



Regional Experiences for Global Solutions- the 3rd World Recreational Fishing Conference

John Harrison Principal Investigator
Anne P M Coleman



Project No. 2001/302

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

2001/302 Regional Experiences for Global Solutions – the 3rd World Recreational Fishing Conference

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Objectives

1. the formation of an international society,
2. creation of an international code of conduct,
3. announcement of the hosts for the 4th conference
4. publication of proceedings and
5. a greater awareness and understanding by the delegates of trends and issues in recreational fishing around the world.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Two workshops were held on the 3rd day of the conference to further progress objectives 1 & 2. Both were given full endorsement by the workshop participants and will be developed by a core group of people in the ensuing months.

A name has been put forward for the international society and it should be known as the World Recreational Fishing Forum (WRRF) with one of its main goals to ensure the continuity of the triennial world conference.

The development of an international code of conduct for recreational fishing is a daunting task. However with dedication and will the Committee is confident that it will be well advanced and hopefully close to finalisation by the next conference in Norway 2005. A draft set of key principles is under development which will be circulated to the delegates and others for comment and further refinement.

Norway will host the 4th conference in 2005 and this was announced on the last day of the conference.

The proceedings will be distributed to all delegates and we already have orders for additional copies.

Comments from Delegates, both personal and through the survey, clearly indicates that the conference delivered on a wide range of issues and information that will prove to be beneficial to the Delegates in their own state or country.

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY - COMMENTS

This project commenced when the Amateur Fishermen's Association of Northern Territory (AFANT) offered to host what eventually became known as the 3^d World Recreational Fishing Conference. The offer was made by John Harrison at Vancouver in June 1999 during a conference titled "Evaluating the Benefits of Recreational Fishing."

Once confirmed that the conference would be held in Darwin it was a matter of securing support from a number of sources. The first came from the NT Government when seed funding (both grants and an interest free loan) was obtained. This allowed for a very important step in the process of organising this conference.

It provided a platform where the organising committee could present a professional approach to prospective sponsors, supporters and delegates. With a well designed and creative logo, printed letterhead and other stationery we had the confidence to create opportunities for the success of the event.

During the very early stages of the organising the then Director of Fisheries offered his support and that of his staff. This support came in many ways. Ms Anne Coleman was an integral part of the local organising committee (Committee) from an early stage and later assumed a Co-Chair role. Later during the organising Ms Annette O'Grady, also from the Fisheries Group, came onto the Committee.

Final papers are being collated by the conference secretariat, Convention Catalysts International, and will then be edited and proceedings are expected to be published in the latter part of 2002. This will provide a permanent record of the conference and will prove to be an invaluable reference document for a wide variety of users in the future.

With almost three years as a planning period the Committee was well prepared with the vast majority of challenges thought through and coordinated well in advance of the conference. It was the 'little' things that were fine tuned as we came closer to the actual event. These little things were, in the eyes of the Committee, vital to the success of the whole conference. This is where the detail needed to be accurate and reflect what we saw as fundamental to a smooth and well prepared conference.

TIPS ON ORGANISING – SOME SUGGESTIONS

Despite all the planning and preparation there were things that could not be controlled by the Committee. One of the international theme speakers withdrew 5 days prior to the conference. With no contingency for reserve theme speakers we had to hastily arrange for a replacement. This was achieved but serves as a reminder for future conference planning to have a contingency for the keynote and theme speakers.

Although the keynote and theme speakers delivered strong messages better advice and more structure in the instructions to keynote and theme speakers on the content and guidelines for their presentations is recommended. This would enable the Committee to ensure that the themes that were selected would be given a real thrust and direction at the theme address.

In addition to the direction for the speakers an assessment of their delivery skills is recommended. The person may be a specialist in their field but lacks the skills to really lift the audience and fuel the debate.

It seems acceptable these days that the keynote/theme speakers get to travel business class for their flights. With the extensive costs associated with getting international

keynote or theme speakers, the Committee recommends that an alternative approach be offered to future speakers that are sponsored to come to conferences.

