

Establishing Recfishing Research

w sawynok & j harrison



Australian Government
Fisheries Research and
Development Corporation



FRDC Project 2005/322



Establishing Recfishing Research

Establishing a recreational fishing working group to develop a national implementation plan for Research, Development and Extension (R,D&E)

W Sawynok¹ and J Harrison²

¹ Infofish Services, PO Box 9793, Frenchville, Queensland 4701

² John Harrison Recfish Australia PO Box 187 Grange Queensland 4051



Project No: 2005/322

Published by Recfish Australia

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ISBN 0-9775165-4-7

Cover designed by All-Biz-Art Rockhampton
Printed by City Printing Works Rockhampton

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The establishment of a strategy to improve national investment in recreational fisheries Research, Development and Extension (R,D&E) requires the support of a large number of groups and individuals. It is not possible to provide recognition to all those that have contributed as invariably someone will be missed. However it is important to recognise the key contributors.

The FRDC initiative and investment in the National Strategy for the Survival of Released Line Caught Fish was the impetus for doing recreational fisheries R,D&E in a new way and required vision and persistence in the face of scepticism and opposition. The FRDC Executive Director at the time Peter Dundas-Smith and the Board were prepared to take the risk and support a new approach. That strategy is now seen as a success in that there has been a total investment of \$7.2 million by FRDC and others in 16 projects.

In the early life of phase 2 of the Released Fish Survival strategy Peter Dundas-Smith and Patrick Hone provided support for expanding the range of recreational fisheries R,D&E issues that could be addressed. That support culminated in the workshop held in Hobart in August 2005 which identified national R,D&E priorities and led to the development of Recfishing Research.

The success or failure of taking a national approach is largely determined by the vision and guidance of those charged with its implementation. In the case of the Released Fish Survival strategy and now the Recfishing Research strategy this guidance has been provided by the Steering Committee led by Ross Winstanley as the chair. A brief resume of each of the Steering Committee members is included. The Steering Committee has taken on a leadership role to progress the priority issues that have been identified and a number of projects to address these priorities are already underway and more are being developed.

Having vision and funding support are not the only things that are required to develop and implement a national strategy. It requires the support of recreational fishers as without that the strategy would flounder. It is not possible to get the support direct from Australia's fishers, at least not within currently funding arrangements, however the view of those fishers are largely reflected through the State peak recreational fishing bodies and national fishing associations. It is pleasing that every State peak body and all national fishing associations, except one, provided letters of support for the application to further develop Recfishing Research. The support of all those bodies is acknowledged.

The other major interest group in the national strategy are the State fisheries agencies. While no agency has expressed a formal view on the national strategy there has been support provided by a range of individual managers and communicators.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Released Fish Survival Steering Committee is responsible for the overall guidance of the National Strategy for the Survival of Released Fish and an expanded committee has acted as an "interim" Steering Committee for Recfishing Research. The steering committee comprises members that have been drawn from all areas of expertise required to deliver the strategy outcomes. The "interim" Steering Committee was established in August 2005 and will be replaced by a permanent committee in the second half of 2007.



Ross Winstanley of Winstanley Fisheries Management Services Pty Ltd is the chair of the steering committee. Ross is currently a fisheries consultant and comes from Geelong in Victoria. He has had extensive experience in fisheries management with 33 years service with Vic Fisheries before setting up his own consultancy in 2001. Ross is a keen recreational fisher and spends a lot of his spare time fishing for Snapper in Corio Bay.



Bill Sawynok is the Principal Investigator responsible for the Released Fish Survival and now the Recfishing Research national strategy. Bill runs his own business Infotish Services based in Rockhampton in Queensland. He is a director of the Australian National Sportfishing Association, a past director of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and a past director of the CRC Reef Research Centre.



Julian Pepperell has been director of his own fisheries consultancy business Pepperell Research and Consulting Pty Ltd. Julian has been based in Doonan in Queensland since 2001 and before that time was based in New South Wales. Julian has worked extensively in recreational fisheries research with special expertise in marine gamefish and fishing media.



Matt Barwick is a Project Manager with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. Matt has gained experience in fisheries management whilst with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and an understanding of freshwater and estuarine fish communities through involvement in a number of research projects with NSW Fisheries (now NSW DPI). He is also a keen recreational fisher.



Doug Joyner is the Executive Officer of the Australian Fishing Tackle Association and is based in Sydney in NSW. He represents the Recreational Fishing Industry on various government and non-government committees and provides comment to various media agencies throughout Australia. Focused lobbying also is provided on emerging issues affecting public access to their resources held in trust by various agencies.



Frank Prokop is the past president of Recfish Australia and the Executive Director for Recfishwest and is based in Perth in Western Australia. Frank is currently a Director with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. He has written 13 books on recreational fishing. Frank was appointed as the first dedicated recreational fisheries manager in Australia and has worked in aquaculture, commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries management since 1984.



Ian Brown is a Principal Fisheries Scientist with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. After working with the Marine Studies Group in Victoria, Ian spent three years as Fisheries Adviser to the Fiji Government, then moved to Queensland. Based at the Southern Fisheries Centre at Deception Bay in Brisbane, Ian has had extensive involvement in both recreational and commercial management-related fisheries research.



Steve Sutton is a research fellow in the School of Earth and Environmental Studies at James Cook University. Steve is a social scientist specializing in the "human dimensions" of recreational fisheries. His research interests include: factors influencing fishing participation patterns, measuring the social values recreational fishers place on fishing and fisheries resources, and participation by recreational fishers in consultation programs concerning fisheries issues. Steve is also an active fly-fisher and spends most of his free time on the water.



John Harrison is currently CEO of Recfish Australia and is based in Brisbane. He was Executive Officer of the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT from 1998 – 2005, President of Recfish Australia from 2000 -2001 and is a former Director of the FRDC. He is also a Director of WetlandCare Australia. In between all that he still finds time to get out fishing.



Jim Harnwell is the publisher and editor of Australia's No.1 fishing magazine, Fishing World. A keen bluewater angler with a particular interest in tuna and billfish, he is a member of the NSW Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing and has been heavily involved in the marine parks debate and other conservation issues.



John Diplock set up the first Policy Unit for NSW Fisheries and took over management of recreational fishing in 1998. John was instrumental in the Introduction of the general recreational fishing fee in 2001 and is currently responsible for the expenditure of revenue from the fishing fee, maintenance of the agents' network, and the running of two trout and one native fish hatchery for stocking public waters throughout NSW



Professor Alistair McIlgorm is Director of the National Marine Science Centre, Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, a corporate entity of the University of New England and Southern Cross University. He was formerly with the Australian Maritime College and is Director of Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd. He has undertaken several surveys of recreational fishing expenditure in regional NSW and of the fishing tackle industry nationally for the Australian Fishing Tackle Association. He is currently overseeing development of a “sustainable recreational fishing” schools visit experience in the NMSC foyer, under Commonwealth community grant funding.



Howel Williams is the Chair of the Australasian Fisheries Communicators Committee and has over 20 years experience in fisheries management and fisheries research in Australia and overseas with the UN. Howel was the head of fisheries R&D in Tasmania and established the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute before heading the South Australian fisheries R&D for several years. Howel moved back to Tasmania in 2002 and has been the manager of Tasmania's recreational sea fisheries since.

