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**Fisheries Research and  
Development Corporation**

**FRDC Project 2008/319**





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Development Corporation**

# **FRDC Recreational Fishing Study Tour – 5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational fishing conference and tour**

## **NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2008**

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**Tour leader: Mr Frank Prokop**

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## Non Technical Summary

### FRDC 2008/319 Recreational fishing industry bursary and study tour to United States

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#### Objectives

1. Empower young recreational fishing industry leaders through a study tour of United States recreational fisheries management and peak body initiatives
2. Educate recreational fishers in Australia of relevant recreational fisheries management initiatives for inclusion in strategic and operational plans
3. Report on Australian recreational fisheries management and peak body governance against United States initiatives.

#### NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:

##### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE

Around 20 Australians that attended the 5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference were able to obtain a snapshot of what is happening in recreational fisheries management and administration in the USA and around the world. Of these twenty delegates, 10 were able to undertake an FRDC facilitated study tour following the conference (see Appendix 3).

Recognition of recreational fishing industry leaders undertaking a study tour (modelled on successful commercial fishing industry initiatives) demonstrated that on-ground interactions could have profound influence on future industry development. Having a variety of ages, experience and wide geographic representation greatly enhanced the learnings and interactions of the group.

Young future leaders that attended the conference and the study tour have become better placed to aspire to leadership roles in Australia.

Key research areas and definitive actions have been incorporated into the revision of the Recfishing Research Business and Investment plan.

Following the conference, Doug Olander, Editor of *Sportfishing* magazine in the US, actively promoted the use of the WA designed release weight and lobbied for its inclusion in Florida legislation to improve released fish survival.

Bill Sawynok was awarded a world conservation award by the International Gamefishing Association.

Participants were able to make recommendations on anchor management and artificial reef management in several Australian states following meetings in the United States.

Recfish Australia was able to develop strong links with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) through its CEO Frank Petersen.

Through contacts made at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, a conduit was able to be established between researchers conducting related research on gulper sharks and with an evolutionary taxonomist regarding the venting structure on Samson fish.

The recreational fishing industry in Australia is extremely important, with more than \$2 billion in economic activity and participation rates of 20 - 30% of the adult population.

Australian recreational fisheries management is highly regarded throughout the world. The Fifth World Recreational Fishing Conference (Australia hosted the Third Conference in Darwin) provided a unique and important opportunity for Australia to learn where it sits in a world context.

An obvious opportunity existed following the World Recreational Fishing Conference in Florida to put together a program that added value to FRDC bursary winners and provided additional opportunities beyond conference attendance. This project was able to follow the successful template of the commercial fishing industry study tour following the European Seafood Exposition (ESE).

As with the ESE industry tour, an open invitation to other Australian delegates attending the conference resulted in a total of ten participants on the study tour. A daily blog on the Recfish Australia website kept people in Australia informed of the progress of the study tour.

Each study tour participant undertook the task of being tour leader, meeting facilitator and rapporteur during the trip to allow a wide range of skills to be developed.

A total of nine papers were presented by participants on the study tour; an exceptional result for a World Conference held at an overseas venue. Bill Sawynok also moderated a full day session and was widely lauded for his 'world's best practice' Infofish service.

The Australian contingent was well received at the conference with the release weight, NEATFISH accreditation and recreational involvement in tagging/research programs eliciting much favourable comment.

The tour itinerary included the opportunity to address four major issues facing recreational fisheries in Australia. The first issue was marine park management. Meetings and an inspection of the National Marine Sanctuary, the only jointly state/federal managed marine reserve in the United States, was insightful.

It was clear that the US has different priorities, with small sanctuaries typified by clear delineation, provision of public moorings and a greater attention to diver damage of coral than to banning recreational fishing. Management advisory groups had a very strong recreational fishing presence and there was a more clear desire to work with recreational fishing interests. There was strong opposition from the marine park managers to habitat enhancement, although the group noticed many miles of artificial reefs in the form of road causeways in southern Florida.

The second major issue involved stock enhancement programs for recreational fisheries. There were a number of meetings at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to discuss the red drum stocking programs. The scientists were strong advocates of a well managed stocking program and there were many projects on improving the community return from stocking through size and site selection. Stocking was not seen as a panacea for habitat destruction, but rather a pragmatic way to address population and fishing pressure.

The third major issue involved an examination of the recreational fishing governance system in the United States. Meetings with politicians in Washington DC were not possible with the Presidential election having been held less than two weeks before the visit. However, a meeting with Frank Peterson Jr, CEO of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) was a highlight for many of the study group. The RBFF budget of \$12 million US allows for many education and extension programs that we can only dream about. They have major partnerships with government in promoting recreational fishing licence renewals, for which they receive some recompense.

There are significant differences in the way that recreational fishers view their fishing. Perhaps due to long standing traditions of licensing and a strong freshwater history with limited resource sharing complications, most Americans view quality fishing as something which requires an investment beyond the licence fee. Therefore, there is a strong organisational and volunteer base for projects.

Conversely in Australia, most fishers believe the government must provide for their fishing quality and they reserve the right to criticise any decision which is not in their interest.

One positive difference in Australia is that although the representative organisations are relatively weak, they are much more strongly cross representational, with game, sport, diving and freshwater interests able to be represented while in the United States there are stronger but much more narrowly focussed bodies such as Trout Unlimited, B.A.S.S. etc.

Finally, a visit to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science provided an American perspective on angler involvement in tagging programs. A charter boat trip to examine artificial reefs demonstrated their benefits (and again those of road bridges). The fishing quality remained high even with much higher fishing pressure than we are used to in Australia through bag limits, slot limits and licences.

The trip was a credit to the FRDC for their support for the concept. Participants from Queensland, NSW, ACT, Tasmania and Western Australia shared experiences and learnings that have already proven beneficial on issues such as the Coral Sea sanctuary proposal and which will be utilised for many years to come.

**KEYWORDS:**        **Recreational fisheries, marine parks, fish stocking, artificial reefs, community based fisheries research, governance, World Congress.**

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to acknowledge the Commonwealth government for the funding of projects such as the Young Future Leaders programs run by Recfish Australia and Recfishwest through the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme which allowed the attendance of outstanding young people.

We would like to thank Recfish Australia, and through them Recfishing Research, for their contributions and assistance in making this project happen.

The investigators would like to thank all of the participants of the conference and especially those who attended the study tour for their unflinching good humour, even in a small bus and for their enthusiasm in gaining as much out of the tour as possible. Their dedication in contributing to the blog was appreciated by those who could not attend.

We would like to thank Larissa Szynski, for her organisational skills associated with the tour and hope that our Aussie ex-pat enjoys the Vegemite brought to her by our delegation.

We would like to thank Karrie Carnes from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Dr Chris Young from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Frank Peterson Jr. from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and Dr Jon Lucy from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

We would like to thank our charter boat skippers in Florida, especially ours that got us a double hook-up of sailfish, and Captain Chandler Hogg of Newport News for his insights into Chesapeake Bay artificial reefs, although we weren't able to catch any pesky 20 pound bluefish. And thanks to our bus drivers – putting up with Diggles in Virginia playing with the American electronic navigator was most amusing.

We would like to thank all the American, researchers, managers and anglers who took the time to share their knowledge and friendship during the trip.

Finally we would like to thank FRDC for their support for this project. The vision of the People Development Program in supporting a recreational program like this is greatly appreciated. All of the FRDC staff have continually been a source of support and positive reinforcement for this and many other projects.

## Background

Every three years a World Recreational Fishing Conference is held. Australia hosted the Third Conference in Darwin in 2002. The fourth conference was held in Trondheim, Norway in 2005 and the fifth conference was held in Dania Beach (near Fort Lauderdale) Florida, USA in November 2008.

Australia has had a strong presence at these conferences and the recreational fisheries management initiatives in this country have been very highly regarded in other parts of the world.

However, Australia has suffered greatly due to the distance to other parts of the world, the lack of well developed management and industry infrastructure, and a belief that other parts of the world must be in a better position than we are.

For example, at the 4<sup>th</sup> conference, it was obvious that the work of Bill Sawynok was clearly considered world's best practice in angler engagement in research and tagging programs. Many speakers referred to this work or used data that they had obtained from Bill's work, yet Bill himself was not able to attend due to financial constraints.

Australia has frequently relied heavily on overseas visitors to provide management insights for Australia. This has proven useful in a number of circumstances, yet the vastly different issues in Australia (including our massive coastline, modest population and low nutrient inflows in a very dry continent) have meant that the information has not always been able to be applied.

The commercial fishing industry has been able to address this difficulty by running a study tour for interested industry people following the European Seafood Exposition (ESE). These study tours provided an important opportunity for industry people to see issues in the context in which they had been applied, which allowed a more objective assessment of their applicability to Australia. A wide range of contacts also greatly benefitted the participants in future business and management dealings.

The FRDC's relatively recently established People Development Program sought to develop people and management skills for future management. This was enhanced by the Community Recreational Fishing Grants Scheme administered by the Commonwealth government.

Recfish Australia ran a highly successful young future leaders program in Darwin. One of the positive outcomes of this course was the selection of one participant for a bursary to attend the World Recreational Fishing Conference as part of a personal development program. This award was won by Tim Wilkes of Tasmania.

