake Wetherell on the Darling - the Senior Fisheries Manager will travel to Broken Hill to discuss this issue and means of improving recreational angling opportunities in the far west, including access to water storage dams.

With regards to the impoundments access guide that is currently being prepared, members suggested it be made clear that some dams and lakes will be affected because of drought/low flows from time to time.

Inland closure issues

The Council indicated support for the re-introduction of the closure of fishing for Murray crayfish on Lake Blowering during the fishing season (May to August inclusive).

The Council supported the removal of Schedule 6 from the NSW General Inland Waters closure, which will mean that the number of yabby traps allowed in the Darling River will rise from 1 to 5. This will bring the Darling River in line with other areas where yabby traps are allowed and will assist in dealing with a resource conflict between commercial and recreational fishers on Lake Wetherell near Menindee.

The Council also recommended that the General Inland Waters closure be reviewed and amended out of session (i.e. prior to renewal) to update the information to ensure it reflects current arrangements.

Action item: Freshwater Recreational Management to progress this issue with the Council out of session (closure renewal due by 8 June 2005).

Recommendations

ACoRF supports the re-introduction of the fishing closure for Murray Crayfish on Lake Blowering during the fishing season (May to August).

Moved: Scott Mitchell Seconded: Terry Maloney **Carried**

ACoRF supports the removal of Schedule 6 of the General Inland Waters closure.

Moved: Lionel Jones Seconded: Terry Maloney **Carried**

Issue

Proposed fishing closure at Audley Weir to reduce angling predation around a new fishway.

Background

The Department's Aquatic Habitat Protection Unit has requested that a fishing closure be considered for Audley Weir, Hacking River, Royal National Park around a new fishway constructed in November 2004. The fishing closure is proposed for a distance of 100m either side of the Weir. This closure would reduce angling predation of fish accumulating at the entrance of the new fishway and at the fishway exit situated approximately 30m upstream from the Weir crest.

Cameron Westaway, Senior Manager, Inland, will discuss this proposal in further detail at the meeting.

Outcomes

It was noted that there is no urgency to introduce this closure. As a result, the Council requested further information be provided by the Aquatic Habitat Protection Unit, for consideration at the next meeting.

Recommendation

The Council requested the deferment of this proposal until more detailed information, including species present/numbers affected, is available.

Issue

Salmon Working Group update.

Background

A closure was implemented on 31 August 2001 to prohibit the taking of Australian salmon (*Arripis trutta*) by netting methods in NSW waters north of Barrenjoey Headland and tailor (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) by netting methods in all NSW waters, for a five-year period (copy of closure attached).

The current closure on the commercial harvest of Australian salmon in northern NSW and tailor in all NSW waters was implemented to address issues of sharing the resource between recreational and commercial fishers.

The commercial fishing industry has expressed concerns regarding the 100kg bycatch limit and the impact that Australian salmon may be having on other species. It has also been noted that the loss of salmon for use as bait for the trap fishery has resulted in the use of higher value species on the north coast. Some industry members also believe there is potential to develop an export market that would benefit local regional economies.

A working group has been formed to consider issues associated with the taking of salmon and tailor by commercial fishers and determine if common ground on this issue can be found. The working group comprises two members of the ocean hauling management advisory committee, representatives from NSW DPI - Fisheries Compliance, Management and Research as well as two members of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing.

The working group met on 10 February 2005 to develop options to address industry concerns with the current closure on taking of Australian salmon by commercial net methods in waters north of Barrenjoey Headland and the associated 100-kg bycatch limit. After much discussion the following options were developed for further consideration by the respective stakeholder groups:

1. Total closure of fishery - including a buy-out of commercial fishers, potentially coupled with a zero recreational bag limit for salmon i.e. the species would be available for recreational catch and release only.
2. Setting of a precautionary total allowable catch (TAC) for salmon taken by commercial fishers based on the average catch over the last 10 years - reduced by 100 tonnes as a precautionary measure (in conjunction with a reduction in commercial tailor by-catch limits).
3. Set a global TAC with separate allocations to the commercial and recreational sectors for both the northern region and southern region.
4. Increase current bycatch trip limit for the commercial fishery, but impose an overall trigger limit for the area north of Barrenjoey Headland.
5. Move from current trip limit of 100kg per day for the commercial fishery, to a cumulative annual limit, including a possible reduction in daily bycatch allowance for tailor.