1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Establishing Recfishing Research

(Establishing a recreational fishing working group to develop a national implementation plan for R, D and E)

FRDC Project 2005/322

Principal Investigator

John Harrison

Recfish Australia

PO Box 187

Grange, Queensland, Australia

Phone: 07-3356-1111

Fax: 07-3356-1111

Email: ceo@recfish.com.au

Objectives

The objectives of this project were:

- 1 Hold a workshop to identify priority research needs of the recreational sector.
- 2 Identify a suitable entity that can be developed to progress the national priorities and complete the framework, timetable and implementation plan needed for a transition to the identified entity.
- 3 Finalise the R,D&E priorities and investment plan for Recfishing Services (now Research) following an industry review at a conference/workshop in the second half of 2006.
- 4 Hold the inaugural recreational fishing awards in conjunction with the conference/workshop and present the inaugural recreational sector recipient of the Peter Dundas-Smith Leadership Scholarship.

Non-technical Summary

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

A workshop held in Hobart in August 2005 identified the national priorities for investment in recreational fisheries R,D&E and identified an expanded Released Fish Survival Steering Committee as an appropriate interim entity for the development and implementation of a national strategy. That committee is now the interim Recfishing Research Steering Committee.

A Business Plan has been developed for Recfishing Research and was submitted to FRDC along with an application for the continuation of Recfishing Research from 2007/08 to 2009/10.

A seminar on recreational fisher's involvement in the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) processes underway or proposed around Australia was held in Brisbane in November 2006. That seminar identified a number of actions that would improve the ability of recreational fishers to better engage in the process and improve their ability to influence the outcome.

The inaugural Recfish Australia awards that recognise excellence in contribution, in 6 categories, to recreational fishing were announced at a dinner held in conjunction with the MPA seminar.

Following the success of the National Strategy for the Survival of Released Line Caught Fish it was considered that a national approach needed to be developed to address a broader range of recreational fisheries R,D&E issues.

A workshop was held in Hobart in August 2005 to determine the national priorities for recreational fisheries R,D&E and identify a suitable entity to develop a national approach. The workshop was attended by a range of key people from industry and from government.

The workshop identified a number of national R,D&E priorities and these were subsequently refined to:

- ☐ Establish and promote the social and economic importance of recreational fishing;
- ☐ Assume a greater responsibility for and develop the R,D&E capacity of the industry;
- ☐ Develop young people and industry leaders;
- ☐ Continue to collect recreational fishing data especially in relation to attitudes, motivation, demographics, participation, fishing methods, catch and effort;
- ☐ Develop a framework for the definition of recreational fishers' rights in fisheries and related management arrangements;
- ☐ Continue the research and promotion of best practices in recreational fishing (to ensure that fishing is sustainable, ethical and humane);
- ☐ Understand the effects of access limitation on recreational fisheries and fishers (eg MPAs);
- ☐ Improve the performance of fishing competitions;
- ☐ Understand ESD effects of marine and freshwater stock enhancement and stock recovery;

- ❑ Improve fish welfare; and
- ❑ Improve the communication of research results and outcomes to recreational fishers and others.

The workshop also determined that the most appropriate entity to develop a national strategy was an expanded Released Fish Survival Steering Committee and the workshop nominated a number of additional members to the Steering Committee. That expanded the range of expertise on the committee to be able to deal with the broader range of issues. That Steering Committee would be an interim one until a permanent committee could be established.

Following that workshop a number of proposals were produced for consideration by the Steering Committee. Options for the development of the national strategy were through a FRDC sub-program model or through the current Steering Committee approach. It was considered that the Steering Committee approach was the most appropriate.

At the workshop it was determined that the interim committee should be known as the Recfishing Services Steering Committee however this was later changed to Recfishing Research to better reflect its business.

Also following the workshop a Business Plan for Recfishing Research was developed that identified the significance of each priority issue, its current status and the strategic response that Recfishing Research should take in relation to each issue.

That Business Plan formed the basis for an application to the FRDC 2007/08 round to continue Recfishing Research from 2007/08 to 2009/10. While that has set the framework for Recfishing Research into the future the Steering Committee has already initiated action to address the priority issues and to facilitate projects to address those issues.

The priority issues that were identified were generally very broad and for some it was considered that the specifics in relation to those issues needed to be more clearly defined. Follow up workshops have more clearly identified the priorities in relation to fish stocking and MPAs.

The R,D&E priorities for understanding the ESD effects of marine and freshwater stock enhancement and stock recovery were identified at a workshop in Brisbane in February 2006 and subsequently Recfishing Research has facilitated the development of 2 project proposals that were submitted to FRDC to the 2007/08 round.

The R,D&E priorities for understanding the effects of access limitation on recreational fisheries and fishers (eg MPAs) were identified at the MPA seminar held in Brisbane in November 2006. A number of initiatives are currently underway to address those priorities.

The R,D&E priorities for continuing to collect national recreational fishing data are proposed to be identified through a working group established through the Australian Fisheries Management Forum and including Recfishing Research.

The second round of R,D&E priorities for released fish survival have already been determined as part of the National Strategy for the Survival of Released Fish. The strategy has already seen an investment of around \$7.2 million in 16 projects. However priorities for the development of best practices in other aspects of recreational fishing have still to be determined.

Improving the performance of fishing competitions is already being addressed through a Recfish Australia project being funded through the FRDC to establish a National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing (NEATFish).

The R,D&E priorities for establishing the social and economic importance of recreational fishing have yet to be determined but are likely to overlap with a number of the other priorities and will be considered by the national statistics

working group. In determining the priorities for fish stocking the social and economic importance of this to regional communities has already been identified and a project developed on this aspect.

Building the capacity of the recreational fishing sector to undertake its own R,D&E is being addressed through many projects where involving industry is an integral part of the conduct of the research.

Recfish Australia has a leadership development project currently underway to develop young leaders being funded through the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program (RFCGP).

Recfish Australia has a second RFCGP project that is known as "*Establish a national qualification pathway for recreational fishing community representatives and leaders*" This has been developed for people involved in representation and advocacy work within the recreational fishing sector.

The concept will utilise the many already established competencies units through the National Training Information Service. These units will form the nucleus of at least two qualification standards - Certificate 4 and a Diploma qualification.

The R,D&E priorities for a framework for recreational fishing rights have yet to be determined.

The R,D&E priorities for improving fish welfare have yet to be determined but it is likely that this may be dealt with on an individual project basis.

Improving the extension of information to recreational fishers is a key objective of Recfishing Research under the new application.

A 2 day workshop was held in Brisbane in November 2006 to examine how recreational fishers were involved in the various MPA processes around Australia.

That workshop:

- ☐ Reviewed the current status of engagement by recreational fishers in the MPA process;
- ☐ What was needed to improve the engagement of recreational fishers;
- ☐ What new or improved tools could be provided to recreational fishers to improve the engagement of recreational fishers; and
- ☐ Good and bad lessons learnt by recreational fishers from their previous engagement.