The opportunity afforded by the World Conference and the opportunity to visit with American recreational fishing industry leaders and managers resulted in this FRDC project.



## **Need**

The recreational fishing industry in Australia is extremely important, with more than \$2 billion in economic activity and participation rates of 20 - 30% of the adult population. Recreational fisheries management and the industry itself is struggling to establish its identity in a local, national and international context.

Australian recreational fisheries management is highly regarded throughout the world. The 5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference provided a unique and important opportunity for Australia to learn where it sits in a world context. Australia had an opportunity to demonstrate a number of our important initiatives, such as CapReef and ANSA Tagging programs, NSW Gamefish tagging, NEATFISH tournament accreditation, Samson Science and the release weight development and Recfishing Research.

This project was based on the initiative of the commercial fishing industry study tour following the European Seafood Exposition. The opportunity was utilised following the World Recreational Fishing Conference in Florida to put together a program that added value to bursary winners and provided significantly better outcomes beyond conference attendance.

As with the ESE industry tour, the project issued invitations to other Australian delegates who attended the conference, to be a part of the study tour. This aspect of the project encouraged networking and forged friendships that added significantly to the outcomes of this project, and the investment made by others in attending the conference in Florida.

The United States has a long history of more intensive and well funded recreational fisheries management and administration. There are important advantages in being able to see programs and initiatives in operation or administration. The group was able to examine four important issues of relevance to recreational fishers and managers – marine park establishment and management, marine fisheries enhancement, recreational fisheries promotion and governance and artificial reef use. Meetings were able to be held with scientists, managers, conservationists, charter boat operators and anglers in Florida, Virginia and Washington DC.

Australian recreational fisheries management stands at the threshold of important changes. As integrated or co-management systems are being implemented, it is important to have a variety of experienced and new people with a broad understanding to be able to meet new challenges.

## **Objectives**

1. Empower young recreational fishing industry leaders through a study tour of United States recreational fisheries management and peak body initiatives
2. Educate recreational fishers in Australia of relevant recreational fisheries management initiatives for inclusion in strategic and operational plans
3. Report on Australian recreational fisheries management and peak body governance against United States initiatives.

Objective 1 offered an opportunity for young recreational fishing industry leaders to attend an international conference and a study tour that would have normally been beyond their means. FRDC provided considerable support through the funding of this study tour and additional bursaries.

Additional participants attended the study tour at their own expense. These included Ann Garard funded through the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust Fund, Andrew Duke, University of Tasmania and Dr Evan Jones of Queensland and Bryan van der Walt (southern Florida part of the tour) – self funded (see Appendix 3).

Bursary winner Mr Tim Wilkes was unfortunately not able to attend the study tour due to personal commitments. The opportunity for additional invaluable learning, interaction with other study tour participants and mentoring was therefore reduced. Dr Ben Diggles provided many important insights during the study tour and made an extremely important contribution.

Mr Shane Jasprizza was also a participant in the Recfish Australia young future leaders course and gained an important insight into recreational fisheries management. Shane has used the opportunity to great effect and is looking to set up a peak body of ACT anglers.

There were a number of political difficulties involved in finalising participation in the study tour. Strong support was received by the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust committees and Mr Malcolm Poole, Mr John Drew and Mr Bryan van der Walt were late withdrawals from the study tour due to objections raised with the NSW Minister involving international travel.

Mr Bryan van der Walt was subsequently able to attend the conference and attended the study tour for the southern Florida portion of the trip at his own expense.

Mr Jack Scrine of Queensland (currently involved with *Modern Fishing* magazine) was unable to raise sufficient funds to attend the conference and study tour and was also a late withdrawal.

The study tour provided a diverse itinerary to examine a variety of recreational fisheries management and governance arrangements in the United States. There was a good mix of younger and older participants to allow for informed discussion from a variety of perspective. This objective was clearly met.

Objective 2 has had benefit from the perspective of Australia being able to learn from American initiatives but also to educate the Americans of Australian initiatives.

In the latter case, it was clear that Australian projects including as CapReef and ANSA Tagging programs, NSW Gamefish tagging, NEATFISH tournament accreditation, Samson Science and the release weight development and Recfishing Research were world's best practice. FRDC and Australia should be justifiably proud of involvement of recreational fishers in cutting edge research and development programs. The release weight was promoted in the angling media in the US and is being adopted legislatively in Florida. Bill Sawynok was awarded an international award for conservation by the International Gamefishing Association, who hosted the conference.

Recfishing Research has been able to utilise information gathered on the study tour in their strategic planning as has Recfish Australia and Recfishwest. Information on marine park

design management has been utilised throughout Australia, including in the bioregional planning process and the Coral Sea debate.

NSW and Western Australia in particular have been utilising protocols for marine recreational enhancement learned in Florida as they progress related projects. Other jurisdictions have examined the protocols for artificial reefs, particularly in conjunction with information gained from the visiting Korean fellow that FRDC previously funded.

Recfish Australia has benefitted from the governance information provided by the RBFF and has examined additional funding options for the organisation. This objective has been met.

Objective 3 was to report on Australian recreational fisheries management and peak body governance against United States initiatives.

One difficulty with this objective was that planned meetings with United States legislators and senior public servants in Washington DC was not possible due to the proximity of the United States Presidential election. Politicians were either not in Washington DC or unable to make time to meet so soon after a major political event.

Nonetheless, the meeting with Frank Peterson of the RBFF was extremely useful from a governance perspective and highlighted a number of historical and cultural differences between American and Australian recreational fisheries management and governance regimes.

Recfish Australia has been able to pursue a number of funding options to promote recreational fishing and has been able to examine ways to address the cultural reliance on government paternalistic management models in Australia. Comparisons were provided to Julian Cribb who has prepared for the FRDC a report on recreational fisheries management.

Frank Prokop has included comparisons in presentations including to the Australian Parliamentary Conference in Perth in late 2009.

It was clear from the discussions that in the areas of community engagement in research, in awareness of management process and in an ability to represent wider rather than narrower interests, Australia was doing extremely well.

When it came to community recognition of recreational fishing, American recreational fishers believe that they must participate in volunteer programs such as stream improvement and to ensure that enhancement and management programs were accountable to anglers. Australia lags far behind the United States in this area.

## **Methods**

A funding application was prepared by Recfishwest to co-ordinate a study tour to the United States following the World Recreational Fishing Conference in Florida. This was designed to pick up participants from other FRDC initiatives such as Young Future Leaders and other bursaries and offer the opportunity for other attendees to optimise their time in the United States.

Formal expressions of interest were called well before the conference so that travel logistics could be worked out before the trip. Bookings and a draft itinerary were worked out between the co-investigators prior to the trip.

A number of issues were encountered and largely resolved. These included:

1. The time differences meant that final confirmation of bookings etc that needed to be done by phone, were done very late at night. Finding quality professional assistance with bookings for accommodation and buses was problematic. This resulted in one bus being too small and several of the accommodation venues were more upmarket than self funded or subsidised Australian attendees would normally use.
2. Funding for the trip came from a wide variety of sources, including FRDC, NSW Trust Account, Recfishwest, University of Tasmania and private individuals. Even within the FRDC funding, some funding was available through this project and other funds were made available to individuals through bursaries and then debited against this project. This made the logistics of paying for things like accommodation difficult for the participants. This should be simplified for future study tours.
3. The budget was prepared with an expectation of an exchange rate of approximately \$0.88 US to an Australian dollar. Due to the global financial crisis, the exchange rate was in the vicinity of \$0.65 US, making many of the costs much higher than anticipated. Booking and paying further in advance for some costs would, in this instance have been advantageous. This made budgeting and management of the trip more difficult for the administrators and participants.
4. The preparation time for the trip was seriously under-estimated. The logistics for a wide ranging trip of this nature were much more onerous than anticipated.
5. It was extremely difficult to arrange several of the meetings. Cold calling from Australia to say that you were leading an important Australian delegation was met with respectful scepticism. In several instances, junior staff were assigned to meet and greet our delegation. However, in every instance, once the meetings commenced, interest increased greatly and many additional staff turned up to interact with the Australian experts. Being able to convince time poor experts that the Australian delegation was as experienced and knowledgeable as proved to be the case would greatly benefit future study tours.
6. Political interference in the study tour was not anticipated. NSW in particular suffered from late changes due to Ministerial approvals being required but not granted for delegates that had registered for the trip. This was unavoidable but unfortunate for those concerned and although it did complicate the logistics, planning was sufficiently in advance of the trip to allow changes to be included.
7. Finally, as is often the case with tours of this nature, we tried to do too much and were very tired by the end of the trip.

The use of rotating group leaders and rapporteurs was very successful. All took their task seriously and provided an extremely professional delegation to those we visited.

The lack of engagement by one bursary winner with the study tour participants was cause for concern and this should be rectified as part of the streamlining of bursary/study tour processes in the future.

The combination of air travel and buses worked well, allowing the group to communicate together while keeping costs at a reasonable level.

## Results/Discussion

Taking Australian recreational fishers from a variety of backgrounds and levels of professional development worked extremely well. There was the opportunity for formal and informal mentoring and an exchange of ideas from a variety of jurisdictional and generational perspectives.