In excess of \$12,000 AUD was paid in air travel costs alone for one speaker – all of which went to an overseas airline company. As an incentive to get the best speakers, consideration should be given to offering economy airfares with a lure of accommodation and tours either before or after the conference. This would have worked particularly well for the NT as it would have been a far lesser cost and secondly, the money spent on the tours would have remained in Australia. We recommend that future conference organisers consider this option – particularly for international speakers.

The conference web site worked very well and was used extensively for information and for registration. It was hosted by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in the early stages and was closely managed by one of the Committee members. This all went well until a change of government and with this change various restructures and departmental shifts meant that as a Committee we did lose some control of the web site. This meant that changes and new items for the site were not posted as quickly as possible. The registration form on the website should be on the home page and highly visible.

The regular newsletter that was produced and emailed to all the people who had registered an interest in the conference was well received. It was posted onto the website and was widely circulated amongst various email discussion groups around the world. Whilst this worked well for everyone with email there are still a number of people who do not have email and these need to be taken care of in the distribution of updated material.

Future conference organisers should take full advantage of any email discussions groups for distribution beyond their contacts and research the internet to find relevant sites to post information. One website the Committee found had about 700 links to recreational fishing sites around the world.

The idea of a 'buddy' system was used by the Committee to allow people to contact another delegate prior to arriving in Darwin. This was very popular with our international delegates and was applauded as a great means of making sure that they knew at least one person. Where possible local people were assigned to overseas people and this provided an opportunity for the visitors to get first hand information from someone who was familiar with the NT both prior to them arriving and during their stay.

Opening sessions of conferences should set the scene and atmosphere. In hindsight the Committee felt that the opening 30 minutes was too long and contained unnecessary political propaganda. If this is an obligation to the organisers it should be scheduled after the keynote address.

With 28 posters on display the area that we had for the poster reception proved to be a little small. A mixture of minor problems like the size of the poster panels and the need to have it on the same floor as the main conference meant that the floor space was not utilised as efficiently as it could have been.

The concurrent sessions meant that the session Chairs had to be strict and run on time. This was reinforced in the briefing that we gave the session chairs on the day prior to the conference. It worked well and was one of the main reasons people were impressed

with the conference. It meant that when a session finished in room 1 they could be sure that a presenter was on time in room 2.

We had fifteen volunteers to assist in the day to day running of the conference. This was needed and proved to be well worth the effort of organising and attracting the volunteers. Volunteers were briefed by the Committee as to the expectations of them and what they might encounter in their role. They ensured that only delegates with registration tags were allowed into the conference, they assisted in serving drinks at the social functions, they were representatives of the NT and provided a wealth of information to the delegates. It is recommended that this sort of help be procured for events of this type. Sponsorship of the volunteers with shirts and a standard dress format presented them as professionals assisting the whole event.

Accompanying persons are often forgotten in conference organising. However we ensured that they would feel welcome as many had come with partners to experience the NT. We organised a welcome morning tea on the first day of the conference which included the presentation of an orchid from the NT and a complimentary neck massage by the Hotel masseur. This was very well received and commented on by the partners. It made them feel part of the whole event.

The catering arrangements for the entire conference were commented on by delegates as being first class. The Committee sampled the food for the gala dinner and were determined to give delegates a taste of the Territory. The meals during the conference proper were also hand picked by the Committee to ensure that the delegates remembered the food as being of high quality. Often a conference is remembered because of the insufficient amount or poor quality of the food.

Bottled water was freely available for delegates for the whole conference and with the tropical nature of Darwin this was popular with delegates. The beverages served at the Poster Reception, Mindil Beach Markets and the Gala Dinner were part of a sponsorship package.

Media coverage for the conference was excellent. ABC Radio did an outside broadcast from the conference and had interviews and reports in almost every 2-hour program for the four days of the conference. Both ABC and Channel 8 TV recorded and ran interviews with a wide range of delegates from a number of countries. This provided exceptional coverage of the conference across the NT and around Australia. The Conference featured on ABC Landline show on Sunday 26 May. The media strategy was to continually drip feed information for the 2 –3 years leading up to the conference to the media and build up to the conference.