The workshop dinner was the forum for the presentation of the inaugural Recfishing Awards hosted by Recfish Australia. The awards were in 6 categories for excellence in contributing to recreational fishing. The winners in each category were:

- ☐ Best research project with recreational outcomes – The ecology of Mulloway by Matt Taylor;
- ☐ Best recreational enhancement project – Restocking of the Blackwood River Estuary (WA) by Greg Jenkins;
- ☐ Best project or initiative encouraging women and young people's participation in fishing – Sunsmart Fishing Clinics by Recfishwest;
- ☐ Volunteer of the year – Bob Audsley of NSW Fishcare Volunteers;
- ☐ Non-government administrator of the year – John Harrison CEO Recfish Australia; and
- ☐ Leadership – John Harrison CEO Recfish Australia

The winner of the Peter Dundas-Smith Leadership Scholarship was Stephen Morgan.

Keywords

Recfishing Research
Recfish Australia
National strategy
Research, development and extension
Research priorities

2. BACKGROUND

In 2005, Recfish Australia approached the FRDC Board seeking support for a biennial conference for the recreational fishing sector. The Board expanded on the idea to include:

- ❑ The establishment of a "Recreational Fishing Working Group" to identify priority research needs and an implementation plan for the sector;
- ❑ To hold a workshop to identify the priorities and to formulate the plans for an "entity" to progress the national R, D and E plan;
- ❑ To hold a conference/workshop in late 2006 to develop a set of recreational sector principles/guidelines to facilitate processes associated with marine protected areas and, to review progress on the development of the entity;
- ❑ To hold in conjunction with the 2006 workshop an inaugural awards dinner for recognition and contribution to the recreational sector; and
- ❑ Announce at that dinner the inaugural recreational sector recipient of the Peter Dundas-Smith Leadership Scholarship.

This project was developed in response to the Board's suggestions.

3. NEED

In 2001 Recfish Australia, with funding from FRDC under project 2000/313, developed a national research and development plan for the recreational sector¹. While this plan identifies the broad range of issues for the recreational sector that required R,D&E it did not identify priorities, nor how the R,D&E could be funded.

There was a lack of a coordinated national approach to R,D&E for the recreational sector. The only area where there was coordinated approach was in relation to the national strategy for the survival of released fish caught by recreational fishers. That strategy was an initiative of the FRDC and demonstrated that a national approach could be successfully developed and investment directed at national priorities.

To drive future R,D&E there was a need for a suitable entity to be created to steer the process into the future and to facilitate investment. A coherent and planned approach to recreational sector R,D&E was needed to ensure the maximum benefit was attained and also to increase investment streams in R,D&E.

A national seminar was also considered necessary to allow the development of a more coordinated approach to high priority issues for the recreational sector. The initial priority was identified as recreational fisher involvement in the marine protected areas processes in progress or planned around Australia and this was proposed as the subject of the first national seminar.

It was also considered that there was a need to recognise achievements by individuals in the areas of research, management, advocacy and volunteering.

¹ "The national research and development plan for the Recreational Section of the Australian Fishing Industry" Edition 2001

4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this project were:

- 1 Hold a workshop to identify priority research needs of the recreational sector.
- 2 Identify a suitable entity that can be developed to progress the national priorities and complete the framework, timetable and implementation plan needed for a transition to the identified entity.
- 3 Finalise the R,D&E priorities and investment plan for Recfishing Services (now Research) following an industry review at a conference/workshop in the second half of 2006.
- 4 Hold the inaugural recreational fishing awards in conjunction with the conference/workshop and present the inaugural recreational sector recipient of the Peter Dundas-Smith Leadership Scholarship.

5. METHODS

5.1. Prioritise investment in recreational sector R,D&E

1. A one day workshop of key industry and government representatives was held in Hobart on August 2005.
2. The workshop identified a number of priorities for recreational sector R,D&E that were used to formulate a R,D&E strategic plan.
3. Following the workshop a number of initiatives were implemented to identify more specifically where the investment should be made in the priority areas and assisted in the development of projects to address these priorities.

5.2. Identification of a suitable entity to guide investment in recreational sector R,D&E

1. The workshop identified a suitable entity to develop a strategic R,D&E plan on an interim basis until a permanent entity could be established.
2. A framework, timetable and transitional arrangements to a permanent entity were to be developed by the interim entity.

5.3. Seminar on Marine Protected Areas

1. A seminar/workshop to be held in the second half of 2006 to improve recreational fisher involvement in the establishment of Marine Protected Areas.
2. The outcome of the workshop was to develop a set of principles and guidelines to assist recreational fishers to engage in the Marine Protected Areas process.

5.4. Inaugural Recreational Sector Awards

1. Establish a number of categories for awards to be presented to individuals, groups or projects that have provided a significant contribution to the recreational sector.
2. Establish a process by which nominations could be made for these awards.

3. Announce the inaugural awards at the dinner to be held in conjunction with the MPA Seminar.

6. RESULTS

6.1. Prioritise investment in recreational sector R,D&E

A workshop was held in Hobart in August 2005 with attendance by a range of key people from within industry and government to determine a national approach to recreational sector R,D&E.

The key outcomes of the meeting were:

- ☐ The expansion of the Released Fish Survival Committee to include a broader range of expertise to act as the interim "entity" for the development of a Recfishing Services (now Recfishing Research) entity.
- ☐ The development of a range of options for that entity to be considered by the Steering Committee.
- ☐ The identification of an initial range of priority national issues where future R,D&E investment should be targeted.

The national workshop identified a number of national R,D&E priorities and these were subsequently refined to:

- ☐ Establish and promote the social and economic importance of recreational fishing;
- ☐ Assume a greater responsibility for and develop the R,D&E capacity of the industry;
- ☐ Develop young people and industry leaders;
- ☐ Continue to collect recreational fishing data especially in relation to attitudes, motivation, demographics, participation, fishing methods, catch and effort;
- ☐ Develop a framework for the definition of recreational fishers' rights in fisheries and related management arrangements;
- ☐ Continue the research and promotion of best practices in recreational fishing (to ensure that fishing is sustainable, ethical and humane);
- ☐ Understand the effects of access limitation on recreational fisheries and fishers (eg MPAs);
- ☐ Improve the performance of fishing competitions;
- ☐ Understand ESD effects of marine and freshwater stock enhancement and stock recovery;
- ☐ Improve fish welfare; and
- ☐ Improve the communication of research results and outcomes to recreational fishers and others.

Over the following months a document was produced that outlined how a national strategy would be implemented² and was adopted by the Steering Committee in May 2006. This was followed by a Business Plan³ which was adopted by the Steering Committee following the meeting in November 2006. The final Business Plan is in Appendix 1.

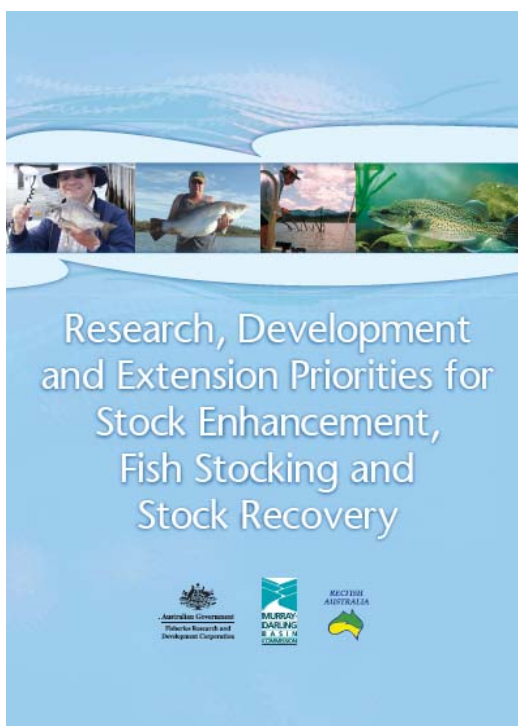
² Winstanley 2006 "Implementing a National Strategy for Recreational Fisheries R,D&E"

³ Sawynok 2006 "Business Plan for Recfishing Research"

That Business Plan formed the basis for an application to the FRDC 2007/08 round to continue Recfishing Research from 2007/08 to 2009/10⁴. While that has set the framework for Recfishing Research into the future the Steering Committee has already initiated action to address the priority issues and to facilitate projects to address those issues.

