



**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council minutes**

**Meeting 30, 20 March 2024
Microsoft Teams virtual meeting**

Members Present	Johann Bell Patrick Linehan Paul Lennon Anna Clark Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Dean Hamilton Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Bill Blair Peter Dugan Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 1 – Mid and Far North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 5 – South Coast Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland (Deputy Chair) Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Nominee of the Secretary
Apologies	Matt Tripet Ian Puckeridge	Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing Spearfishing

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chair, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 30th meeting of RFNSW.

b) Register of Interest

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the RFNSW Register of Interests (Risk Register).
 - Member Bill Blair confirmed he was the Publicity Officer of the Monaro Acclimatisation Society, a Delegated Life Member of the Canberra Anglers Association, and a financial member of the Queanbeyan Anglers Club.
 - Member Anna Clark confirmed she was a member of the expert advisory Panel of the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council (VMaCC).
 - Member Paul Lennon reiterated he was a member of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group, and a member of the Business Efficiency Working Group Committee.
 - Member Karl Mathers declared that the Wedge Group Pty Ltd was engaged by DPI to assist with the preparation of the Enhancement of the Trout and Murray Cod Management Strategies. This engagement is completed.
 - Member Ian Puckeridge reiterated he was a member of the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group, a current financial member of the Australian Underwater Federation (AUF), and a member of the Ben Buckler Amateur Fishing Club.
 - Members Grahame Williams OAM, Matt Hansen and Ray Tang declared pre-identified Conflicts of Interest regarding their association with various Recreational Fishing Trust project recommendations (as part of agenda item 3).
 - The Chair of RFNSW adopted a precautionary approach for managing potential conflicts of interest (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) relating to review of Recreational Fishing Trust recommendations and members Grahame Williams OAM, Matt Hansen and Ray Tang left the meeting during specific relevant discussions in the meeting. Additionally, these RFNSW members did not receive any relevant funding recommendations made by RFSTEC and RFFTEC as part of the agenda.
- c) **Agreement on the agenda, adoption of previous meeting record, proposed future meeting schedule**

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 29th meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.
- Next meeting is proposed to be held on 27 and 28 June 2024.

2) Eastern Blue Groper management

NOTED:

- DPI provided Council with an overview of the recent changes in the management of Blue Groper, including a 12-month trial during which Blue Groper will be a 'no take' species in NSW, which commenced on 1 March 2024. As part of the 12-month trial, DPI is consulting with stakeholders and the broader community. Council was advised that public submissions can be made via a web portal on the DPI website until 30 April. Community drop-in sessions are also being held at various locations. The Council indicated that options for longer-term changes to Blue Groper fishing rules will be considered at the next meeting and advice will be provided to the Minister accordingly.

Action item: RFNSW to provide an initial response regarding the Eastern Blue Groper rule changes via the online consultation form on the DPI website and to table the matter for further detailed consideration regarding longer term options at Meeting 31 prior to referring this advice to the Minister for consideration.

3) Recreational Fishing Trust matters - Expenditure advice from RFSTEC and RFFTEC

NOTED:

- The 67th meeting of the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee and the 71st meeting of the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee were held on 6 and 7 March 2024, respectively. The Committees reviewed new Saltwater and Freshwater applications received following an expression of interest from the Minister calling for Trust fund applications.
- RFNSW reviewed the advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding new applications to the Recreational Fishing Trust.
- Council recommended that a process be considered whereby members can access both the application and assessment details for specific projects.
- The Chair took the opportunity to express gratitude to the two Expenditure Committees for the comprehensive task of reviewing applications.
- Council endorsed the advice provided by the Expenditure Committees and will now pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration.

4) Trout stocking site variations in the Monaro region

NOTED:

- DPI briefed Council on changes to trout stocking in the Monaro, related to potential impacts on the endangered species of Roundsnout Galaxias, and Macquarie Perch.
- The recent listing of Roundsnout Galaxias as 'Endangered' under Commonwealth environment legislation has required DPI to work with the Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) to amend some stocking sites on Monaro rivers and streams.
- MAS is responsible for assisting DPI in releasing trout produced by Government hatcheries.
- In this instance, DPI is working with MAS to move a small number of stocking sites to alternative areas in the same waterways and/or catchment areas. This action will mitigate potential impacts associated with fish stocking on populations of the endangered Galaxias and Macquarie Perch.
- No changes to the total number of trout stocked in the waterways/catchment areas currently receiving fingerlings are proposed.
- Members requested an improved process for informing stakeholders about new declarations of endangered species to provide better opportunities for recreational fishers to be more involved in co-management of such species.