There were a number of significant findings from the trip.

Firstly, Australia is held in high regard for the quality and innovation of its recreational fisheries management. There are a number of world's best practice research and management projects which can be found in Australia. Participants at the World Conference were pleased to be able to learn of a number of these projects and to interact with people like Bill Sawynok and Ben Diggles on projects such as CapReef and NEATFISH. Australia frequently undervalues its own place in the world and it was positive to see the efforts of Australian researchers, industry and managers acknowledged in a forum of this nature.

Australia has an obligation to the rest of the world to promote its successes so that they can be understood, and if possible, adapted to other jurisdictions. Australia has tended to rely upon visiting experts who have presented a 'one size fits all' solution to management problems which has had highly variable success. Sending a number of delegates, and including a mix of experienced and young leaders to conferences and study tours allows critical assessments of the projects and their leaders in situ, with significant benefits of empowerment across a wider group and the capacity to follow up information at the time.

Secondly, the breadth of knowledge of the recreational fishers on the tour was universally praised. This included younger members of the team who were able to offer insightful comments and perspectives along the way. By virtue of our geography, history and culture, Australian recreational fisheries leaders are generalists, with an extremely broad knowledge base and the ability to explore lateral and innovative management solutions. Americans, on the other hand, often possess greater specialist information backed up with far greater resources and a culture of each angler making a tangible contribution to their fishing future. However, they have a stronger but narrower mandate for management discussions and this means that intra-sectoral discussions can actually be more difficult for them.

The down side of being so far away from the US, is that much of what we are doing, and the expertise that is available in Australia, is unrecognised. This conference represents the single greatest attempt by the recreational sector (other than the Third World Recreational Fishing Conference which was held in Darwin), to sell some of our achievements to the rest of the world. The lack of general understanding of Australia also made it difficult to make appointments with senior industry and government officials.

Universally, after we arrived and word of the level of engagement reached other people where we were visiting, many senior and previously unavailable leaders not only met with us, they were asking as many questions of us as we were of them. The capacity of this tour to set a high level of professionalism and quality of participant needs to be built upon with further study tours. The organisation of future tours should be easier as the bona fides of this initiative has been clearly demonstrated. It would be beneficial if at least one of the participants on this study tour, and preferably one of the younger participants, were to go on another tour to maintain linkages.

One of the most difficult aspects of the tour related to the rapid change in exchange rate and the variety of funding sources for participants. There was clearly a need for some activities such as internal flights, travel and accommodation to be pre-booked so that everyone could travel together. This required Recfishwest to invoice a number of participants for some costs but not all. As Len Olyott has reported (see Appendix 4), this led to some difficulty. The extent to which the bursaries were able to meet trip costs was a factor, as the real cost changed by nearly 20% between planning and taking the trip due to currency fluctuations.

In future it may be better to have the infrastructure costs of bursary winners (such as travel and accommodation) paid to the trip organiser and then a *per diem* allowance paid for the duration of the trip. The administration costs for this study tour proved to be larger than expected, although they were met by Recfishwest staff, especially Con Costa.

Different parts of the trip resonated with different participants. There was a good balance between face to face meetings and on-site inspections. It is important to explore several topics (in keeping with the generalist knowledge of Australian recreational fishing industry leaders) to make the most of the tour. Having more than one geographic location was also beneficial.

There may have been one too many topics and locations covered by this study tour. The schedule was tight which meant that participants were exhausted by the end of the trip.

The opportunity to visit the United States was invaluable. In many ways, Australia models itself on the sportsfishing ethos of North America and it was important to see the similarities and differences first hand.

One good example was the cultural differences between the US and Australia. In Australia, many recreational fishers expect the government to provide for them and to manage the resource for their benefit. The short history of wider licensing here and a much lower focus on freshwater, has meant that most recreational fishers think that the issues are too big for them to make a difference. Their licence fees, where they exist, are seen as their commitment for which they should be able to harvest their share of the resource.

For many in the States though, paying a licence is only part of the commitment to a quality fishery. Many anglers volunteer on stream and habitat improvement, restocking programs and fishing education programs. While Australia also has such programs, they are not as widespread and they do not include additional donations from anglers. Seeing these issues first hand was welcomed by the study tour participants.

## **Benefits and Adoption**

There were a number of significant benefits from this project. They include the outcomes highlighted earlier in the report.

The presence of Bill Sawynok on the tour was important. Bill is highly regarded throughout the world for his innovation and engagement of recreational fishers in the collection of scientifically rigorous data. However, as in much of Australia, many scientists did not want to adopt the same methodologies which Bill has pioneered as it 'would be too difficult and we can't trust our recreational fishers'. This needs to be addressed in a worldwide context.

The recreational sector has already benefitted from the study tour through the information exchanges which have resulted since the tour. Having participants from around Australia has proven beneficial when issues such as the Coral Sea exclusion proposal was promulgated.

Members of the study tour have been able to mentor younger participants and this has seen them make a positive and real contribution to management.

One of the unexpected benefits of the study tour was meeting researchers with seemingly unconnected interests who wanted contacts in Australia. A researcher at VIMS was looking into gulper shark biology and needed some Australian samples for analysis. An evolutionary taxonomist was fascinated by the discovery of the 'release valve' structure discovered in Samson fish and related species. In both cases, the study tour was able to facilitate positive information exchanges to benefit future research.

## **Further Development**

Several of the participants on the study tour have been encouraged to undertake additional personal and professional development, including applying for the National Seafood Industry Leadership Program or the Peter Dundas-Smith scholarship.

It is hoped that a similar tour can be run following the 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference in Germany in 2011. All participants from the 2008 tour will be encouraged to get additional applications and to encourage more Australian to contribute papers to the next conference.

It is also hoped that further study tours can be planned to the US and Canada. There are many more topics that can be explored. More formal staff and industry exchanges should be encouraged and Mr Frank Peterson should be invited to attend an Australian conference to share his insights and experience with a wider audience. This could be possible through the FRDC visiting fellows bursary, although Mr Petersen indicated that the United States government had some difficulties in him attending meetings on foreign soil. This matter should be more fully explored, preferably by Recfish Australia.

A balance between inviting prominent guests and visiting other countries will benefit recreational fisheries management in Australia.

## **Planned Outcomes**

This project has increased understanding of American recreational fisheries management systems, the funding and governance structures of the RBFF, an American recreational peak body group and specific issues such as stock and habitat enhancement and marine park design.

The wider recreational fishing community has benefited through seminar and extension works that have been delivered by participants on the study tour.

Initiatives such as changes to stocking protocols, provision of facilities at marine reserves and improving the participation of recreational fishers in applied fisheries management have significantly progressed as a result of the study tour. Bill Sawynok was awarded an international prize for conservation by the IGFA and the release weight developed in Australia was promoted nationally in the United States.

In the longer term, participants on the study tour will take a greater national lead role and make their marks on recreational fisheries management and peak body administration. Since the tour Frank Prokop has been elected Chair of Recfish Australia and Shane Jasprizza will establish a peak recreational fishing body in the ACT.

Australia should be pleasantly surprised by how well it has done in many areas when benchmarked against United States initiatives. There are still many areas where Australia can benefit from ongoing meetings, exchanges and co-operation with our North American counterparts.

Additional areas of investigation exist and some of these have been picked up in Recfishing Research and Recfish Australia planning documents prepared since the study tour.

## **Conclusions**

Around 20 Australians that attended the 5<sup>th</sup> WRFC and the study tour were able to obtain a snapshot of what is happening in recreational fishing in the USA and around the world and use that to better meet the challenges in Australia. Many of the Australian presentations would not have been possible without the support of the FRDC.

The Australian presentations were of a very high standard and were extremely well received. Australia compared favourably to the rest of the world in many areas, particularly innovation in management and in breadth of understanding of issues affecting recreational fishing.

Linkages to people dealing with similar issues in the rest of the world and Australia were established or reinforced. There were many insights into important issues including governance of recreational fishing, stocking and habitat enhancement, marine parks and angler engagement in management.

Young future leaders that attended the conference and the study tour will be better placed to aspire to leadership roles in Australia. Having young people and experienced leaders together was seen as a benefit.

Key research areas identified have been incorporated into the revision of the Recfishing Research Business and Investment Plan which is currently being updated following a recent workshop in Canberra and the USA trip.

The conference and study tour provided benefits to the wider community and should be strongly supported in the future. There are some operational matters that could be improved for future study tours.



## **Appendix 1: Post study tour report by Bill Sawynok**

### **Aim of this report**

The aim of this report is to provide key personal insights from a recent trip to the USA. The 5<sup>th</sup> World Recreational Fishing Conference (WRFC) was the catalyst for the trip followed by a study tour which was an initiative of Recfishwest and funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). Rather than provide details of the trip and what we did this report focuses on three key things identified during the visit that I believe will accelerate change in Australia and provide positive benefit to fisheries and particularly recreational fisheries.

### **Focus of the Visit**

The main focuses of the trip were:

- 5<sup>th</sup> WRFC from 10-13 November 2008 held in Fort Lauderdale Florida. -
- Australian Study Tour by 9 persons following the conference from 14-21 November that included Florida, Washington and Virginia.