The priority issues that were identified were generally very broad and for some it was considered that the specifics in relation to those issues needed to be more clearly defined. This has been achieved in relation to two of those issues through subsequent workshops and a working groups is being established in relation to a third priority.

Understand ESD effects of marine and freshwater stock enhancement and stock recovery



The specific areas of research priorities in relation to this issue were identified at a workshop held in Brisbane in February 2006 that looked at R,D&E priorities of stock enhancement, fish stocking and stock recovery. This workshop was carried out as a separate FRDC project.

The R,D&E priorities were identified in the workshop proceedings (*figure 1*) that were published in May 2006 and are available in electronic format only. The proceedings can be downloaded from www.recfish.com.au or a copy can be obtained from Recfish Australia⁵.

Figure 1: Proceeding Of Stock Enhancement Workshop

The R,D&E priorities were summarised as: The broad indications of important future directions for stock enhancement R,D&E outlined during the workshop point to the following as major priority areas for FRDC and Recfish Australia:

- ☐ Experimental application of stock enhancement as a learning tool (ie adaptive management) for fisheries management, and for addressing factors that limit productivity of wild fish stocks.
- ☐ The development of decision support tools and information resources suited to community engagement in planning and implementation of stock enhancement programs.
- ☐ Improved understanding of the impacts of stocked fish on wild stocks.

⁴ Recfishing Research: National Strategy for Recreational Fisheries Research, Development and Extension

⁵ FRDC project 2005/323: National Workshop on Research and Development Priorities of Stock Enhancement, Fish Stocking and Stock Recovery

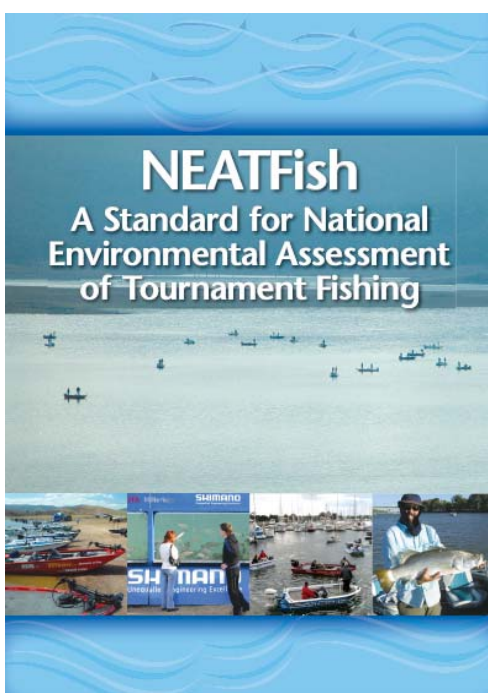
- ❑ Social and market research to:
 - determine the full range of benefits sought by recreational fishers from enhanced fisheries; and
 - demonstrate the social and economic benefits provided by enhanced fisheries.
- ❑ Assessment of the impacts of fish stocking in terms of:
 - success in meeting fishery objectives and angler aspirations;
 - impacts on the environment; and
 - rehabilitating threatened species.

As a result of that workshop 2 applications were developed for submission to the FRDC 2007/08 round.

Understanding the social and economic costs and benefits of stocked impoundment fisheries (Principal Investigator Steve Sutton James Cook University): This project involves all eastern States and has received support from Fisheries agencies in those States except for Victoria (who want to be involved if it gets funded).

Towards responsible fish stocking: Displacement of natural populations, leakage from release locations and changes in the genetic diversity of wildstocks (Principal Investigator John Russell DPI&F. The Steering Committee considered that this application was addressing an important priority that was identified at the Stock Enhancement Workshop. However it was considered that the methods proposed may not provide the answers. Given the projected total cost of \$1.3m it was suggested that a smaller pilot application be considered to test the methods proposed. This project was submitted to FRDC for consideration.

Improve the performance of fishing competitions



Recfish Australia has a current project to develop a National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing (NEATFish) standard⁶. A National Standard is being developed to conform to International Standard ISO 17050 with the ability to move to ISO 14001. A number of fishing competitions around Australia have been assessed in 2006 and further competitions will be assessed in 2007. The assessment process results in a 1-5 star rating based on its environmental, social and economic performance and its management of public risk.

A national workshop involving industry, government, fishing competition organisers and insurers was held in Brisbane in September 2006 to review and endorse the development of NEATFish.

Figure 2: NEATFish national standard being developed

⁶ FRDC project 2006/057: Development of a national environmental management and accreditation system for business/public recreational fishing competitions

National Statistics on Recreational Fishing

A workshop was proposed for January 2007 to develop a national approach to recreational fishing statistics however that workshop was postponed to refine the national objectives. An expertise based working group is currently being proposed to develop the priorities for national statistics.

The R,D&E priorities for establishing the social and economic importance of recreational fishing are likely to overlap with a number of the other priorities. In determining the priorities for fish stocking the social and economic importance of this to regional communities has already been identified and a project developed on this aspect.

Actions on other Priority Areas

The second round of R,D&E priorities for released fish survival have already been determined as part of the National Strategy for the Survival of Released Fish. The strategy has already seen an investment of around \$7.2 million in 16 projects. However priorities for the development of best practices in other aspects of recreational fishing have still to be determined.

6.2. Identification of a suitable entity to guide investment in recreational sector R,D&E

At the Hobart workshop in August 2005 it was determined that an expanded Released Fish Survival Steering Committee was an appropriate interim entity to take the development of Recfishing Research forward.

A paper resulting from the workshop outlining the development of a Recfishing Research entity was presented at the following meetings of the Recfishing Research Steering Committee. Initially it was proposed that the entity should be a sub-program of the FRDC however it was eventually determined that the National Strategy model for the Released Fish Survival program be adopted. It was also determined that an application be submitted to the FRDC 2007/08 round for the establishment of Recfishing Research and that to include a process for establishing the permanent entity.

The Recfishing Research Steering Committee would remain in place until that entity was finalised. The members and a brief resume of the Recfishing Research committee are in the section on Steering Committee at the front of this report.

Up to the February 2006 meeting the Steering Committee had 2 roles. One was to guide the development of Recfishing Research and the other was as the Steering Committee for the Released Fish Survival National Strategy. As Released Fish Survival was still a priority issue under Recfishing Research it was decided to have only one meeting with Released Fish Survival being an item on the agenda for Recfishing Research.

As part of the new Recfishing Research application a new smaller, industry focused Steering Committee is proposed to be established in early 2007/08.