The Department's compliance representative has informed working group members that options considered would need to be workable from a compliance perspective.

Darryl Sullings, Commercial Fisheries Manager, will provide an overview of these discussions at the meeting.

Outcomes

Council members believe that salmon is worth a lot more to recreational fishers than to any commercial fisher as 'trap bait'. As a result of this position, the council was unanimous that they do not want commercial fishing management arrangements changed to enable salmon to become an export industry. The Council explained that a previous survey showed value comparisons of 5c/kg for commercial fishers as opposed to \$5.50/kg to locals.

The council acknowledged that salmon numbers have increased since the closure was introduced, however, it was questioned whether the stock had recovered sufficiently to enable widespread commercial harvest.

The council was advised that the above options had also been discussed by the Ocean Haul MAC, which raised the following issues:

- because access to salmon for bait is restricted, north coast commercial fishers now take other species to use as bait in their traps.
- salmon are eating juvenile fish therefore presenting environmental impacts on other species.

A research funding project on salmon diet and other life history characteristics was proposed to the Expenditure Committee in April 2005. As this species is exploited by both sectors, the Committee provided in-principle support for the program on the proviso that matching funding be obtained from FRDC.

It was confirmed that the Salmon Working Group will be considering these issues further and that no clear resolution had been reached at this stage.

It was suggested that a permit system could possibly be introduced to enable small quantities of salmon to be caught by commercial fishers north of Barrenjoey (for use as own bait only), in conjunction with scientific research on the species.

The council indicated support for the continuation of the current arrangements for salmon north of Barrenjoey.

Action item: Write to the Minister to advise that the council does not support a change to existing management arrangements for salmon.

Summary of background information considered by the salmon working group

Based on catch records since introduction of the closure (i.e. 2002/03 and 2003/04), approximately 10 tonnes per annum of Australian salmon have been taken north of Barrenjoey Headland, by an average of 35 ocean hauling fishers. It is assumed from these figures that approximately 10 crews would have taken Australian salmon, as crews consist of at least 2 fishers but more usually 4 or more. This equates to approximately 1 tonne taken by each crew per annum.

Attention was drawn to the results of the Departmental catch and effort working group, which indicated an increase in the catch of salmon. Recent commercial catch statistics indicate that approximately 1000 tonnes are caught annually, the majority from south of Barrenjoey. Departmental staff reported that the current trigger catch limit under the Ocean Hauling Fishery Management Strategy (OHFMS) was 1500 tonnes per year. Recreational fishing representatives noted that this has increased since the introduction of the strategy.

Recreational fishing representatives reiterated that salmon are a highly prized sport fish for anglers and charter boat operators and that the species are important from a social and

economic point of view. It was indicated that although the previous Minister implemented the current closure as a resource reallocation initiative, recreational fishers were unlikely to support amending the current closure unless there was a clear scientific reason to do so. Much of the discussion centred on the necessity of a comprehensive study on Australian Salmon to generate the data needed to be able to make informed decisions.

Biological data

Australian salmon are endemic to the Australasian region. Two sub species occur in southern Australian waters, the western Australian salmon and the eastern Australian salmon. The eastern Australian salmon matures at around 39 cm and at 4 years of age. Mature individuals move north from Tasmania and east from central Victoria to waters between Lakes Entrance and Bermagui to spawn between November and February, after which the fish disperse into Bass Strait and northern NSW.

Estimates of age and growth have generally been made by counting bands in scales and suggest that Salmon may live up to 9 years. However, a 6.9 kg salmon caught in New Zealand was estimated as being 17 years old based on the more reliable method of reading bands in the fishes otoliths.

Larger fish feed mainly on fishes or pelagic crustaceans, especially krill. Fish smaller than 10 cm feed predominantly on copepods. There is limited information available on the trophic interactions of Australian salmon. Some information indicates that in southern and western Australia, migrating schools of are prey to whaler sharks, great white sharks, grey nurse sharks, dolphins and occasionally seals.

Commercial Catch in NSW waters

Australian salmon catches in NSW waters since the 1940s have been highly variable but have remained within a range of between approximately 170t/pa and 1490t/pa. Over the last 5 years catches have averaged 932t/pa.