### **Key Activities**

Key activities during the trips were:

100 papers presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> WRFC with 18 by Australians (the biggest input behind the USA). There were 8 presentations from those who attended the full study tour, none of whom would have been able to attend except for this opportunity.

Bill Sawynok, Renae Tobin, and Steve Sutton of Australia also moderated theme sessions.

Bill Sawynok presented papers on the Gently Does It program in Australia and the Effects of Local Climate on Central Queensland fisheries and moderated the session on Catch and Release and Gear Technology.

Frank Prokop presented papers on Development and Promotion of the release weight in Western Australia to reduce the impact of barotrauma and on The benefits of strategic alliances for recreational fishing.

Ben Diggles presented a paper on Development of an environmental standard for recreational fishing tournaments.

John Diplock presented a paper on Recreational fishing governance: A new model for property rights and resource ownership.

Len Olyott presented a paper on Fishing for today and tomorrow: Recreational fisheries monitoring in Queensland, Australia.

Andrew Duke presented a paper on The socio-economic impacts of recreational fishing by target species in St. Helens, Tasmania, Australia.

Bryan Van der Walt presented a paper on Factors driving recreational fishing licence sales and implications for management in New South Wales, Australia.

Although not a formal part of the study tour, significant support and mentoring was provided by a number of Australian delegates. Bryan van der Walt attended the tour through Florida and Ross Winstanley and Steve Sutton provided a Recfishing Research perspective. They also presented papers at the conference.

Ross Winstanley presented a paper on Recfishing Research: A new approach to promoting investment and uptake of recreational fisheries R&D in Australia.

Steve Sutton presented a paper on Recreational fishers perceptions of the costs and benefits of the 2004 rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Additional Australian papers were delivered by R. Tobin, D. McPhee, N. Harrison, C. Syers, G. Pike, K. Dew, S. Griffiths.

Study tour visit to Key West Florida to examine aspects of management of sanctuary zones and meeting with members of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary committee.

Study tour visit to St Petersburg Florida to meet with Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute members on Red Drum Restocking program in Tampa Bay.

Study tour meeting in Washington with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

Study tour trip to examine artificial reefs in Chesapeake Bay and meeting with Virginia Institute of Marine Science to discuss tagging programs.

### **Key Areas which could accelerate change in Australia**

The key benefits from a visit such as this are insights into how others are dealing with similar issues to those in Australia and identify where we could focus attention here to accelerate change and achieve positive outcomes for recreational fishers and fisheries:

To halt and reverse the decline in participation in recreational fishing we need to promote the positive aspects of recreational fishing in terms of health and providing life balance benefits.

To improve recreational fishers engagement in the implementation of Marine Protected Areas and understanding and promotion of the positive benefits of artificial reefs and their legitimate use as a form of “compensation” to recreational fishers that lose access through the implementation of no fishing zones.

Improved understanding of fish recruitment to increase robustness of stock assessments,

provide the opportunity for fisheries management to move to predictive rather than retrospective approach to management.

## **Observations and Comments on Key Areas Identified**

The following are some observations and comments in relation to the key areas which could accelerate change:

### **Participation in Recreational Fishing**

Like Australia there is a general view that participation in recreational fishing in the USA is declining.

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) has embarked on a program to increase participation and has implemented a number of successful programs to entice lapsed fishers back into fishing.

The RBFF has a budget in the order of \$US12m/year so has the capacity to run significant national programs.

There is need for research on the health and life balance benefits of recreational fishing both in the USA and here to assist in the positive promotion of recreational fishing.

There is an opportunity for this to be taken up through the Recreational Fishing Development Strategy being implemented by the Federal Government.

### **Marine Sanctuaries and the role of Artificial Reefs**

Studies indicate that many recreational fishers in Australia generally support Marine Protected Areas yet recreational fishers are mostly portrayed as wearing the black hat (the enemy of those promoting MPAs). If we are to make headway in future MPA debates then moderate fishers need to better engage with agencies to achieve better outcomes.

It is legitimate for recreational fishers to seek some form of compensation (as applies to other users impacted by no fishing zones). There is a concerted campaign by some green groups (and some researchers) to discredit the use of artificial reefs as a form of compensation. Most of their arguments are based on poor and misleading information.

We need to look to how artificial reefs are used in the USA, Japan, China, Korea and elsewhere and obtain sound information on the functioning of their artificial reefs and the effects these have on fish stocks and other habitat.

There is considerable debate about artificial reefs in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary however there is no recognition that around 150km of road and rail bridges within the Sanctuary are actually artificial reefs.

In Chesapeake Bay there are 3 artificial reefs in the lower reaches. However a 20km long dual highway bridge that runs from Norfolk to Townsend at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay is the biggest artificial reef in the bay and supports a large number of charter operators and recreational fishers that target Striped Bass and Bluefish. The different approaches to establishing infrastructure in marine waters and the establishment of artificial reefs needs to be reconciled.

### **Improved Understanding of Fish Recruitment**

Inshore/estuary fish stocks in the places we visited were in considerably better shape than inshore/estuary fish stocks in Australia despite the much greater level of fishing

effort. This is largely attributed to the banning of commercial fishing, narrow slot limits for key recreational species and high levels of catch and release for some species (eg Atlantic Tarpon)

In the areas we visited the fisheries agencies had good stock assessments for their recreational fisheries with better data on the parameters used in stock assessments than is the case in Australia.

Most had good information on stock recruitment but had little information on the drivers of recruitment and therefore relied heavily on expensive surveys each year to obtain recruitment data.

An improved understanding of recruitment and what drives recruitment is an area where more work needs to be done in both the USA and Australia.

Having better data and understanding recruitment will benefit stock assessments and allow fisheries managers to be more forward looking in management (rather than making decisions on stock assessments that use retrospective data).

The early impacts of climate change are most likely to be reflected in changes in levels of recruitment with some species being winners and others losers. Early information on changes in patterns of recruitment will better prepare fishers to adjust their operations and managers to adjust management.

The USA and the rest of the world has done little in the way of research into the possible effects of climate change on recreational fisheries although some northward movement of Sea Bass in Norway is believed to be linked with climate change.

Innovative new ways need to be developed involving fishers to obtain data on recruitment as resources to undertake independent surveys are unlikely to match those available to USA fisheries.

## **Positive Outcomes from the Trip**

Around 20 Australian that attended the 5<sup>th</sup> WRFC and the study tour were able to obtain a snapshot of what is happening in recreational fishing in the USA and around the world and use that to better meet the challenges in Australia.

Linkages to people dealing with similar issues in the rest of the world and Australia were established or reinforced.

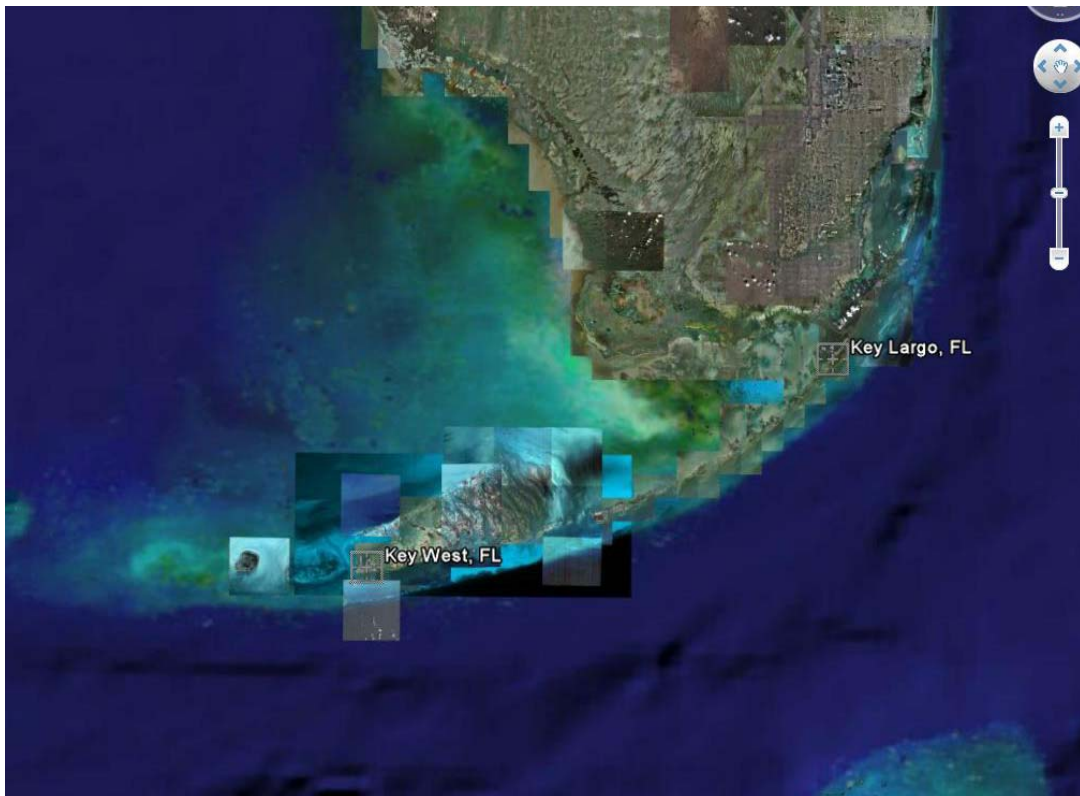
Young future leaders that attended the conference and the study tour will be better placed to aspire to leadership roles in Australia.