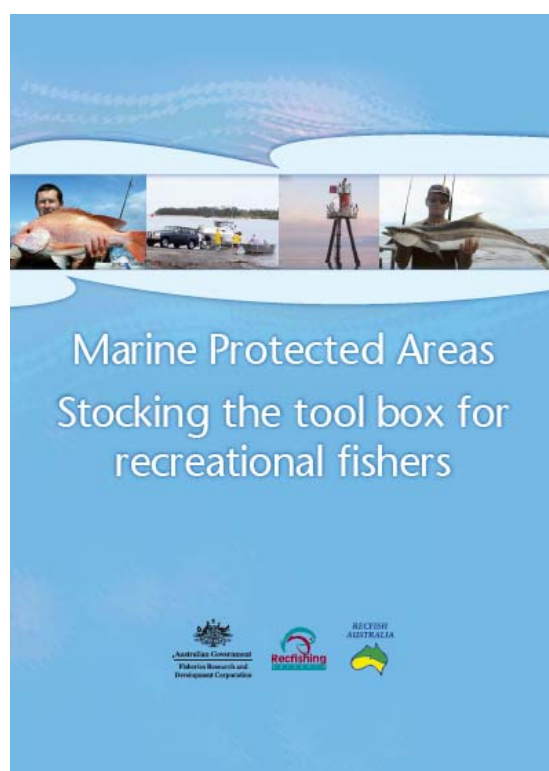
The workshop also determined that the most appropriate entity to develop a national strategy was an expanded Released Fish Survival Steering Committee and the workshop nominated a number of additional members to the Steering Committee. That would expand the range of expertise on the committee to be able

to deal with the broader range of issues. That Steering Committee would be an interim one until a permanent committee could be established.

Following that workshop a number of proposals were produced for consideration by the Steering Committee. Options for the development of the national strategy were through a FRDC sub-program model or through the current Steering Committee approach. It was considered that the Steering Committee approach was the most appropriate.

At the workshop it was determined that the interim committee should be known as the Recfishing Services Steering Committee however this was later changed to Recfishing Research to better reflect its business.

6.3.Seminar on Marine Protected Areas



A 2 day seminar was held in Brisbane in November 2006 to examine how recreational fishers were involved in the various Marine Protected Areas processes around Australia. Proceedings from the workshop were produced in February 2007 and are available from www.recfish.com.au or copies may be obtained from Recfish Australia.

The workshop included key industry groups, recreational fishers, government agencies and conservation groups.

Figure 3: Proceedings of the Marine Protected Areas seminar

Key findings from the two day seminar included:

- ☐ Acknowledgement by the participants of the importance of MPAs as management tools;
- ☐ The need for biodiversity conservation;
- ☐ Inadequate consideration of socio-economic impacts of MPAs;
- ☐ Lack of understanding of impacts of MPAs by governments;
- ☐ MPAs are here to stay;
- ☐ Recognition of the impacts is sought through offsetting initiatives; and
- ☐ The inability of recreational fishers to influence MPA outcomes.

To assist recreational fishers in the MPA engagement process a number of initiatives were put forward:

- ☐ Establish clear unified position statements;
- ☐ Develop rules of engagement;
- ☐ Create a 'roadmap' to assist engagement;
- ☐ Enlist 'champions' to assist communications;
- ☐ Develop case studies on past good and bad examples of process;
- ☐ Guidelines on data collection for monitoring programs;

- ☐ Build capacity within the sector;
- ☐ Form strategic alliances where common ground exists; and
- ☐ Seek funding to support recreational fisher participation in MPA processes.

Research, Development and Extension (R,D&E) has been identified as a priority with the emphasis on D&E. The R,D&E needs were:

- ☐ Documenting case studies;
- ☐ Local baseline data particularly socio-economic pre MPA declaration;
- ☐ Initiate monitoring programs;
- ☐ Establish risk assessment processes for cost/benefits;
- ☐ Assess authenticity of spillover effects; and
- ☐ Establish performance audits on MPAs.

6.4. Inaugural Recreational Sector Awards

In 2006 Recfish Australia established awards for 6 categories of excellence in recreational fishing. These categories were:

- ☐ Best research project with recreational outcomes
- ☐ Best recreational enhancement project
- ☐ Best project or initiative encouraging women and young people's participation in fishing
- ☐ Volunteer of the year
- ☐ Non-government administrator of the year
- ☐ Leadership

A panel of 4 persons comprising 2 members of the Recfish Australia Board, including the Chair, and 2 independent members assessed the nominations for the award and determined the winners.

The inaugural Recfishing awards were held at a dinner during the MPA Seminar in Brisbane in November. The Minister for Fisheries Senator the Hon Eric Abetz attended the dinner and presented the awards.

The awards were introduced by Recfish Australia to recognise the contribution made by the many people who dedicate thousands of hours to their respective causes within recreational fishing. Recfish Australia will present the awards every 2 years. The awards were sponsored and supported by the FRDC and the Recreational Fishing Community Grant Program.

Winners of the six categories were:

Category 1: Best research project with recreational outcomes

"The ecology of Mulloway" by Matt Taylor

Matt Taylor's project "The ecology of Mulloway" *Argyrosomus japonicus* provided the essential information for a generic model of the environmental impact of restocking NSW estuaries with juvenile (fingerling) Mulloway. This numerical model is simple, providing a guide to the appropriate density of any fingerlings that should be released taking into account likely survival and growth rates, the area of preferred habitat, their diet and consumption rate.

Category 2: Best recreational enhancement project

"Restocking the Blackwood River Estuary (WA)" by Greg Jenkins

Project - "Restocking the Blackwood River Estuary (WA)" with Black Bream through a stock assessment in the estuary. Recreational fishers were closely involved in the project. The project undertook an assessment of Black Bream in the estuary and determined that they were highly depleted. 220,000 juvenile bream were cultured

using over 100 broodstock captured from the Blackwood River and released into the river.

Category 3: Best project or initiative encouraging women & young people's participation in fishing

Recfishwest Sunsmart Fishing Clinic Program

These Recfishwest initiated clinics have reached over 3,000 children in metropolitan and regional WA and have become an annual event. The clinic program encourages messages of sustainable fishing, respect for the marine environment and principles of catch and release. The clinics have been well received by the many local communities visited and have become a festival of fishing for many families.

Category 4: Volunteer of the year

Bob Audsley – NSW Fishcare Volunteer

Bob is the Botany Bay leader with the NSW Fishcare Volunteer program. Among other things Bob has been instrumental in implementing the Endeavour High senior school fishing for sport volunteer mentor program and instilling sport fishing goals and aims in teenage anglers. He undertakes training himself annually and assists and trains new volunteers. He is a tireless volunteer totally committed to ensuring kids get out from behind the computer and go fishing

Category 5: Non government administrator of the year

John Harrison – CEO Recfish Australia

John has a wealth of experience in advocacy and representational roles within the recreational fishing industry. John was the National Executive Director of Recfish Australia, then the Executive Officer of the recreational fishing peak body in NT, and is currently the CEO of Recfish Australia. John was instrumental in having Recfish Australia recognised as a representative body of FRDC.