Use as bait in other Commercial Fisheries

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Australian salmon is important as bait for trap fishers and currently fishers purchase salmon from the south coast of NSW. The lobster fishery also utilises a variety of other products to bait traps including mullet and luderick taken in other NSW commercial fisheries.

Estimated Recreational Catch

The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey (July 2003) indicates that recreational fishers harvested approximately 136 million aquatic animals during the survey year. The national harvest included 1.7 million Australian salmon. There were an estimated 110,000 individuals caught in NSW and 88,000 salmon released by recreational fishers, so roughly 200,000 fish were caught annually. Using an average weight of 2kg this equates to around 400 tonnes.

Recommendation

The council supports the continuation of existing commercial fishing management arrangements for salmon north of Barrenjoey.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Neil Ryan

Carried

Issue

Shift of estuarine commercial fishing effort resulting from the creation of Recreational Fishing Havens.

Background

Jim Harnwell requested discussion regarding increased commercial fishing effort in non-RFH areas. Correspondence from recreational anglers indicates that an increase in these activities is causing conflict and significant damage to fish stocks in these waterways.

When the 30 havens were created, the Department and the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee strived to buy-out sufficient fishing businesses to ensure that effort would not increase in the estuaries that remained open to commercial fishing. Many NSW commercial fishing businesses are multi-endorsed, i.e. they are able to operate across a number of fisheries utilising different gear types. The nature of these businesses means that effort can be spread between areas and times to ensure fishing occurs in a sustainable manner.

Our records indicate that a very small number of operators on the south coast that participated in the licence buy-back have bought a commercial fishing licence (i.e. removed another commercial fisher) to re-enter the industry, which anyone can do. Once a commercial fishing licence has been bought out it is permanently removed from the industry. Please note that when commercial fishing licences are sold there can be an uptake of latent effort for that licence. However, management of commercial fisheries is based on total effort, including potential latent effort being re-activated, therefore, a change in operator should not impact on the total fishing effort for each activity.

The Government does not plan to create any new recreational fishing havens. This is consistent with the approach to seek stability in the commercial fishing industry after a period of significant change and adjustment. Whilst some small changes to boundaries of existing havens may be considered, this would only be on the basis of strong community consensus involving all sectors.

The Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee is currently investigating options in consultation with the commercial fishing industry for additional buyouts using funds remaining from the \$20 million loan used to create the 30 havens.

Outcomes

The Department advised that there is \$1.32 million remaining from the \$20 million loan used for the initial commercial fishing buy-outs. There are also some outstanding financial matters associated with the compulsory acquisition process of the remaining commercial fisher entitlements in Botany Bay, which are being finalised and may further reduce the current balance.

The Council believes that there are many more commercial fishers that would like to be bought out. Commercial fisheries management staff, who confirmed that the commercial fishing sector is receptive to further buy-outs, supported this view. Based on this support and the fact that there is money available, the council agreed that the buy-out process should continue.

In order to determine the level of interest, ACoRF has requested that the Department write to all commercial fishers seeking “without prejudice” expressions of interest from those wishing

to be considered for possible buy-out on a voluntary basis. It was agreed that this method of consultation would facilitate identification of the best way to secure the optimal outcome through an open, transparent and voluntary process.

This proposal does not include the creation of further recreational fishing havens, therefore, it is believed that the recreational fishing sector should not bear all costs. Consideration should be given to the breakdown of funding (such as a one-third contribution by recreational fishers, commercial fishers and Government) if it were to proceed.

Action item: The Chair write to the Minister to request approval for the Department to send an expression of interest to all commercial fishers.

It was suggested that, if further buy-outs did not proceed, the \$1.32 million surplus could also be used to help pay off the initial 'buy-out' loan.