With less than a week to the start of the conference a media alert was issued and two meetings were held with ABC to organise the broadcast and to arrange the finer details of their media coverage. Many of the presenters from ABC radio had previously interviewed John Harrison on a number of occasions regarding the conference. NT News, the local daily paper, covered the conference reasonably well however their coverage was not as strong as ABC.

It was disappointing that no representatives of the Australian fishing media (magazines) were in attendance at the conference. Despite being aware of the conference they decided not to attend and cover this important world event. The only plausible explanation that the Committee can come up with is that the Editors of these publications were not prepared to expend the registration fee to attend. This may have

been rectified if personal invitations were extended however this can lead to expectations that fees will be paid. One editor was offered airfares by one of the NT government departments but then insisted that he be given complimentary registration to the conference.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the support of sponsors an event like this would be very difficult if not impossible to organise. The Committee is grateful for the support of a wide range of sponsors who contributed both financial and in-kind assistance.

Our principal sponsor was the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Major sponsor was the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia.

Other sponsors were:

Northern Territory Department of Business Industry and Resource Development,
Amateur Fishermen's Association of NT,
Fisheries Centre of the University of British Columbia,
Northern Territory Office of Sport and Recreation,
Department of Fisheries Government of Western Australia,
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (USA),
Primary Industries and Resources – South Australia,
Woodside Australia Energy,
Castlemaine Perkins,
Reidy's Fishing Lures,
Department of Primary Industries – Queensland,
NSW Recreational Fishing Trusts,
Alvey Reels Australia,
Hotspot Fishing Tours
The Exhibitionists.

BACKGROUND

Recreational fishing is an integral part of the lifestyle of at least 5 million Australians. The increasing numbers of participants and the growing demand for improved fishing experiences is placing greater emphasis on the management, research and social importance of recreational fishing. It is therefore absolutely vital that agencies, associations, organisations and all other elements of the recreational fishing industry be acquainted with trends and new findings from around the world. This need for a regular meeting of the recreational fishing managers, researchers, industry administrators, representative organisations etc has been strongly voiced by the peak representative bodies in Australia over recent years.

During the 1999 conference "Evaluating the Benefits of Recreational Fishing" held in Canada, the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT) identified an opportunity for a regular international meeting of people involved in the industry. The general consensus of delegates attending the conference also supported the need for such a meeting.

In Canada, AFANT was successful in its bid to host the next (3rd) world recreational fishing conference, which was held in Darwin 21 – 24 May 2002.

NEED

The demand for recreational fishing is increasing across the globe. More people are seeking to experience recreational fishing or are seeking an improved fishing experience. Greater demands are being placed on fisheries management, research and the development of this industry sector. Within the next few years, the debate on the allocation of resources, access to resources, environmental issues and a range of other concerns of the industry will only increase. With issues such as improved fishing efficiency, (e.g. sounders and GPS systems), it is unlikely that the simple management techniques currently used will continue to afford the same level of protection to fisheries resources over the longer term.

There is a wealth of information available from the experiences of other Countries, States and Agencies, and all countries can learn from the advances of others. A conference environment provides an opportunity to share these experiences, create networks, link research projects and share new approaches to management.

The 3rd World Recreational Fishing Conference brought together fishery scientists, managers and stakeholders who discussed current trends and issues confronting the management of recreational fisheries. The conference advanced our understanding of these key issues and provided benchmark information for future directions in recreational fisheries development, research and management.

METHODS

An International Steering Committee (ISC) was appointed to provide advice and direction to the Local Organising Committee (Committee) leading up to the conference. The ISC members were; Professor Tony Pitcher University of British Columbia, Dr Ian Cowx University of Hull UK, Dr Oystein Aas Norwegian Institute of Nature Research, Michael Leech International Game Fishing Association and Angus Horwood Recfish Australia.

Convention Catalysts International were appointed as the Conference Secretariat and provided the logistical support to the Committee. The Committee was made up of John Harrison of the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT, Ms Anne Coleman & Ms Annette O'Grady from the Fisheries Group of the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development.