Category 6: Leadership

John Harrison – CEO Recfish Australia

John was instrumental in Australia hosting the 3rd Recreational Fishing World Conference in Darwin. John was President of Recfish Australia prior to becoming a director of the FRDC Board, is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Currently as CEO he continues to look to the future and has sourced funding for programs and initiatives that will develop and support the continuation of advocates and qualified people in the Recfishing industry

7. DISCUSSION

Two of the objectives of this project related to identifying the national R,D&E priorities and another to a suitable entity to develop a national implementation for R,D&E. The broad objectives were determined early at the Hobart workshop and many of these have subsequently been refined and become more specific. A proposal is in place for a working group to refine the priorities for two other issues and this is expected to occur in the near future. These issues are in relation to national statistics on recreational fishing and the social and economic importance of recreational fishing.

With the development of a Business Plan for Recfishing Research where specific priorities have not been identified the plan provides a strategic direction in dealing with the issues.

With the interim Steering Committee formed around the existing Steering Committee for the Released Fish Survival strategy and that committee having been in place for some time meant that it was able to focus on the priority R,D&E issues very early on rather than dealing with committee operations and corporate governance.

That enabled the Steering Committee to focus on assisting researchers and industry bodies to develop projects that addressed the priority areas and a series of projects were developed to address those priorities, at least in part.

8. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Further development of Recfishing Research is dependent on whether the current application before the FRDC Board is funded.

This section may be rewritten once the Board's decision is known.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The development of national R,D&E priorities for recreational fisheries will focus R,D&E resources to address the issues that have been identified and this is likely to provide a greater return on the level of investment.

10. APPENDIX 1 – RECFISHING RESEARCH BUSINESS PLAN



Business Plan for Recfishing Research

INTRODUCTION

During 2005/06 the concept of a national strategy to provide leadership and direction in Research, Development and Extension (R,D&E) in relation to recreational fisheries in Australia was developed in consultation with recreational fishing national and state bodies, fisheries agencies and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

A document titled "Implementing a National Strategy for Recreational Fisheries R,D&E" was developed and adopted in May 2006. An application titled "Recfishing Research: National Strategy for Recreational Fisheries Research, Development and Extension" was developed to seek funding from FRDC to establish and develop Recfishing Research from 2007/08 to 2009/10.

An interim Steering Committee was established in August 2005 which will be replaced by a formal Steering Committee from July 2006. The Steering Committee has the responsibility for the development and implementation of the Investment Plan. The functioning of the Steering Committee is outlined in a document titled "Recfishing Research: Steering Committee Terms of Reference and Engagement".

As part of the development of Recfishing Research a number of national priorities were identified at a workshop in August 2005 and this investment plan outlines, in broad terms, how these issues will be addressed through Recfishing Research.

NATIONAL RECREATIONAL FISHERIES RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION PRIORITIES

The national workshop in August 2005 identified a number of national R,D&E priorities and these were subsequently refined to:

- ☐ Establish and promote the social and economic importance of recreational fishing;
- ☐ Assume a greater responsibility for and develop the R,D&E capacity of the industry;
- ☐ Develop young people and industry leaders;
- ☐ Continue to collect recreational fishing data especially in relation to attitudes, motivation, demographics, participation, fishing methods, catch and effort;
- ☐ Develop a framework for the definition of recreational fishers' rights in fisheries and related management arrangements;
- ☐ Continue the research and promotion of best practices in recreational fishing (to ensure that fishing is sustainable, ethical and humane);

- ☐ Understand the effects of access limitation on recreational fisheries and fishers (eg MPAs);
- ☐ Improve the performance of fishing competitions;
- ☐ Understand ESD effects of marine and freshwater stock enhancement and stock recovery;
- ☐ Improve fish welfare; and
- ☐ Improve the communication of research results and outcomes to recreational fishers and others.

RECFISHING RESEARCH BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

In determining how Recfishing Research will respond to and invest in the national priorities it is necessary to outline the business environment that it operates in. That business environment is primarily comprised of those bodies that are involved in providing funding for or undertaking projects involving R,D&E that are relevant to recreational fishing.

While it is not possible to identify all the bodies that can potentially provide funding for recreational fishing R,D&E there are a number of key bodies that will be the initial focus for Recfishing Research. These are:

- ☐ Fisheries Research and Development Corporation;
- ☐ State and Commonwealth Fisheries agencies;
- ☐ Recreational Fishing Trusts;
- ☐ Recreational Fishing Community Grants;
- ☐ Natural Heritage Trust;
- ☐ Murray Darling Basin Commission and other catchment management bodies; and
- ☐ Industry business grants programs.

Again it not possible to identify all those undertaking R,D&E into recreational fishing issues however researchers and others that Recfishing Research is likely to interact with include:

- ☐ State and Commonwealth Fisheries researchers;
- ☐ Industry based researchers;
- ☐ University based researchers;
- ☐ International researchers with specific required expertise; and
- ☐ Fisheries communicators.

ESTABLISHING RECFISHING RESEARCH

An application titled "Recfishing Research: National Strategy for Recreational Fisheries Research, Development and Extension" has been submitted to FRDC to establish and develop Recfishing Research from 2007/08 to 2009/10. This funding will allow Recfishing Research to strategically respond to the identified national priorities. The table below provides an outline of the investment proposed for Recfishing Research.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The role of Recfishing Research in addressing the national issues identified will be strategic and catalytic rather than attempting to address those issues itself. The

approach taken in relation to each priority area has been to identify the key questions that need to be answered, determine the best way in which they can be addressed, engage the people/groups that are capable of addressing the questions, work collaboratively to develop projects that will address these questions and determine the most appropriate funding sources. It is not proposed that FRDC will be the funding source for all issues and a number of projects have been and are being developed where other funding sources are being targeted.

While the role in addressing the national issues will be strategic, in relation to the extension of new knowledge generated by the research, Recfishing Research will take a more "hands on" approach. This will be through the establishment of a Recfishing Research Extension Service. That service will seek to establish partnerships with research projects and assist in the development and distribution of information products. Initial funding for that service is being sought from FRDC however by 2010/11 this is expected to be self sustaining.

In 2009/10 Recfishing Research will undertake market research into how effective

Year	Recfish Australia contribution	FRDC contribution
2007/08	\$24,000	\$101,224
2008/09	\$24,600	\$40,884
2009/10	\$25,200	\$140,092

it has been and how well it is recognised.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR EACH NATIONAL PRIORITY

This plan outlines how each of the national priorities will be addressed by identifying the significance of the issue and the desired outcome, the current status of how it is being addressed and how Recfishing Research will respond and work to attaining that outcome.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF RECREATIONAL FISHING

Planned Outcome: The social and economic importance of recreational fishing is known and understood by Australian politicians, Government agencies and recreational fishing industry bodies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Over recent years recreational fishing bodies and recreational fishers have not been able to argue effectively in many forums, especially those that deal with resource allocation including those forums that reallocate resources to non fishing interests eg though the establishment of Marine Protected Areas. Part of the reason for this is that the importance of recreational fishing in social and economic terms to Australia is poorly understood by decision makers.

There is a need for sound data on the social importance of recreational fishing in relation to health, its role as an alternative in dealing with anti-social behaviour and social wellbeing in the community. This involves knowing the levels of participation, reasons that people go fishing, their attitudes and practices and comparing the health of people that fish with other groups in the community.