Recommendation

That the Minister approve the release of an Expression of Interest to all commercial fishers, to gauge the level of support for further buy-outs of commercial fishing effort.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Lionel Jones

Carried

Issue

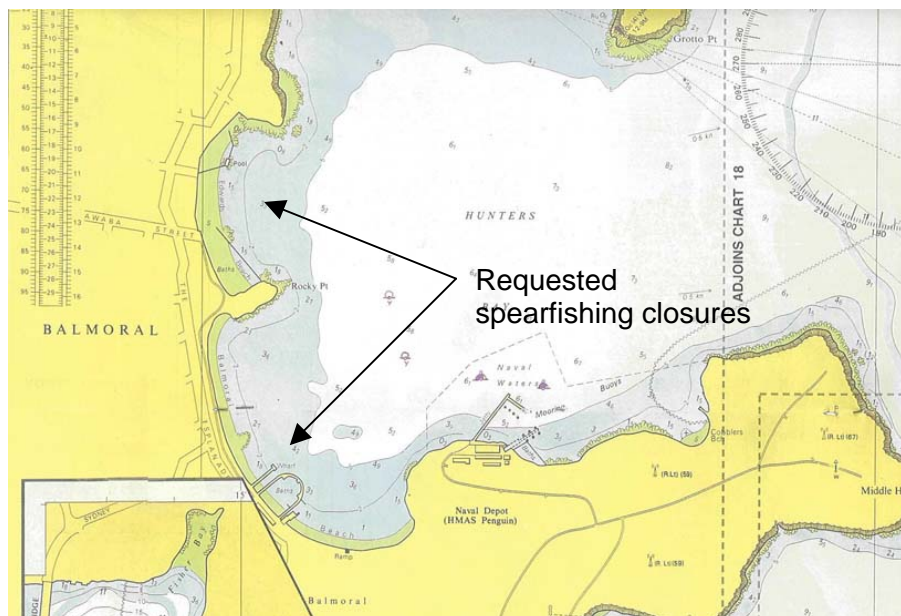
Request for spearfishing closure at Balmoral and Edwards Beaches

Background

A resident of Balmoral Beach wrote to the Department stating that increasing numbers of spearfishers are using Balmoral and Edwards Beaches in Middle Harbour, which are popular designated swimming areas for the public. Whilst spearfishing is prohibited on many ocean beaches and estuaries, there are no access restrictions on spearfishing at Balmoral and Edwards Beaches. The resident also expressed concern that as this sport increases in popularity, shark activity in the area may also increase as a result of blood in the water from speared fish.

In line with the pro-forma for proposed spear fishing closures (distributed at the last ACoRF meeting), consultation with groups including the Wollstonecraft District Fisheries Office and Mel Brown, in collaboration with the SFA, has been undertaken and will be provided at the meeting.

Figure 1 – Balmoral and Edwards Beaches



Outcomes

The Council discussed existing arrangements and acknowledged the local stakeholder consultation that occurred. As the majority of consultation, including that provided by the SFA and local Fisheries Officers, concluded that spearfishing within Balmoral and Edwards Beaches did not present an increased risk to other beach users, a closure to spearfishing activities in these areas is not warranted at this time.

Recommendation

The council does not support the proposed spearfishing closure at Balmoral and Edwards Beaches.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Elaine Garvey

Carried

Issue

Standardisation of estuarine recreational trap and net identification buoys.

Background

Lake Macquarie Yacht Club and The Boat Owners Association of NSW have written to NSW DPI requesting the standardisation of recreational fishing gear identification, particularly for crab traps and net identification buoys.

At the 30th ACoRF meeting, the Council was informed that in Lake Macquarie plastic bottles were often used to mark set hoop nets, making these nets very difficult to see from an approaching vessel. The Council noted that aesthetic and cost complaints could arise if a minimum buoy size for hoop nets was introduced. It was also suggested that this issue may be specific to Lake Macquarie.

Currently the following restrictions apply:

Crab traps:

- Not more than 1 trap to be used (or in possession) by any person at any one time.
- Maximum dimensions – 1.2 metres (length) x 1 metre (width) x 0.5 metre (depth) or has a diameter not exceeding 1.6 metres at the top or bottom.
- Minimum mesh size of 50mm.
- No more than 4 entrances (none of which are on the top of the trap).
- A buoy with a minimum diameter of 10cm clearly marked “CRABTRAP” with your name in letters not less than 50mm high must be attached. No rope should float on the surface of the water.
- Must not be made of entanglement material.
- Must not be set to impede the free passage of fish.