Key research areas identified will be incorporated into the revision of the Recfishing Research Business and Investment Plan which is currently being updated following a recent workshop in Canberra and the USA trip.

**Bill Sawynok**  
**Recfishing Research Manager**  
**14 December 2008**  
Email: [bill@info-fish.net](mailto:bill@info-fish.net)  
Phone: 07 4928 6133



Sanctuary marker offshore from Key West in Florida



Key West is an island about 8km long by 5km wide yet sustains 300 charter boats (boosted by several hundred more during the northern winter) that work the nearby grounds and is close to oceanic waters (dropoff to deep water visible) – there are many more charter boats operating from Key West to Key Largo (distance 160km)



Atlantic Tarpon of around 30kg swimming around the marina at Key West



Promotion of collection of fin clips from Red Drum by recreational fishers at a tackle store in St Petersburg on Tampa Bay (to identify stocked fish)



## Appendix 2

# FRDC US RECREATIONAL STUDY TOUR - Itinerary:

Nadene Grossman / Larissa Szynski. – 922 Caroline St., Key West, FL 33040 –  
Phone 305-295-9112 - Fax 305-294-2854

Client/Group: Recfishwest – Western Australia

Contact: Frank Prokop – [frank@recfishwest.org.au](mailto:frank@recfishwest.org.au) 0419 949 118

Ann Garard – US Mobile 132 3982 7102

**Thursday November 13, 2008 – Group Leader – Frank Prokop  
Rapporteur – Len Olyott**

### **TRANSPORTATION FROM DANIA BEACH TO KEY WEST**

10:00am Pick Up - Marriott Hotel – 400 Gulf Stream Way Dania Beach Florida

Key Transportation to pick up all guests and transport from Dania Beach to Key West for check in at the Sheraton Suites.

### **ACCOMODATION**

#### *Sheraton Suites Key West*

Located on 2001 South Roosevelt Boulevard – walking distance to Smathers Beach. The hotel offers a shuttle service downtown. Restaurant on site.

Six rooms – 3 Single Rooms and 3 Double Rooms

#### **ROOMING LIST**

Single Room - Bill and Shirley Sawynok – 1 bed

Single Room – Andrew Duke- 1 bed

Single Room - Ann Garard - 1 bed

Double Room - John Diplock – Frank Prokop – 2 beds

Double Room - Ben Diggles – Shane Jasprizza – 2 beds

Double Room – Evan Jones – Len Olyott – 2 beds

**Friday November 14, 2008 – Group Leader – Andrew Duke**  
**Rapporteur – Ann Garard**

**TRANSPORTATION FROM SHERATON TO CHARTER BOAT**

7:30am

Round Trip - Florida Keys Group Transportation to pick you up at the Sheraton (please wait in the lobby) and take you to A&B Marina for Charter and back to Sheraton at 12:00pm.

**SANCTUARY ZONE INSPECTIONS - CHARTER**

8:00am – 12:00pm

Half day (4 hour) charters are available on Charter boats. 6 people maximum per boat. Beverages and food will need to be provided for the visitors. A cooler full of ice will be on board. Please advise how you will be stocking the boats. Deep Sea Fishing Boats are Mr Z and Triple Time with 5 people in each boat.

**BOATS – FOOD & BEVERAGE**

Stock Boats with Lunch Boxes – to include assorted Meat & Cheese Sandwiches on Cuban/French Bread with condiments on the side, Potato Chips, Pickle Spear, Fresh Apple and Snack Bar. Water, Sodas.

**Saturday November 15, 2008 – Group Leader – Evan Jones**  
**Rapporteur – Shane Jasprizza**

**HOTEL CHECK OUT IS 11:00am**

**TRANSPORTATION FROM SHERATON TO NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

9:30am

Round Trip - Florida Keys Group Transportation to pick you up at the Sheraton (please wait in the lobby) and take you to The National Marine Sanctuary and back to Sheraton. Driver will hand you his card so that you can call him for pick up.

**FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

10:00am – 11:30 am 33 East Quay Road, Key West FL Located at the Eco Discovery Center, you will meet with Karrie Carnes to talk about the National Marine Sanctuary. Hosts: **Dave Score**, Superintendent FKNMS; **Cal Sutphin**, member Sanctuary Advisory Council, recreational charter boat captain, weekly columnist on fishing issues in Keys (also TV and radio) tentative: **Doug Gregory**, Florida SeaGrant, has been involved with Sanctuary and Keys fishing issues since the Sanctuary's designation in 1990, an important conduit between Fishery Management Councils and fishermen:

<http://floridasportfishing.com/magazine/product-reviews/press-releases/noaa-honors-florida-sea-grant-agent-for-empowering-fishermen-2.html>



## Saturday November 15, 2008

### TRANSPORTATION FROM KEY WEST TO TAMPA

1:00pm (approximate time)

Florida Keys Group Transportation to pick you up at the Sheraton and take you to your hotel in Saint Petersburg, which is located 30mins to Tampa Airport and Port Manatee as requested. Vans can take up to 12 passengers with luggage.

### HILTON ST PETERSBURG BAY FRONT

**NOVEMBER 15 – 18, 2008**

Check-In: 4:00 PM - Check-Out: 11:00 AM

Located at 333 First Street South, Saint Petersburg, Florida, United States 33701-4342

Tel: 1-727-894-5000

Six rooms – 3 Single Rooms and 3 Double Rooms as requested

## Sunday November 16, 2008

*FREE DAY – participants free to make personal plans at their own expense.*

## Monday November 17, 2008 – Group Leader – John Diplock Rapporteur – Bill Sawynok

**FWC/AUSTRALIAN FISHERY MEETING NOVEMBER 17, 2008 FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE 100 8TH AVENUE SE ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33701 – Host Dr Chris Young**

- 09:00 Welcome & Introductions
- 09:10 Red drum Propagation overview
- 09:25 Genetic overview
- 09:45 Fishery Independent monitoring overview
- 10:00 Fishery Dependent monitoring overview
- 10:15 Fish Health overview
- 10:30 Fin Clip Return Program
- 10:45 Open Discussion Q & A
- 11:45 Lunch
- 1:00 Additional Marine Topics
- 3:00 End of meeting

**Tuesday November 18, 2008 – Group Leader – Len Olyott**  
**Rapporteur – Andrew Duke**

*US Airways Flight US1678 departs Tampa International Airport 7:05 am. Share taxis to airport. Arrive Ronald Reagan Airport Washington DC – 9:01 am. Hotel transfer available from airport.*

**BEST WESTERN OLD COLONY INN ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA**

**NOVEMBER 18 – 19, 2008**

Check-In: 3:00 PM - Check-Out: 12:00 PM

Located at 1101 North Washington Street, Alexandria VA

Tel: 1-703-739-2222

Six rooms – 3 Single Rooms and 3 Double Rooms as requested

*THIS HOTEL OFFERS AIRPORT SHUTTLE SERVICE*

**RECREATIONAL BOATING AND FISHING FOUNDATION (RBFF) / AUSTRALIAN  
MEETING NOVEMBER 18, 2008 RBFF Headquarters - 601 N. Fairfax St.,  
Suite 440**

**Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: 703/519.0013 Fax: 703/519.9565. Host: Frank  
Peterson Jr, President/CEO**

Meetings on RBFF programs and engagement of stakeholders and funders.

**Wednesday November 19, 2008 – Group Leader – Bill Sawynok**  
**Rapporteur – Ben Diggles**

Bus leaves hotel – 7 am to travel to hotel at Williamsburg. Then on to Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

**FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES WILLIAMSBURG VIRGINIA**

**NOVEMBER 19 – 21, 2008**

Check-In: 3:00 PM - Check-Out: 11:00 AM

Located at 1402 Richmond Avenue, Williamsburg VA

Tel: 1-757-645-3600

Six rooms – 3 Single Rooms and 3 Double Rooms

**VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCES (VIMS)/AUSTRALIAN MEETING NOVEMBER 18, 2008 RBFF Headquarters - Rt. 1208, Greate Road Gloucester Point, Virginia 23062-1346. Host: Dr Jon Lucy**

Meetings to discuss tagging programs and engagement of recreational sector in research programs. How to ensure quality of data and critical success factors when dealing with recreational fishers.

**Thursday November 20, 2008 – Group Leader – Shane Jasprizza  
Rapporteur – John Diplock**

**Charter Boat fishing – Captain Chandler Hogg. Inspection of artificial reefs and fishing for bluefish and Striped bass. Departs 7 am for a seven hour charter. Arranging for lunch to be provided. All will fit on one boat. [www.captainhoggscharters.com](http://www.captainhoggscharters.com)**

#### **THE CHARTER BOAT:**

Fishing the Chesapeake Bay aboard Captain Hogg's Virginia charter boat the "Smokin' Gun II" is comfortable and safe. This boat is a 2008 custom-built 40' Evans that is Coast Guard certified for charters up to 32 passengers. The boat is equipped with the latest electronics and fishing equipment. Powered by a 670 H.P. Cummins Diesel, this charter boat cruises the Chesapeake Bay at 26 knots allowing us to get to the fish fast so that charters spend more time catching fish than cruising.