There is a need for sound data on the economic importance of recreational fishing in relation to its contribution to the national economy and job generation in Australia.

CURRENT STATUS

There is little national data on the social importance of recreational fishing with some data being obtained through the National Survey in 2000 and some data obtained through State surveys.

There are very few national data on the economic importance of recreational fishing. The Australian Fishing Tackle Association (AFTA) produced a report titled "An Economic Profile of the Australian Fishing Tackle Industry" in 2002 that estimated a retail value of sales of tackle of \$550m in 2000/01 and 2,550 full-time and part-time jobs across Australia.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Traditionally the focus of recreational fisheries research has primarily been on the biological and environmental aspects of fish stocks and it is these fields where there is the greatest research capacity. The research capacity in relation to social and economic issues is very limited and this has been partly driven by lack of funding directed to these areas and partly by these not being recognised as priorities.

Recfishing Research will work strategically with funders of recreational fishing research such as FRDC, Recreational Trust funds, Fisheries agencies and other funders to increase the funding directed at social and economic issues. Recfishing Research will also identify researchers in these fields and encourage them to consider working on the priority issues.

Recfishing Research has worked with researchers on the development of two projects for submission to the FRDC for the 2007/08 round. These are in relation to evaluating the socio-economic impacts of changes to Queensland's inshore fishery management and to improve understanding of the social and economic costs and benefits of stocked impoundment fisheries.

<h2>INDUSTRY R,D&E CAPACITY</h2>

Planned Outcome: The recreational fishing industry has the capacity and resources to undertake R,D&E into priority issues identified for the industry.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

There is a need for the industry to have a capacity to undertake its own research into issues that are seen as industry priorities. These issues are often not seen as a priority for government researchers or those in universities and are not funded through those traditional avenues.

CURRENT STATUS

More funding is being directed at recreational fisheries research at both the national and state level as more funds are being collected direct from recreational fishers eg from fishing licences. However, very little of this funding is being returned to the industry, due to the very limited research capacity within the industry. The reliance on traditional research providers is limiting the development of innovation within the industry.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research will work with researchers that currently work within the industry to develop their capacity to undertake R,D&E projects and to become more competitive in the market place for R,D&E contracts. Recfishing Research will identify researchers that can address the national priorities and work with them to develop projects and improve the quality of applications to increase the number of applications that are successful.

Recfishing Research will also promote the need for a greater involvement of industry researchers in those programs where there is a direct contribution to research funds by recreational fishers.

DEVELOP YOUNG PEOPLE AND INDUSTRY LEADERS

Planned Outcome: The recreational fishing industry has the leadership to take the industry forward and advocate its position effectively in decision making forums.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Leaders within national and state recreational peak bodies are aging and while many of these bodies have attempted to implement succession plans these have only had limited success.

CURRENT STATUS

A quick scan of key national and state recreational fishing bodies reveals almost all those involved in positions in these bodies are over 50. While this means there is a significant level of experience within those bodies there are very few younger people being attracted to become the next generation of leaders.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research will work with national and state recreational fishing bodies to develop leadership programs that will be attractive to younger fishers. Recfishing Research will also work with those bodies to assist in the identification of young fishers with leadership aspirations or potential and encourage them to get involved in leadership and skills development program.

Recfish Australia has already initiated a leadership development program with funding from the Recreational Fishing Community Grants program. This program will work on the development of skills that will improve the capacity of participants to undertake future leadership roles through dealing with real industry issues.

NATIONAL STATISTICS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING

Planned Outcome: Data on attitudes, motivation, demographics, participation, fishing methods, catch and effort are available at the national level.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

For recreational fishing bodies to be able to engage in debates on national issues such as Government policy development in relation to recreational fishing, increasing national funding for recreational fishing, effectively engaging in national resource allocation there is a need to have basic statistics on recreational fishing.

CURRENT STATUS

A National Survey of Recreational Fishing was undertaken in 2000 that produced the first national statistics on recreational fishing in relation to participation, fishing effort, catch, expenditure, attitudes and awareness. At the time of the survey it was proposed that it be repeated each five years. While there is high level recognition of the need for national statistics in bodies such as the Australian Fisheries Management Forum and commitment by some States to a repeat survey this has not eventuated.

The cost, duplication of data being collected in some States and a perceived lack of need for the data at a national level has effectively halted progress towards a repeat survey. Most States have conducted or about to conduct their own surveys so support for another national survey is likely to further diminish.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research considers that there is an important need to have statistics on recreational fishing at a national level. The recent move towards the recognition of a recreational fishing equivalent to the commercial sector's GVP is likely to lead to a greater recognition and possibly funding by the Commonwealth Government. The calculation of the GVP will be based on the value of the catch of the recreational sector. The exploration of the concept of a levy on fishing tackle will also focus further attention on the need for national statistics.

The response of Recfishing Research has been to promote a "bottom up" approach to the generation of national statistics, particularly in relation to catch and effort. The concept is to aggregate data being collected at the state and regional level up to a national level. Along with this a number of States proposing to undertake surveys shortly were seeking to ensure that any data collected would be consistent with what others were doing. This has led to a proposal by Recfish Australia for a National Recreational Fishing Statistics workshop for January 2007. This workshop is likely to set the future direction for how national statistics should be arrived at.

FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING RIGHTS

Planned Outcome: A clear understanding of recreational fishing rights in relation to resource allocation between sectors of the fishing industry.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

There is a need for a clear framework that is recognised by all industry sectors for the reallocation on resources between sectors.

CURRENT STATUS

Decisions on resource allocation between fishing industry sectors have been based on who can exert the greatest political pressure and for some years both the commercial and recreational sectors have been seeking an improved definition of "fishing rights".

In 2002 a workshop was held to move the development of recreational fishing rights forward and resulted in the "Coolangatta Communiqué" which set out some elements of a fishing rights framework. A Fishing Rights conference was also held in 2005 to advance the development of fishing rights by the commercial sector.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

While this has been recognised as a R,D&E priority the issue is primarily the responsibility of recreational and commercial fishing bodies. Recfishing Research is only likely to become involved in the recognition and advancement of any specific issues that require research. At this stage there have not been any specific issues that have been identified.

BEST PRACTICES IN RECREATIONAL FISHING

Planned Outcome: Fishing practices of recreational fishers are sustainable, ethical and humane.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

There is a need to clearly define the best practices that should be used by recreational fishers.

CURRENT STATUS

The National Strategy for the Survival of Released Fish has been in place from July 2001 and will end in June 2007. This program involves research and the promotion of best practices in releasing fish by recreational fishers. A total of 15 projects involving a

total investment of \$6.5m have resulted in a significant increase in understanding of best practices and the survival rates for a range of key species.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

The National Strategy for the Survival for Released Fish will continue as a priority under Recfishing Research. Many of the priorities established under the National Strategy have been addressed and our knowledge significantly improved. New priorities have been identified for 2007/08 onwards.

There are a range of other practices in relation to recreational fishing where research may be required to improve practices. At this stage Recfishing Research has not identified a process by which those R,D&E priorities can be priorities and to what level the investment should be and the appropriate funding sources. Some practices such as the correct disposal of fishing line do not need research but require an education or extension program. Such extension could be funded under the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program or other funding sources dealing with managing rubbish disposal.