Hoop nets and witches hats:

- Not more than five nets are to be used (or in possession) by any one person at any one time.
- One or two hoops per net (no rigid frame between them).
- Diameter of hoops should be no greater than 1.25 metres.
- Mesh size cannot be less than 13mm.
- Drop (length of net) should be no more than 1 metre.
- A tag, at least 80mm x 25mm, clearly showing your name and address (or name and registration number of boat being used) must be attached.
- The net must be dropped and raised vertically through the water by hand.
- The net must not be used in ocean waters.
- Any rock lobsters or finfish, which are subject to a size limit, must be returned to the water unharmed if caught.
- The same rules apply for witches hats as for hoop nets.

Under the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2002* set fishing gear such as traps and nets are all required to be clearly identified by anglers in NSW. The Regulations also stipulate that the position of crab and lobster traps must be indicated by a buoy, moored above the trap, with an above water diameter of at least 10cm. To reduce the risk of entanglement a weight of at least 50 grams must be suspended not less than 1 metre under the buoy so that no rope is floating on the surface of the water.

It is proposed to standardise the buoys used as markers for hoop nets/witches hats and crab traps.

Outcomes

The council strongly supports the intention to standardise trap/net identification. However, members expressed concern that people's addresses had to be recorded on the identification buoy/tag, as this information could potentially be used for unlawful purposes (eg break-ins). The Department advised that fishers could also record their boat number as identification on the buoy/tag.

Following discussion of possible alternatives, the council suggested the use of an identification buoy/tag greater than 10cm, with full name and address, or full name and phone number, or full name and boat registration details displayed. The council recommended that this proposal be referred to the Estuary General MAC for consideration.

Recommendation

That the identification buoy on hoop nets be greater than 10cm and not made from clear/transparent material, with the fishers name and address, or name and phone number, or name and boat registration details to be displayed on the buoy.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

Carried

Issue

Closure renewals.

Background (NSW Fisheries)

A number of closures relating to recreational fishing are due for renewal in the near future.

Current closure notifications are attached (see additional information). Further information will be distributed and discussed at the meeting:

- a) NSW Inland Waters (Expires 8/6/05)
- b) *Caulerpa* (Expires 12/6/05)
- c) Southern Bluefin Tuna (Expires 17/5/05)
- d) Trip Limits - Gemfish (Expires 18/5/05)
- e) Black Road Bait Ground (Expires 8/6/05)

There are a number of closures due to expire shortly where the Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries seeks to consult ACoRF on their views regarding renewal and/or amendment of these closures.

a) Inland Waters

Senior Fisheries Manager Albury, Cameron Westaway has suggested that the closure be amended by deleting Schedule 6, having the effect of increasing the number of yabby traps which can be used in the Darling and Barwon Rivers from 1 to 5, in keeping with clause 63 of the Regulations. This amendment has the support of the local District Fisheries Officer Far West, Mark Hauser and Macquarie, Steve Ward. Consultation with local anglers indicates support for the amendment.

b) Caulerpa

Senior Conservation Manager, DPI, Rebecca Chapman recommends that the closure be renewed without change to Schedule 1 - Narrawallee Inlet, 2 - Burrill Lake and tributaries, or 3 - Lake Conjola and Berringer Lake and tributaries.

However, Ms Chapman seeks the views of ACoRF regarding Schedule 4 of the closure (Careel Bay, Pittwater), as it is considered that *Caulerpa* has spread throughout other areas of Pittwater. Ms Chapman believes that recreational boat usage patterns in Pittwater require further study and that consequently, Schedule 4 may need to be amended in the future.

Ms Chapman also considers that it may be possible to delete Schedule 5 - Lake Macquarie in the near future, as the incidence of *Caulerpa* has reduced dramatically in the Lake.

c) Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT)

Southern bluefin tuna (*thunnus maccoyii*) were listed as an endangered species in NSW waters under Part 4 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* in December 2004, making the closure to commercial fishing redundant.

As it is unlikely that current recreational fishing activities in NSW are resulting in significant impacts on the SBT population, the Minister made an Interim Order (*Fisheries Management [Continuation of Activities Relating to Southern Bluefin Tuna] Interim Order 2004, published in the NSW Government Gazette No. 198*) to allow current recreational fishing practices to continue, while further formal impact assessment is carried out. Regulations also allow the continued commercial trade in SBT caught outside NSW.

d) Gemfish

The species has been nominated for listing under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. A recovery program is likely to be developed for Gemfish in NSW under the draft ocean trap and line fishery management strategy. Senior Fisheries Manager, Sonya Errington recommends that the closure be renewed, maintaining the current recreational trip limit of ten gemfish per boat per day.

e) Black Road Bait Ground

The Black Road Bait Ground fishing closure was put in place to assist in the sharing of baitfish resources between recreational and commercial fishers in the area. It is proposed that the closure be renewed for a further five years. The Department seeks ACoRF's view on the proposed renewal of the closure.