The delegate list from the Vancouver conference was used as the starting point to promote the event around the world. This list grew as the email networks and user groups distributed advice about the Darwin conference. There was about 1200 people who expressed interest to the Secretariat in the conference and their details will be passed on to the organisers for the 4th Conference in Norway.

A number of media releases were sent out during the planning phase of the event which contributed to the promotion. Ms Anne Coleman attended a conference in San Diego USA and took posters and flyers with her to further promote the meeting. In addition the

conference was advertised on a number of websites as an upcoming event including the FRDC, AFANT, ASFB and a number of others.

Flyers, posters and promotional material were produced and distributed to a wide variety of potential delegates. This included a flyer inserted into a Recfish Australia newsletter to all fishing clubs around Australia. A meeting in Darwin of the State and Territory Fisheries Ministers was also used by the Committee to promote the conference and to elicit support from the Ministers.

A prospectus was developed and a list of about 100 potential sponsors identified. These were all sent letters along with the prospectus and follow up phone calls were made to attempt to gain support. This approach worked well with the Committee pleased with the corporate support and the willingness to provide in-kind support from the smaller businesses associated with the recreational fishing industry. Further sponsorship may have been able to be obtained however limited resources meant that the Committee were restricted to the 100 original prospects.

Once the conference themes had been finalised the Committee and ISC then selected the best possible speakers for each theme. Once identified these speakers were formally approached and asked to confirm their availability.

The actual program structure was determined once we assessed the number of papers that could be accommodated in the 3 days of the conference. Concurrent sessions would be needed and with the capacity to divide the ballroom into two rooms in a reasonably quick time it meant that the theme speakers could be evenly distributed over the three days.

The two workshops that were planned for the international society and the code of conduct were deliberately held on the Thursday to attract as many of the delegates as possible and to allow for a break between day 2 and 3 of the paper presentations.

Initially the Committee met with the Conference Secretariat on a monthly basis however as we got closer to the time, meetings were held on a weekly basis with other adhoc onsite meetings scheduled as well. Hundreds of phone calls were made between and within the Committee and the Secretariat and this proved to be a reliable efficient means of making sure that communication lines were open and everyone understood the processes.

RESULTS

The feedback that the Committee has received from many delegates has been overwhelmingly supportive of the entire conference. It is clear from this feedback that a great deal of information has been exchanged and knowledge shared amongst the delegates. As an indication of the success appendix 1 has some examples of the feedback.

We also asked all delegates for their comments on the conference through a feedback survey and the results of that are in appendix 2. The networking and establishment of contacts around the world is an invaluable tool for all those who attended. The Committee is confident that everyone who attended benefited in some way.

CONCLUSION

This was an extremely successful and well planned conference. It set the benchmark for future world recreational fishing conferences and has put the NT of Australia well and truly on the world stage. The success was due to the planning and attention to detail in the closing stages of the organising.

APPENDIX 1 – DELEGATE COMMENTS

- I trust you have recovered from the conference week - it was a cracker of a conference. I particularly liked the diversity of presenters.
- Just thought I'd follow up with another word of congratulation - for a job very well done. Hard to put a finger on what made the conference the success it was. -Locale? people? organisation? content? I think all of those.
- A quick thank you again for a great conference, you guys did a magnificent job.
- I didn't have a chance to thank you for a great conference. I thought it was a real success.
- Thank you for your assistance with our visit to Darwin, and for organising a great conference. Please pass on our thanks to your executive and to the staff involved in the conference organisation.
- I just want to thank you for the generous hospitality and superb organisation of the conference. It was second to none.
- Congratulations on a splendidly organised, thought provoking and thoroughly enjoyable conference.
- Firstly thanks for a great week.
- The meeting was well organized and very informative. You and your associates did an excellent job, congratulations on a well planned and conducted meeting.
- Thanks for organising a great conference

APPENDIX 2 DELEGATE SURVEY

The following is a general outlook of the Delegates' opinions of the 3rd World Recreational Fishing Conference. Please note that not every Delegate returned the forms and not everyone completed every question, however the results provide a good overview of the opinions.