EFFECTS OF ACCESS LIMITATIONS ON RECREATIONAL FISHING

Planned Outcome: That access limitations to recreational fishing are implemented with maximum engagement of recreational fishers and result in minimum impacts.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Access limitations have been imposed on and will continue to be imposed on recreational fishers around Australia though the establishment of management arrangement for National Parks and Marine Parks. In the case of Marine Parks this is primarily through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other zoning arrangements that limit access to fish.

CURRENT STATUS

In 2004 a rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park resulted in the effective closure of 33% of the Marine Park to fishing. A Marine Park program is currently being implemented by the Commonwealth Government in Commonwealth waters around Australia. Many State Governments are also implementing MPAs in waters that they manage.

In many of the processes used by the respective Government bodies undertaking the development of the Management Plans for Marine Parks recreational fishers feel left out or powerless to influence the outcome even though they, along with commercial fishers, are the only groups that are impacted by such management changes as the establishment of MPAs.

While science and research has played a part in the establishment of MPAs the process has largely been a political one with most politicians supporting the establishment of MPAs. In the case of the GBR where 33% of the Marine Park was placed in MPAs this was supported by all parties when the proclamation was made by the Commonwealth Government.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research does not hold a view on the effectiveness of MPAs however it believes that there is community and political support for their establishment. The most appropriate approach for recreational fishers is to work with the agencies developing management plans to endeavour to minimise the impact on recreational fishers.

The role of Recfishing Research is to identify case studies where recreational fishers have been successful in achieving an acceptable outcome. The Queensland Capricorn Coast fishing community was successful in achieving a result that had a minimum impact on fishers in their area in the rezoning of the GBR. The process used by the Capricorn Coast fishers was provided to Recfish Australia and was used recently to achieve a positive outcome for recreational fishers in a proposed marine protected area off Freycinet Peninsula in Tasmania.

As well the Capricorn Coast fishers were successful in establishing a community based monitoring program that is collecting data on the effects of the management changes in their area. This is to ensure that fishers and the community have a greater understanding and involvement in the future management decisions.

Recfishing Research will continue to identify case studies that can be provided to recreational fishers and groups that are going through a Management Planning process. Recfish Australia has received funding from the Department of Environment and Heritage to assist groups in their engagement in the management process.

IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF FISHING COMPETITIONS

Planned Outcome: That fishing competitions remain an integral part of the fishing experience by being conducted in a sustainable manner that is socially and economically beneficial to the areas in which they are held.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Fishing competitions are coming under increased scrutiny from environmental groups, animal rights groups and by the broader community.

CURRENT STATUS

Currently Recfish has a project funded by FRDC to develop a National Environmental Assessment for Tournament Fishing (NEATFish) scheme for business/public recreational fishing competitions. A National Standard is being developed to conform to International Standard ISO 17050 with the ability to move to ISO 14001. A number of competitions around Australia have been and will be assessed under NEATFish through to June 2007. The assessment process results in a 1-5 star rating based on its environmental, social and economic performance and its management of public risk.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research assisted in the development of the current Recfish Australia project and will await the outcome of this project before considering if further strategic action is necessary.

STOCK ENHANCEMENT AND STOCK RECOVERY

Planned Outcome: That fish stocking is conducted in a sustainable manner and is socially and economically beneficial to communities adjacent to where the stocking occurs and stock recovery contributes to the maintenance of threatened or endangered fish species.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Fish stocking is increasingly being questioned in relation to its effects on wild fish stocks and other threatened fauna. It has been proposed to be listed as a key threatening process when carried out in areas outside the normal range for the species proposed to be stocked.

Fish stocking can be used as a means of maintaining or enhancing fish stocks that are under threat.

CURRENT STATUS

A workshop funded by FRDC was held in Brisbane in February 2006 to identify the key R,D&E associated with stock enhancement, fish stocking and stock recovery. The proceedings of the workshop have been published to guide future investment in research in this area.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research has assisted with the development of a number of projects seeking FRDC funding that are addressing the priority issues identified. This includes a proposal to examine the social and economic benefits of fish stocking to adjacent communities and another proposal to look at the impacts of stocking on wild stocks and endangered fauna.

Recfishing Research will continue to work with researchers that have an interest in fish stocking to address the other priorities that have been identified.

<h3>IMPROVE FISH WELFARE</h3>

Planned Outcome: Fish caught by recreational fishers are handled appropriately if they are kept or if they are released.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Fish welfare is a growing concern among animal rights groups and in the broader community. There is a need for recreational fishers to treat fish humanely.

CURRENT STATUS

Material is available on how to kill fish humanely that are intended to be eaten and the Released Fish Survival program has provided information on best practices in releasing fish. Fact sheets are available from the Released Fish Survival website.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

This issue is primarily an extension and education issue and making material available on handling fish will be a role for the Recfishing Research Extension Service.

<h3>IMPROVE EXTENSION OF RECREATIONAL FISHERIES RESEARCH</h3>
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Planned Outcome: Information on best fishing practices and knowledge gained from research is made available to maximise the benefits of new knowledge.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE

Improving the extension of new knowledge is recognised as a key issue underpinning all the other priority areas and the success of changing management or fisher behaviour is very much dependent on the effectiveness of the extension.

CURRENT STATUS

Extension is carried out to some degree by most recreational fisheries research projects however the effectiveness of that extension is dependent on the how well the researchers have engaged recreational fishers during the planning and conduct of the research. Many projects and researchers still see extension as an "add on" following the completion of the research and fewer resources and time are committed to this important aspect of the work. Often researchers have poor engagement skills and do not utilise others that have the required skills.

RECFISHING RESEARCH STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Recfishing Research sees this as a critical element underpinning everything else that this Investment Plan is addressing and is the one area where it is taking a “hands on” rather than a strategic approach. A Recfishing Research Extension Service is being established to improve the extension of new knowledge obtained from research.

The Recfishing Research Extension Service will focus on getting information into recreational fishers existing information networks rather than on the employment of people and development of infrastructure. The Released Fish Survival website will be revamped into a Recfishing Research website but will retain the approach of using simple fact sheets and providing a least path approach to users seeking access to information.

During the Released Fish Survival program links were established with information networks that are used by recreational fishers including websites, fishing magazines, fishing television presenters and fishing tackle outlets. Recfishing Research will continue to build its contacts with these networks and also support the development of new methods of providing access to information. Recfish Australia is currently looking at an innovative proposal to develop an information portal that could improve information dissemination.

An important part of the information network is the National Fisheries Communicators Network (NFCN) which encompasses the fisheries extension service of all State Fisheries agencies. Recfishing Research has worked with the NFCN in the extension of Released Fish Survival material and will expand that to include the broader range of products to be produced in the future.

In developing the Recfishing Research Extension Service it is proposed to seek partnerships with current and new research projects relevant to recreational fisheries to assist in the development of information products and in the distribution of those products. To establish the service we have sought funding from FRDC on a sliding scale over three years to provide Recfishing Research with a ability to enter into joint arrangements with researchers. At the end of the three years the extension service will need to be self funding to continue.

Summary of Recfishing Research Extension Service

Year	FRDC funds	Other contributors
2007/08	\$10,000	\$5,000
2008/09	\$10,000	\$7,000
2009/10	\$5,000	\$10,000

Other contributors will include funding that is provided by researchers towards the development of information products based on their research.