Outcomes

a) NSW Inland Waters

Addressed in agenda item 4.

b) Caulerpa

The council agreed that if the prevalence of *Caulerpa* changes in a particular waterway, such as an increase in Careel Bay or a reduction in Lake Macquarie, then the associated Schedule of the closure should be amended to reflect that change.

c) Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT)

The council noted that SBT was recently listed as an endangered species in NSW waters and expressed its support for the protection of this species. As a result, the council supported the renewal of this closure, which relates to the taking of SBT by commercial fishers, if required.

d) Gemfish

The Council reiterated its lack of support for the use of boat limits as a recreational fishing management tool and requested the removal of the recreational boat limit from the closure. With regards to recreational fishing restrictions for gemfish, the council affirmed that the daily bag limit of 2 fish per person (and aggregate deepwater bag limit of 5) should apply. It was also noted that the Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter Management Advisory Committee does not support recreational boat limits, as these limitations discriminate between large and small vessels.

The Council supported the renewal of the commercial fishing component of the gemfish closure and requested that the recreational boat limit of 10 be removed prior to renewal.

e) Black Road Bait Ground

The council was advised that no representations have been made about this closure and that it appears to be achieving its objective to share baitfish resources between recreational and commercial fishers in the area.

Recommendations

a) NSW Inland Waters

Addressed in agenda item 4.

b) Caulerpa

Renewal of this closure, including amendment to Schedule 4 and removal of Schedule 5 if required, is supported.

c) Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT)

Renewal of the closure relating to the taking of SBT by commercial fishers is supported, if required.

d) Gemfish

Renewal of the commercial fishing component (i.e. 50kg trip limit) of this closure is supported. The council also recommended that the recreational boat limit of 10 be removed from the closure.

e) Black Road Bait Ground

Renewal of this closure is supported.

Moved: Lionel Jones

Seconded: Elaine Garvey

Carried

Out of Session items

- *Draft Eastern Sea Garfish Recovery Program (for comment)*

The Fishery Management Strategy for the Ocean Hauling Fishery (OHFMS) and the associated environmental impact statement (EIS) have identified that eastern sea garfish are likely to be overfished and require a recovery program. The eastern sea garfish recovery program has been designed to significantly reduce the adverse effects of fishing on the stock. It includes a number of actions that have been implemented recently, such as year-round weekend closures, the restriction of fishers to one ocean hauling region and a change in the operational mesh size from 25mm to 28mm.

The Council's comments regarding the recovery program were forwarded to commercial management for consideration.

- *Proposal to change access to purse seine activities off NSW (for comment)*

An operator who has upgraded their vessel under the tuna policy and who also holds both Commonwealth and State purse seine entitlements received a Regional Assistance Grant in mid 2002 that was used to increase processing capacity for purse seine catch. The operator has questioned the policy that their catch and effort in the State purse seine fishery should be restricted where they believe a resource is able to support an increased sustainable harvest. The basic premise is that the target species (mainly pilchards and blue mackerel) move across the jurisdictional boundaries and it really doesn't matter from a resource sustainability point of view where they are caught.

DPI has been advised that if the catches of the above vessel are constrained in accordance with general boat replacement policy it is likely that shore based activities will be impacted resulting in significant negative flow on effects to the regional economy.

To minimise impacts on the regional economy and, in recognition of the need for resource information to assess sustainable harvest levels, the operator has proposed if their catch cap was increased they would:

- Not exceed 1,200 t of purse seine species per annum
- Not fish in the following areas of historical purse seine activity:
 - Illawarra – Stanwell Park to Kiama 34°13'S to 34°40'S
 - Bermagui – Camel Rock to Goalen Head 36°18'S to 36°33'S from the coast to 3 nautical miles
- Pre and post report any transit through exclusion areas and VMS fitted to the vessel can validate the location of the vessel
- Provide a weekly fishing program to DPI in advance of operations
- Provide daily catch reports if the catch is within 100t of that permitted
- Contribute to research by
 - Providing samples
 - Providing access to the operation for managers, scientists and compliance officers
 - Contribute to the funding of a scientist for data analysis – up to 3% of the value of landings at first point of sale,

until future management measures are determined in accordance with the share management plan and supporting policies.