1. What attracted you to the conference and how did you find out about it?

Diversity of topics and to learn more about current issues.	8
Personal invitation.	7
Opportunity to network with international experts and others interested in recreational fishing.	7
Heard through recreational fishing networks.	7
Asked to attend by organisation/ workplace.	6
Heard about in magazines/internet.	6
Saw flyer.	5
Was advised by Sunfish Qld.	5
Attended previous conference.	4
Relevant to work.	4
Personal interest.	4
To come to Australia.	4
Keen to follow world developments.	3
Subject material.	3
Heard about it at another conference.	3
Announced via EIFAC.	1
Invited to co-sponsor.	1

2. Which keynote/ theme presentation did you think were most beneficial?

Sir Tipene O 'Regan	11
Rex Hunt	9
Management of rec fishing.	9
Tony Pitcher	7
ESD	7
Relevant topics to rec fishing.	5
John Harrison	4
Sean Cox	4
Theme 4	4
Ian Cowx	3
Frank Prokop	3
Ken Pollock	3
Theme 5	3
Options for the future	3
Informative	3
Entertaining	3
Peter Rogers	2
Bob Kearney	2
Margaret Moore	2
Carl Walters	2
Theme 1	2
All good	2

Inspiring	2
Research methodologies	2
Graham Pike	1
Norman Fry	1
All WA presenters	1
Theme 2	1
Theme 3	1
Allocation and fishing rights	1
Social and economic value	1
Diversity	1
Communication	1
New techniques	1
Indigenous fishing	1

3. What was your evaluation of the following?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Program	8	28	17	2	1
Workshops	7	19	19	3	1
Poster Presentations	13	24	13	1	
Venue	34	18	4		
Location	40	15		1	
Keynote Speakers	22	28	4	1	
Theme Speakers	7	41	7		
Organization	34	16	4		
Catering	28	25	2		
Social Functions	39	14	1		

Some reasons for selecting below average or poor.

Posters were disappointing, should have been put in theme categories.

Too many late changes to the program.

Presentations did not relate to themes.

Lack of interest from participants.

Not enough input from recreational fishing representatives.

4. Did the session content deal with issues that were important to you? Please explain briefly.

Yes, but little content on solving issues.	6
Yes, management and sustainability of Australian rec fishing.	4
Too much focus on Australia.	3
Yes, but too scientifically based.	3
Yes, all were relevant when the content stuck to the theme.	3
Most of them did.	2
Yes, good opportunity to hear updates of world trends.	2
Mixed but overall a good range.	2
More time for discussion.	1
Couldn't attend all the sessions.	1

5. Is there any suggestions for improvement that you would like to see for the 4th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Norway in 2005?

No or no answer.

Make themes of value internationally/ more international attendees/ presentations.	13
Perhaps workshop sessions. More discussion.	7
More consistency with themes.	6
More involvement by rec fishing reps.	5
Other	5
Shouldn't be so scientific.	4
Program needs to be more thought out.	3
Problem solving session.	3
Involve all stakeholders – fishers, divers, guides.	2
Number of themes could be expanded.	2
Consider inviting reps from Asia.	1
Access for general public to attend.	1
Include an active debate.	1
Mid week break/excursion.	1

6. What was your overall view of the conference?

Good	19
Worthwhile, informative, good range of topics.	17
Very good organisation and venue.	16
Excellent	9
Need more international attendees.	4
Good opportunity for networking.	3
Very enjoyable	2
Would like to be more involved in discussions.	2
Can promote recreational fishing.	1

APPENDIX 3 – STAFF

The following people were involved either for all or for part of the planning and delivery of this conference;

Mr John Harrison

Ms Anne Coleman

Ms Annette O'Grady

Ms Kristina Oberhardt

Ms Danielle Witham

APPENDIX 4 – DELEGATE LIST

Given Name	Surname	Position	Organisation	Address 1	Suburb	State	Postcode	e_mail
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