#### **DIRECTIONS TO THE CHARTER BOAT:**

The boat is docked in Hampton, Virginia, only minutes away from the prime fishing waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

From Richmond (I-64 E): Take Exit 267, turn RIGHT onto SETTLERS LANDING ROAD, Go three stoplights to KING STREET. Turn LEFT onto KING STREET and follow for two blocks until the road ends at the dock.

**Friday November 21, 2008 – Group Leader – Ann Garard  
Rapporteur – Frank Prokop**

Meetings with Dr John Hoenig on recreational catch and data collection.

**1 pm pick up at Williamsburg Hotel to Alexandria Hotel.**

#### **BEST WESTERN OLD COLONY INN ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA**

**NOVEMBER 21 – 22, 2008**

Check-In: 3:00 PM - Check-Out: 12:00 PM

Located at 1101 North Washington Street, Alexandria VA

Tel: 1-703-739-2222

Six rooms – 3 Single Rooms and 3 Double Rooms as requested

*THIS HOTEL OFFERS AIRPORT SHUTTLE SERVICE*

**7 pm – end of study tour dinner on cruising boat Nina's Dandy - hosted by FRDC.**

*Study tour concludes.*

**Saturday November 22, 2008**

**PARTICIPANTS OWN RESPONSIBILITY – return to Australia**

## **Appendix 3**

### **BIOS SENT ON ATTENDEES TO FRDC FUNDED US RECREATIONAL FISHING DELEGATION**

#### **Frank Prokop (Convener)**

For the last 10 years, Frank Prokop has been Executive Director of Recfishwest ([www.recfishwest.org.au](http://www.recfishwest.org.au)), the peak body representing the estimated 640,000 recreational fishers in Western Australia. For two years he was President of Recfish Australia, the national peak body. Frank is now a Board member of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Frank has extensive experience in fisheries management in NSW and Western Australia and was the first dedicated recreational fisheries manager in Australia. He has also been the manager of the Western rock lobster fishery and minor commercial fisheries. Frank has written a number of books on recreational fishing and many fisheries management papers.

He has also been a Board member of the Perth Wildcats basketball team and on the Board of the WA Sports Federation for 4 years. Frank's hobby is lure collecting. Frank won the Recfish Australia 'Lifetime Achievement award' in 2008.

#### **Ben Diggles.**

Marine Biologist with PhD in aquatic animal health. Currently manager of DigsFish Services ([www.digsfish.com](http://www.digsfish.com)), a company which specialises in research and development in the fields of fish attractants, medicated fish feeds for the aquaculture industry, and recreational fishing research, development and extension. Previous positions include fish pathologist for New Zealand's primary aquatic animal health laboratory and recreational fisheries manager for South Australia.

#### **Len Olyott**

A third generation recreational angler, Len's passion for fish and fishing led him to pursue a career in fisheries science. He graduated from Rhodes University in South Africa with a Masters in Fisheries Science. Len has been a founder member of several flyfishing clubs as well as a fisheries consultant to various fishing clubs and organisations both within Australia and internationally. An accomplished author of numerous book chapters on recreational fishing and articles in Australian and South African magazines, Len also has a solid scientific publication record and has attended several international fisheries conferences. He has also reviewed several manuscripts for the Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries journal.

He worked for Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries for six years and was responsible for the design and management of recreational fishing surveys and diary programs as well as providing scientific advice to fisheries managers. Len has recently taken up the role of Chief Executive Officer with the Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Industry Confederation ([the peak representative body for recreational fishers at a national level](#)) and currently sits on several national committees including the aquatic animal health

committee, aquatic animal welfare working group and the Commonwealth Fisheries Research Advisory Board. He is also a member of the Australian Society for Fish Biology.

## **Bill Sawynok**



Bill Sawynok manages his own family business, Infofish Services, and is based in Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia. Infofish Services manages the Suntag tagging program in Queensland (over 500,000 fish tagged) and the CapReef community based fisheries monitoring program in Central Queensland. He also manages Recfishing Research, a national program to improve research into recfishing issues. For the past 7 years he managed the national Released Fish Survival program (Gently Does It) which now forms part of Recfishing Research.

He is a director of the Australian National Sportfishing Association, a past director of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, a past director of the CRC Reef Research Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, a past director of the Fitzroy Basin Association (catchment management) and a past board member of Recfish Australia. Bill won the 'Excellence in Support of Research Outcomes' from Recfish Australia in 2008.

## **Evan Jones**

Evan is an Honorary Life Member and Past Vice President of Sunshine Coast Game Fishing Club. He is Honorary Conservation Officer QLD Game Fishing Association and has been closely involved in a number of marine conservation initiatives, most recently on the Coral Sea conservation proposals. Evan has considerable technical expertise and is a member of the Research Review and Recommendation Panel for the East Coast Tuna and Billfish Fishery for Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

Evan is a member of the Moreton Bay Artificial Reef Working Group and has recently been involved in the establishment of artificial reefs as offsets to environmental loss.

Evan is an extremely keen angler and is widely regarded for his business acumen. The group sincerely hopes that they will not need Evan's medical training during the trip.

## **John Diplock**

Started with research into the biology of demersal and pelagic fish then spent 3 years as Tuna Scientist in the Federated States of Micronesia. Returned to manage commercial fisheries in NSW and transformed all commercial fisheries from open access to defined rights fisheries. After setting up the first Policy Unit moved to recreational fisheries management in 1998 and introduced an all-waters recreational fishing licence in 2001. Brought in a limited access licensing regime for charter fishing boats in 2001. Since then has been responsible for a suite of new licence funded programs and significant improvements to the administration of the recreational fishing licence. Left NSW DPI in August 2008 to set up a fisheries management consultancy, Hamata Pty Ltd. John won the Recfish Australia award for 'Excellence in Innovation and Leadership' in 2008.

## **Shane Jasprizza**

Young future leader winner through Recfish Australia. Winner of FRDC Bursary to attend study tour. Chartered Accountant, currently studying MBA in Marine Resource Management through the Australian Maritime College (University of Tasmania).

Past president of Canberra Fisherman's Club, current Treasurer and Membership Officer for the NSW branch of the Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA). ANSA National Board member (Business Director), with involvement in introducing non-lineclass, length-based competitions into ANSA to promote catch & release amongst members.

Occasionally even find time to fish, with lurecasting for freshwater natives and estuary species a favorite way of relaxing. Also enjoy the competitive side of fishing through ANSA Conventions and the personal challenge of the ANSA Masters system.

## **Andrew Duke**

Andrew is a keen recreational fisher and has been involved with Fishcare volunteers since its inception in Tasmania, including working as a regional co-ordinator. He graduated with first class honours from the Australian Maritime College in Bachelor of Applied Science (Fisheries). Since then Andrew has worked on a range of projects for the Department of Primary Industries around Tasmania, some include the capture of glass eels, conducting creel surveys of recreational fishers and as an education officer for recreational netting.

Andrew owned and operated an oyster farm, seafood processing plant and retail outlet for six years and was a director of the Tasmanian Aquaculture Council and chair of the regional shellfish industry representative group during this time. Andrew is currently completing his Masters of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. His research is based on an evaluation of the socio-economic impacts of recreational fishing in St Helens, Tasmania.

## **Ann Garard**

Ann is a long time recreational angler (from school holidays fishing off wharf at Stanley Tasmania). Partner with husband Rodney in Kiama Charter Service since 1995. One of first 2 legitimate charter operations operating from Kiama 110km south of Sydney NSW. Active member & committee person of NSW Charter Boat Operators Assn for 10yrs.

Member of NSW MERCMAC (Charter Boat MAC) & other committees primarily representing recreational charter fishing since 2000. Keen to see appropriate fish/fishery management & enhancement via consultation, factual information & a plan to continue access for all, wherever possible. Looking forward to the commencement of an Offshore Artificial Reef program, following on from the extremely successful & well received estuarine program.

Member of the Jervis Bay Marine Park Advisory committee since park's inception in late 90s. Lobbied for fishing charter operations to be given separate representation in all marine park deliberations. Always open to the opinions of all interest groups and able to see and assess all points of view.

**Mr Bryan Van Der Walt** of NSW was able to attend the south Florida component of the trip, making 10 participants in all.

## APPENDIX 4

### 2008 World Recreational Fishing Conference and Study Tour Group Report – Len Olyott

Firstly, a big thank you to FRDC for funding this trip and to Frank Prokop and Kane Moyle for sound planning and leadership which ensured a successful trip.

