

Chair's Summary (Meeting 21)

The 21st meeting of RFNSW was held on 17 August 2021 via videoconference due to current COVID-19 restrictions. It was another comprehensive meeting, and Council once again demonstrated its commitment to pursuing meaningful change to strengthen the recreational fishing sector, especially under the challenging impacts of the pandemic. The key outcomes from the meeting are given below.

Kingfish and Snapper: In response to Council's request for updates on the status of Snapper and Kingfish stocks, the comprehensive information presented by the relevant expert scientists from DPI provided RFNSW with valuable insights into the cumulative effects of fishing on these two highly-valued species. This information included current and historical length-frequency distributions from commercial catches, catch-per-unit-effort indices, changes in fishing power over time, and available compliance information. Based on the presentations and ensuing discussion, and the previous work by a sub-group within Council, RFNSW decided to proceed with recommendations to the Minister related to revisions to the minimum legal length for these species taken by recreational fishing, and the recreational fishing bag limits.

Update from the Deputy Director General, DPI Fisheries: RFNSW received an update from Mr Sean Sloan on a number of key projects being undertaken by the Department, including the significant progress being made by species-based Harvest Strategy Working Groups; the upcoming release of the NSW Mainland Marine Park Network draft Management Plan; progress on the Fisheries and Aquaculture regulatory reform package that RFNSW provided comments on during the community consultation phase earlier this year; and the latest NSW Health advice relating to recreational fishing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recreational Fishing Trust expenditure: The Council reviewed advice from the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committees regarding a number of new Saltwater and Freshwater grant applications made to the Recreational Fishing Trust. Council endorsed the advice provided by the Expenditure Committees and will now pass this advice on to the Minister for consideration.

Fish passage: The Council welcomed an update from DPI on the excellent progress being made under the NSW Fish Passage Strategy. The achievements of this Strategy that prioritise the removal of barriers to fish passage to improve survival and reproduction rates of native Australian fish was highly commended by the Council.

NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy: Council discussed and added to the final draft actions and initiatives for inclusion in the NSW Recreational Fishing Strategy, which has a wide range of actions to help build a thriving sector and enrich fishing experiences. The next phase will involve preparing an easy-to-read, highly-visual design for the Strategy prior to submission to the Minister for consideration.

NSW Mainland Marine Park Network: RFNSW was briefed on the upcoming community consultation proposed for the NSW Mainland Marine Park Network Draft Management Plan. This represents a new approach to marine park management in NSW and members were encouraged to comment on the draft plan from a recreational fishing perspective once it goes for public exhibition.

Presentation on volunteer engagement of recreational fishers: Matt Hansen presented the excellent work being done by volunteers across the state to achieve positive fisheries habitat outcomes. The presentation outlined a number of case studies highlighting the efforts of different OzFish chapters working on, for example, fish passage, fish habitat remediation (e.g., re-snagging), citizen science, and swamp and seagrass restoration throughout NSW.