5) NSW Harvest Strategy update

NOTED:

- DPI provided an update on the development and implementation of Harvest Strategies in NSW, including advice on the Trawl Whiting, Eastern Rock Lobster, Spanner Crab, Line and Trap and Mulloway harvest strategies.
- Given the iconic status of Mulloway, and the depleted classification that prompted RFNSW to request that a Mulloway Harvest Strategy be prioritised, Council considered an independent review of the Harvest Strategy should be undertaken before being tabled to RFNSW.
- The Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group is currently focusing on progressing harvest strategies for Snapper and Yellowtail kingfish with development of management options, reference points and decision rules.
- The next meeting of the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group is scheduled for June 2024.

6) Offshore windfarms update

NOTED:

- Member Grahame Williams OAM provided an update on wind farm consultation in NSW and advised that the NSW Game Fishing Association (NSWGFA) had been involved in recent discussions with the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) as part of a working group process to consult further on the Illawarra and Hunter proposed areas.
- Mr Williams OAM noted that a list of recommendations from the NSWGFA had been presented to DCCEEW for consideration in relation to key fishing grounds off the Hunter coastline.

7) Session with Hon. Tara Moriarty, Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW & Western NSW

NOTED:

- Members appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Hon. Tara Moriarty, to discuss several current and emerging recreational fishing priority areas.
- The Council discussed the current public consultation process that is underway on the longer-term management changes to Eastern Blue Groper fishing rules.
- The Minister was pleased to advise Council that she had the opportunity to showcase some of the achievements of programmes receiving funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts in Parliament earlier in the day.
- RFNSW members also took the opportunity to update the Minister on the development of the Recreational Fishing Action Plan, including the key goals of the Plan.

8) Freshwater Fisheries update

a) Update on the Draft Trout and Murray Cod Management Strategies

NOTED:

- Council received an update on the development of the draft Trout and Murray Cod Management Strategies.

b) Update on Gaden hatchery and stocking trucks

NOTED

- Council received an update on the recent refurbishment of the Gaden Trout Hatchery.
- For the interest of members, images of the state-of-the-art upgrades to the hatchery were provided.
- Members acknowledged the recent refurbishment which will considerably increase production capacity of the hatchery.
- Members also received a brief update on the new proposed hatchery fish stocking trucks, noting fabrication of the transport tanks and trays is due to commence.

9) Recreational Fishing Action Plan update

NOTED:

- Council reviewed and provided comment on the latest draft Recreational Fishing Action Plan.
- Members will be provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the current draft before the Action Plan will be presented to the Minister for consideration.

Action item: DPI to collate member comments on the draft Recreational Fishing Action Plan before presenting to the Minister for consideration.

10) Aquatic Biosecurity update

a) White Spot management update

NOTED:

- Following detection of White Spot in prawn farms in northern NSW in 2023, DPI has been implementing a nationally-endorsed, NSW long-term surveillance plan for the Clarence River and surrounding marine environments.
- Council was presented with three scenarios under the DPI White Spot Management Programme that represent possible outcomes of the current NSW surveillance plan.
- DPI is inviting feedback and comments on the scenarios and the proposed management options.
- Members reiterated previous concerns relating to the risks associated with uncooked prawns being used for bait.
- Members encouraged the White Spot Management Programme to continue the ongoing targeted campaign, which includes encouraging the recreational fishing community not to use prawn products marketed for human consumption as bait.