Members were asked to provide advice on this proposal by 11 March 2005. The Council's comments regarding proposed changes to access arrangements have been forwarded to the commercial management section for consideration.

Recommendation

The council confirmed its out of session recommendation not to support the proposed change to access arrangements for purse seine activities off NSW.

Moved: Scott Mitchell

Seconded: Lionel Jones

Carried

- *Silver Perch Recovery Plan (for information)*

A recovery plan has been developed to promote the recovery of silver perch to a secure and self-sustaining wild population in NSW. The majority of natural silver perch habitat occurs in NSW, and actions undertaken to recover NSW populations of silver perch will be critical to ensuring the viability of the species across its entire range. Also, conversion of the current licence to fish for silver perch in stocked impoundments into a fisheries management order will enable the continuation of fishing for silver perch in stocked waterways beyond 30 June 2005.

Other Business*Correspondence received*

- Ron and Lynette Lavis – wrote to the Minister to show support for the ACoRF recommendation not to re-open or amend the weekend and public holiday closure, east of Juno Point, in the Hawkesbury River Prawn Trawl fishery.

The council noted this support and expressed appreciation for the positive feedback.

Around the table

- The council expressed its support for a reconfiguration of the NSW DPI hatchery at Grafton so that it can produce eastern freshwater cod. It was suggested that the costs associated with this proposal be investigated to determine feasibility.

Recommendation

That the Department commence plans for the production of eastern freshwater cod at Grafton hatchery.

Moved: Terry Maloney

Seconded: Neil Ryan

Carried

- Freshwater tournament monitoring – it was suggested that consideration be given to utilise Fishcare Volunteers during surveys, to assist consultation/education efforts and possibly reduce overall monitoring program costs.
- The council expressed concern that a NSW DPI Fisheries Research staff member was recently appointed, with full voting rights, to both the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee and Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee. The council stated that originally these committees were entirely angler based, with departmental research staff only present to provide scientific input, when required. Council members believe that NSW DPI staff should not have voting rights on the expenditure committees.

Recommendation

That the council write to the Minister to express concern over the appointment of a NSW DPI Fisheries staff member, with full voting rights, to the expenditure committees.

Moved: Neil Ryan

Seconded: Scott Mitchell

Carried

- The council queried the timeframe for the introduction of the plastic licence for 1 and 3 year licence holders. The department confirmed that tender proposals would be advertised in May 2005 and that the delay in this process has been due to the ongoing challenge to keep administration costs below 10% of total revenue, as promised by the Government when the licence was introduced.
- Council was advised that Ms Ann Garard has been nominated by the Marine and Estuarine Recreational Charter MAC as the new Charter Fishing Boat representative on the council.
- *Capacity development for recreational fishing committee representatives (program funded by the Saltwater Trust)* - The department thanked members for their contribution to the development of an instruction manual for councils and committees, which is being prepared by Dominion Consulting. It was confirmed that the final draft would be available to members soon.
- The council previously requested that the Lake Illawarra commercial fishing closure be amended to prohibit the use of mesh nets in Mullet Creek in addition to Macquarie Rivulet, to protect bream and mullet. However, the Estuary General MAC vehemently opposed this proposal. The Council re-affirmed its position that it does not support commercial meshing activities in Mullet Creek. It was mentioned that the buy-back of mesh nets from this system may need to be considered by the recreational fishing sector in the future.
- The council raised the issue of enforcement of freshwater bag/possession limits. The department advised that the scope of rules, particularly relating to the possession of fish, were recently amended to address constraints relating to freshwater possession limits.
- The department advised that the new DPI website is currently being designed. Anyone wishing to provide input into this process should contact Bryan van der Walt on (02) 9527 8522 or visit the website (www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au) for details.
- The council was advised that the timeframe for the petition distributed by the Australian Fishing Tackle Association (AFTA), which is collecting signatures from recreational fishers regarding preferred management arrangements for striped marlin, has been extended.

Next meeting – Thursday 23 June 2005

Meeting ended 3:30pm