#### **The Good**

- I think that the tour covered a wide variety of US experiences and took into account the information needs and interests of the tour participants. There was a good balance of “official”, scientific and informal viewpoints which helped to get a realistic picture of the issues facing the US.
- There was ample time for exploring and checking out the sights which is great and adds to the cultural experience.
- The contacts that were chosen were generally very receptive and willing to exchange ideas.
- Despite the value of the Internet and email, there is no replacement for face-to-face meetings to build relationships and establish rapport.
- The idea of different leaders and reporters is good and shares the responsibility, it also serves to eliminate the idea that one person is always getting their own way (not that it was like that all...)
- The Blog idea is fantastic and allows for comments from followers and a live, readily updated record of the journey. Blogs are the way of the future for reporting and marketing.
- There was a good mix of participants, only sector really missing was the fishing trades sector, although Ben Diggles could arguably be considered as part of that. We really needed to have some of the more traditional tackle dealers there to see the potential in working together for a better future.

#### **The Not So Good**

- The group booking concept didn't work that well as there was some confusion about what accommodation was paid for and what wasn't. It would probably have been better to prepay all accommodation before leaving (especially in light of exchange rate changes).
- In terms of expenses, a daily allowance would be better than retaining invoices. This is especially pertinent where tipping is the norm and this is not always picked up on invoices and receipts. It is also difficult when sharing meals with a single bill or accommodation. As a result, participants may incur out of pocket expenses for not keeping the required paperwork.
- At least two of the transport vans provided were inadequate for the number of people, their luggage and the distance traveled.
- Trying to cover a big country is always difficult but the nine hour bus ride may not have been the most effective use of time, although more expensive, airfares may have proved more efficient and allowed more time in Tampa/St Petersburg.

#### **Most valued experience**

Spending time with Frank Peterson from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation was truly inspirational. His ability to turn the company around in a relatively short space of time was phenomenal. It obviously helps to have sufficient resourcing but the keys to his success are:

- Working on the successes that the organisation has had
- Retaining and recruiting the staff with the right skills and attitude
- Clear reporting on simple goals

Initiatives such as Take Me Fishing and Anglers Legacy are not impossible to achieve in Australia in a bid to grow participation but we do need to have the cooperation of angler representative organisations, business and government to make a success of it. I think there would be great benefit in getting Frank out to Australia to talk to different groups including govt. The best forum (depending on its structure) could be the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.



### **Most memorable experience**

Catching an Atlantic tarpon (well 3 to be precise) under tough conditions. Memorable because it was a goal that I set out to achieve and that it took teamwork to achieve that. There is a lesson in there somewhere.

### **Essential learning experience**

The “science” of buying fishing lures according to Prokop’s First Principle: “the bigger and uglier it is, the more valuable it will be”.

### **General comment**

I think it is a worthwhile investment for FRDC to fund these kinds of study tours. Sharing the experience with not only existing leaders but also those that have leadership potential is a good model and serves to more equitably distribute the opportunity. The tour was not just about learning from overseas examples but there was a genuine exchange of ideas such that the groups we visited also benefited immensely from our knowledge and experiences.

The tour had a fair mix of formal and informal activities and this is vital to gain a more comprehensive overview and to share ideas. Everywhere that I went, I was able to talk fishing to someone. This included charter operators, fishing store attendants and people that I met on the street while fishing. Through this informal exchange, we were able to make good contacts and identified avenues for further promoting projects such as NEATFish.

### **Lasting impression**

Although there are obviously still issues and there were some serious fisheries resource issues in the 1980’s, the USA is able to provide world class recreational fishing opportunities for millions of anglers on the doorstep of major cities. This is only achieved through a changed perception of anglers to respect their quarry and treat recreational fishing as a privilege that is worth paying for.

## Appendix 5 **FRDC RECREATIONAL FISHING STUDY TOUR USA**

THIS BLOG DESCRIBES THE ADVENTURES OF THE AUSTRALIAN RECREATIONAL FISHING STUDY TOUR TO THE USA. SPONSORED BY THE FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, THE TEAM COME FROM A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND SECTORS.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2008

### **The Trip in Pictures - A Canberran's Perspective**

IGFA Museum and Hall of Fame, Ft Lauderdale,



Florida.

Fly casting legend, Lefty Kreh conducting a private lesson on the lawns of the IGFA centre.



Live bait vending machine, Bass Pro, Ft Lauderdale.



Up close and personal with an Everglades



"Lizard".

Don't try this at home kids! He's a trained



lunatic.



A friendly native

Sunset over Key West.





Recreational fishing platform on one of the many bridges in the Florida Keys.



The things you see on a road trip.  
(No, we didn't take the chance...)



Tampay Bay Buccaneers taking the field  
against the Minnesota Vikings.



One for the Holden fans - a Pontiac GTO  
(rebadged, LHD Monaro for the



uninitiated).

"Supersize my ride". Everything is BIG in the



USA.

Conversing with the locals. "John made me do it"...



Potomac River by night, Washington DC.



POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 3:37 PM 0 COMMENTS  [LINKS TO THIS POST](#)

### **Last Day - Washington DC**

The intrepid group of study tour attendees awoke to yet another thermal experience - the probability of white flakes descending from the heavens!

We left to take taxi cab rides through the incredibly picturesque forests of Virginia to revisit the VIMS people. Along the way, we commented frequently about the possibility of encountering bambi on the road, but only saw a slightly mashed raccoon - no longer even suitable for rock lobster bait in many jurisdictions.



Today was much more about give than take.

An interesting presentation from Tracey Sutton about shark tagging lead to discussions about better engagement of recreational fishers in tagging programs. It is clear that Australia is far in advance, at least in those areas that encourage angler engagement, in the process. Timeliness and respect for responses are a key factor and it is clear that the active engagement of the recreational (and commercial sector) in this process is crucial. Interestingly, although many of the sharks are caught mainly by commercial fishers, that it is the recreational sector that provides the majority of the returns.

We learned about the daggertooth, a mid water predator with an oil filled swim bladder that attacks tuna from below.

Bill Sawynok was in high demand to demonstrate his data base. Biologists from far and wide visited to learn about data entry and control, feedback and the importance of understanding the need for long time series data and immediate feedback to anglers.

Frank Prokop met with Dr Hinton, an evolutionary morphologist who was extremely excited about the discovery of the 'whoopee cushion' pressure release valve in Samson fish and similar species. There was considerable praise for an Australian researcher being able to identify a new physical structure for a teleost fish. Dr Hinton specialises in Carangiid species (trevallies) and will explore both the physiological and evolutionary implications of this structure.

The main group met with Dr Mary Fabrizio (immediate past President of the American Fisheries Society) about recreational engagement in recruitment modelling. Again Australia seems to be looked to as a leader in this area.

After bidding a fond farewell to our main host, Dr Jon Lucy, with promises of many more interactions, we boarded the bus for the return to Washington DC. One slight rear ender on the freeway lead to



about 15 miles of backup, fortunately on the other side of the road.

We managed to look at the marketing strategies of Bass Pro and Gander Mountain (huge sporting store with a little bit of fishing tackle....) and its use of the RBFF Angler Legacy program and the need to examine the impact of the global economic meltdown on retail sales of fishing tackle.



We arrived back in Washington DC to temperatures better suited to hibernation and had to once again chip our Queensland representatives out of their teeth chattering ice blocks to sign their names in the register.

Our end of tour dinner was aboard a cruise boat on the Potomac River. Luckily it was temperature controlled, but those who ventured out for scenic photos of sights such as the Watergate Hotel were able once again to astound the locals with the use of strine to describe the sub-human conditions. I am convinced that new phrases will enter the American lexicon in the near future.






Dr Jones lead discussion on the best aspects and learnings from the trip. The concensus was that the trip was very much enhanced by the study tour and the learnings that ensued. The best features ranged from the highly stratified sampling techniques to the need to think really big about national funding for projects.

After one final toast, the group poured into taxi cabs to once again struggle with the concept of tipping and the service industries before retiring to the lounge in the hotel to provide useful?? assistance to the final blog from yours truly.

Tomorrow and beyond, the group disperses to Australia, wiser and committed to make a real difference to future fisheries management. All agree that Australia should sell what it does well much better and to continually assess its performance against broader criteria than just the assessment of imported 'experts' for a single conference.

We look forward to catching up with you all and seeing loved ones again and would encourage any of you to work very hard to attend a similar conference/study tour in the future. Meanwhile all who can will save their pennies to try and make it to Germany in 2011.

See you soon  
Frank

POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 2:34 PM 0 COMMENTS  [LINKS TO THIS POST](#)

## November 20

Having finally voted the Diggler off our island we were free to commit to the advancement of science unencumbered. Thursday dawned clear and warmer than the Wednesday and we tracked off to the Hampton dock to meet Cap'n Chandler Hogg and board "The Smoking Gun II".



We bored out into Chesapeake Bay under a light northerly wind. First stop was the amazing Chesapeake Bridge Tunnel system - a 19 mile bridge across the bay with 2 tunnels and a high level bridge to allow shipping passage. Remember, a fair slab of the US Navy uses the Bay as its base and the boat traffic is heavy. The bridge is actually a double concrete structure carrying vehicular traffic and the squillion or so pylons provide probably the biggest artificial fish habitat in the world. The artificial islands at each end of the tunnels are armoured with rock and make great fish holding structures.