Action item: RFNSW to provide feedback to DPI on the proposed long-term surveillance plan and response options presented by the DPI White Spot Management Programme.

b) Redfin release regulation

NOTED:

- DPI outlined the current legal requirements under the NSW Biosecurity Act surrounding the release of pest species back to waterways after being caught by recreational fishers. The differences between regulations relating to individual pest species were also discussed.
- Council noted that current rules prohibited the possession/movement of live Redfin Perch and prohibited the use of Redfin Perch (alive or dead) as bait, but noted that it is not prohibited to release Redfin Perch into the water from which they were caught.
- Members raised concern regarding the potential impacts from EHN virus being introduced to Macquarie Perch populations, via translocated redfin, to waters where redfin/ EHN virus does not currently exist.
- Concern was raised by members regarding the differences between different jurisdictions and how each state manages redfin perch as a pest fish (e.g., Queensland).
- Member Matt Hansen sought consideration of a renewed Redfin advisory campaign, in collaboration with DPI, to educate fishers of the rules and the risks regarding translocation. It was agreed that there should be further discussions between DPI and Mr Hansen after the meeting to progress this proposal. Mr Hansen will report back to Council on this issue at the next meeting.

c) Upper Winburndale Rivulet - Section 8 Fishing Closure

NOTED:

- The Council received an update on the implementation of the Section 8 Fishing Closure for Upper Winburndale Rivulet.

11) Incoming correspondence

a) Email from Ross Britt

NOTED:

- Members discussed correspondence from Mr Britt regarding the current recreational fishing limit on the number of rigged rods and noting some people have difficulty rigging rods once on the water. Mr Britt has requested fishers being able to have more than four rigged rods in their possession but only use four at any one time.
- RFNSW noted this is long-standing rule to help ensure the sustainability and equitable sharing of our fish stocks. It was acknowledged that having more than four rigged rods would create significant compliance issues which would make the rule difficult to enforce.
- Council recognised that fishers can have additional rods set up with snap swivels which enables fishers to clip on pre-assembled rigs without the need to tie any knots whilst on the water. Accordingly, Council considered that the current rule continues to play an important role in contributing to sustainability of fish stocks.

Action item: DPI to contact Mr Britt to discuss further the issue of the current rigged rods rule for recreational fishers.

12) Election commitments update

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief update on the Government's election commitments relating to recreational fishing.
- DPI advised that there had recently been five Women's Fishing Workshops held on International Women's Day, with more events to be held this autumn.
- Regarding the establishment of a peak body for recreational fishing, DPI advised that a first Recreational Fishing Stakeholder online forum was held on 15 November 2023, which was facilitated by independent fisheries expert and independent chair of the Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Council, Dr James Findlay.
- Based on stakeholder feedback from this initial forum, a smaller Working Group was formed through an Expression of Interest process.
- This Group held online meetings in February and March 2024, with a third face-to-face meeting to be held in Sydney on 26 March.
- Outcomes from the Working Group will be presented to the wider stakeholder forum and RFNSW, before being released for public consultation.

13) General Business

a) Harvest of Blue Mackerel on NSW coast by the Small Pelagic Fishery

NOTED:

- Member Matt Hansen raised concern about the perceived localised depletion of bait species on the South Coast of NSW based on anecdotal reports, which may be affecting the availability of bait and associated quality of marlin fishing this season. Mr Hansen advised there had been some significant social media on the issue.
- Mr Grahame Williams OAM advised that a Total Allowable Catch, among other rules, apply to the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery.

Action item: DPI to contact the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for statistics on the current operation of the Small Pelagic Fishery and the associated rules that apply to the boats in the fishery and report back to Council at the next meeting.

14) Commercial Fishing Operations presentation

NOTED:

- Following on from the Commercial Fishing Operation presentation given at meeting 29, a follow-up presentation was provided by DPI.
- DPI presented a brief overview of the NSW Estuary General Fishery including the purpose, social and economic indicators, sectors, and the regions of operations.
- An overview of methods used in the fishery including, handlining, meshing, prawning, trapping, eel trapping, crab trapping, hand gathering, and Category 1 and 2 hauling, was presented.
- Management controls for this fishery were outlined including, size limits, catch limits, catch and effort quota, marine park zoning rules and various spatial and temporal fishing

closures.

- Members greatly appreciated the presentation and thanked DPI for the overview.

Meeting closed.