To test their effectiveness we conducted a series of sampling runs with bibbed minnows, and weighted soft plastics and jigs trolled on paternoster rigs in about 30 feet of water. While taking meticulous measurements of environmental factors (Frank's taste test put the salinity at around 12-15 ppt) and recording detailed observations of numerous recreational fishing craft, our diligence was rewarded with striped bass and more striped bass. The fish were mostly around the 2kg mark, with a number of multiple hookups. Frank again showed his catch and release ability by dropping most of his fish, but we each ended up with 2 or 3 fish each. Bill S. top scored with a 29 incher which exceeded the slot limit and of course went back. Despite repeated renditions of Frank's funky Bluefish Boogey, the legendary giant bluefish proved elusive.



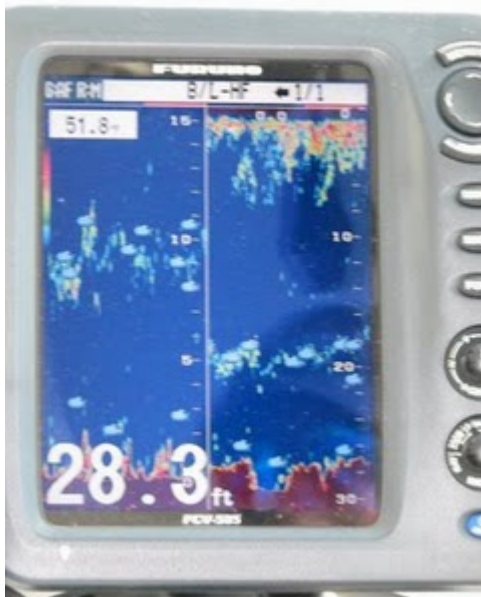


Sampling completed, we moved to inspect the artificial reefs scattered around the bay. There are a number of rubble reefs consisting of rock spoil in these relatively shallow waters.



We stopped on a Reef Ball reef about 2 km off Ocean View. The reef balls which are about 1.5 metres tall showed up clearly on the echo

sounder. This reef was made of about 1,000 reef balls and fishes well for tautogs and stripers. The location was marked with bouys.



We moved further into the Bay to a reef composed of concrete piers demolished from a US navy dock. The reef was located in 24 ft of water, and like the reef above, was placed where 2 major currents converge. The fish seen on the sounder were holding very close to the structure, probably due to the strong current. It seems that the use of "materials of opportunity" is still alive and well in the US.

All up it was a very enjoyable and informative day.

JD

POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 8:59 AM 0 COMMENTS [LINKS TO THIS POST](#)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2008

## Virginia Institute of Marine Science

19th November 2008

We awoke to a crisp cloudless morning in DC with a brisk -2 degrees celcius outside, heading towards a maximum of 5 degrees celcius. Bl\*\*dy cold ! No time to waste, after breakfast at the Old Colony Inn (38 deg 48.996 N, 77 deg 02.631 W for those with google earth) we didn't even have time to raid the free snack bar before boarding the bus to take us to Williamsburg, VA, Chesapeake Bay – blue crab country- and our meeting at VIMS.



During the bus trip there was a robust and animated discussion on a variety of topics related to the direction of recreational fishing development in Australia, including political representation, licensing, young leaders and then broader issues including the state of the global economy.





After about 2 hrs 20 min we had covered the 230 km to Williamsburg and resisted the temptation to raid the Bass Pro, Orvis and Columbia outlets on the way. After checking in and icing the beers at the Best Western Fairfield (37 deg 17.193 N, 76 deg 43.294 W) we reboarded the bus for the scenic 30 km trip along the York River to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (37 deg 14.935 N, 76 deg 30.022 W).




Here we met our host Jon Lucy, and some of us caught up opportunistically with a seminar on “Challenges for sustainable fisheries in a changing world” by NOAA chief science advisor Dr Steve Murawski. Then after lunch we had productive informal talks with VIMS fisheries staff including Jon Lucy, John Olney, Mary Fabrizio (immediate past president of the American Fisheries Society), Rich Brill, John Hoenig, and Andriy Horodysky. Topics discussed included the successful recovery of striped bass by protecting a strong year class in a formerly depleted fishery, delayed post release survival in bluefish (tailor), management of Tautog, sight and sensory biology of marlins and other inshore species, the pros and cons of co-operative tagging programmes.



Following the discussion we took a tour of the fisheries genetics lab and had incredibly interesting discussions on gulper sharks with very strong international relationships being forged with Jan McDowell and Laurie Sorensen with the potential for sharing of genetic materials of not only gulper sharks, but billfishes.

Ben "Diggler" Diggles

POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 7:14 AM 0 COMMENTS  [LINKS TO THIS POST](#)  
LABELS: [VIMS](#)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2008

## **Meeting with RBFF - Take Me Fishing (please)**

18th November

After a very early start, the flight Tampa to Washington went without a hitch. The welcome in Washington was about 30 C cooler but the fantastic meeting with Frank Peterson at the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation well made up for the weather. Frank is the CEO of RBFF which is responsible for increasing boating and fishing participation and is federally funded to the tune of US\$13M from the Sport Fish Restoration Fund. The funding is made available through a conservation act initiated in the 50s and comes from a series of taxes and excise on fishing gear and fuel purchased by the fishers. Frank discussed in detail the foundation's role and some initiatives he has helped implement:

**Anglers Legacy:** A program of advertising and communication to increase participation by fishers signing a declaration to take at least one person fishing during the year who has not fished before. The concept is targeted at the 35 – 55 year old group. The anglers are 'ambassadors' of the sport and number around 75 000.

**Take me fishing:** Another great program to encourage participation in rec fishing from kids to adults alike. This program is supported by an extensive and excellent media campaign.

The standard of Research and Education was excellent and provided

some great ideas to bring back.

After a full day with Frank he explained his short term targets for participation and detailed his marketing approach to anglers whether they are 'new, occasional or avid customers'. Frank was well keen with 'NEATFish' tournament accreditation so the opportunity for further two way communication looks inevitable.

All in all a brilliant opportunity to bring a lot of fresh and proven ideas back home.

<http://www.rbff.org/>

<http://www.takemefishing.org/>

<http://www.anglerslegacy.org/>

**The Duke**

POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 11:58 PM 0 COMMENTS  [LINKS TO THIS POST](#)

## **Visit to Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute**

**Monday 17 November 2008**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute is a division of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and is responsible for the research underpinning management of fish and wildlife. Of particular interest to the study group was Project Tampa Bay involving the stocking and evaluation of Red Drum in Tampa Bay from 1988-2004. The project had a number of components which were:

- \* Hatchery production of fingerlings (at SERF hatchery on Tampa Bay)
- \* Fisheries independent monitoring to detect stocked fish
- \* Fisheries dependent monitoring

- \* Health assessment of fish to be stocked
- \* Genetic analysis to determine if fish sampled were stocked fish



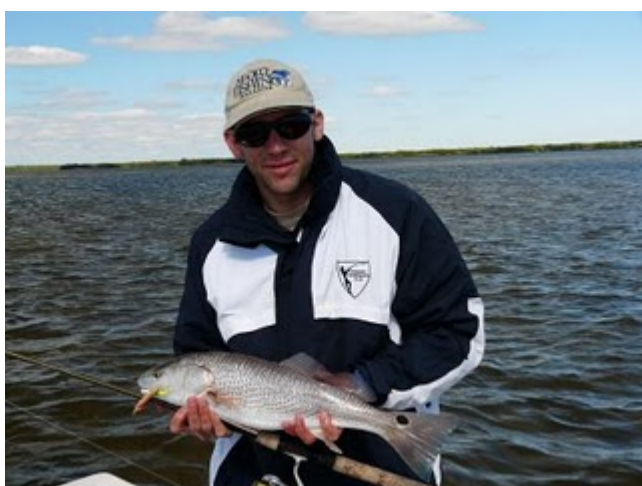
The project involved the production and release of fingerlings in 3 size ranges at 2 locations in Tampa Bay. A total of around 3 million fish were released and stocked fish were detected in the various monitoring programs at around 6% of the fish sampled. By the way we shouted the presenters lunch at the Pier where the discussion was well lubricated and continued into the afternoon.

Bill Sawynok

## **Sunday 16th November**

Len and Ben went on a trip with guide Jim Lemke to experience first hand the results of Florida's red drum stock enhancement project. While Len "catfish" Olyott missed out on a red, Diggler managed to inspect the health of both a red drum and a spotted sea trout at close quarters. Both fish appeared very healthy and were released to fight another day.





POSTED BY FRDC REC STUDY 2008 AT 12:36 PM 2 COMMENTS  LINKS TO THIS POST

LABELS: VISIT TO FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2008

## As an aside



Not all of what we have seen is useful or applicable to Australia but this is not because our Australian situation is so unique but rather, put plainly - we simply cannot get our !@#\$\$% together. It was amazing to most international delegates, that even in this darkest hour, we cannot get the recreational fishing industry/community/sector/rabble to work together. It was astounding to them that industry and advocacy groups do not work together.

For me, its immensely frustrating. There is so much potential if we all give a little ground and actually start to listen to each other. As long as I am expending effort trying to get recreational fishers to work together, it leaves no time to actually focus on issues.

How do we grow our fisheries and our fishers? We need to work together, anyone who can't see that, needs to step aside and let others who can step up to the plate.

Len

