



The Great Lakes - Hunter study area includes the main fishing ports of Taree, Wallis Lake (Forster/Great Lakes), Port Stephens/Tea Gardens and Newcastle. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries targeting a variety of species including ocean fish trawl, ocean trap and line, lobster, ocean haul, a seasonal longline tuna fishery and an active estuary general fishery. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing on Great Lakes-Hunter communities according to seven dimensions of community wellbeing.

Dimensions of wellbeing
 Seven 'dimensions of wellbeing' were identified through the Valuing Coastal Fisheries project as being relevant to the professional wild-catch industry. These are all elements of overall community wellbeing that the industry contributes to in a number of ways. The project explored the nature of these contributions through interviews, an economic questionnaire of fishers and three social questionnaires. These included a random phone survey of the general public (35% of whom identified as recreational fishers), a phone survey of fish retailers and wholesalers (including co-ops) and an internet questionnaire of tourism and hospitality businesses.

A resilient local economy
 The wild-catch industry in the Great Lakes-Hunter region generates more than \$83 million in revenue and over 727 full time local jobs. This includes \$42m, and 310 jobs, from the industry and the businesses that service it and a similar amount from the secondary processing, wholesale and retail sector.

Eating out is one of the most popular activity undertaken by domestic visitors to the Great Lakes-Hunter area and the fishing industry provides an important and valued product to local tourism and hospitality markets. Our project indicated that the vast majority (89%) of NSW residents expect to eat locally caught seafood when on holidays.

Residents of the Great Lakes-Hunter recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 89% think it provides important employment opportunities, 90% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 87% of people believe that professional fishing plays an important part in tourism in their region through, for example, the supply of local seafood.

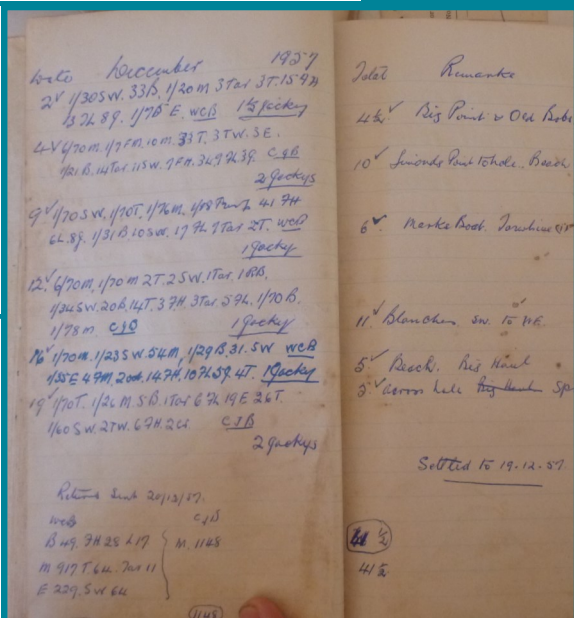
Community health and safety
 Consumers in the Hunter-Greats Lakes region have a strong preference for local product (40% prefer seafood sourced from their own town or region, 43% prefer Australian product). Consumers from this area prefer to always (14%) or often (38%) purchase local seafood. Only 9% of consumers in this area purchase seafood more than once a week (the lowest in the state) but most purchase at least once a week (26%) or once a fortnight (25%). 77% of people from this region prefer local product as they believe it is better for their health.

The fishers we interviewed indicated they regularly participated in search and rescue operations, including towing broken-down vessels.



Education and knowledge generation
 The accumulated environmental knowledge held by individual fishers and fishing families – some of whom have been working in particular waterways or sections of coast for multiple generations – is a significant resource. Examples we uncovered included one family who had diaries spanning more than 100 years, documenting catches, weather and other environmental conditions for a lake system in the Great Lakes-Hunter area.

I've got diaries for over 100 years, from my great-grandfather, my father, [my husband], and they start from 1930, every single day on the Smiths Lake. Fishing family member (061114_1a) Great Lakes-Hunter

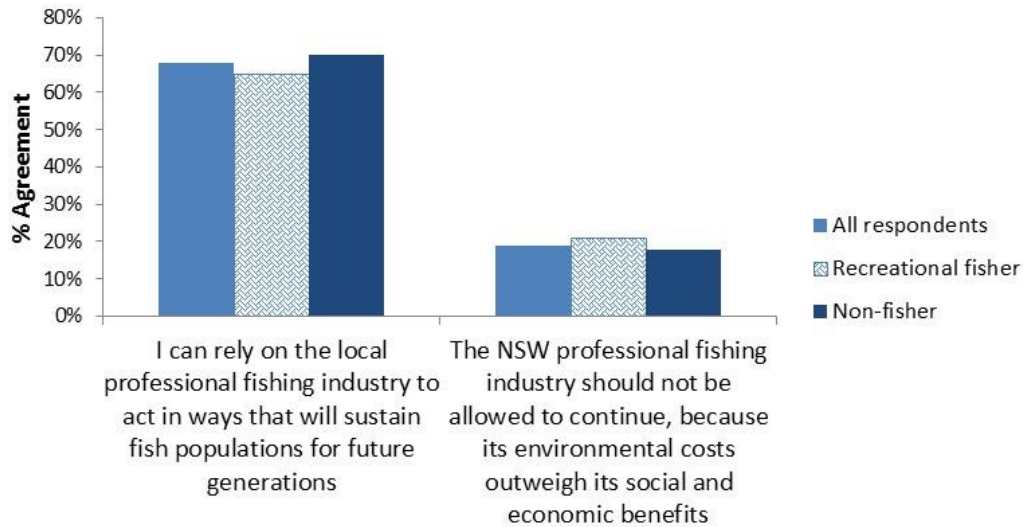


VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries

A healthy environment

The wild-catch professional fishing industry in the Great Lakes-Hunter area operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The majority of the Great Lakes-Hunter community support the continuation of their local industry and believe the industry can be relied on to act in a sustainable manner.



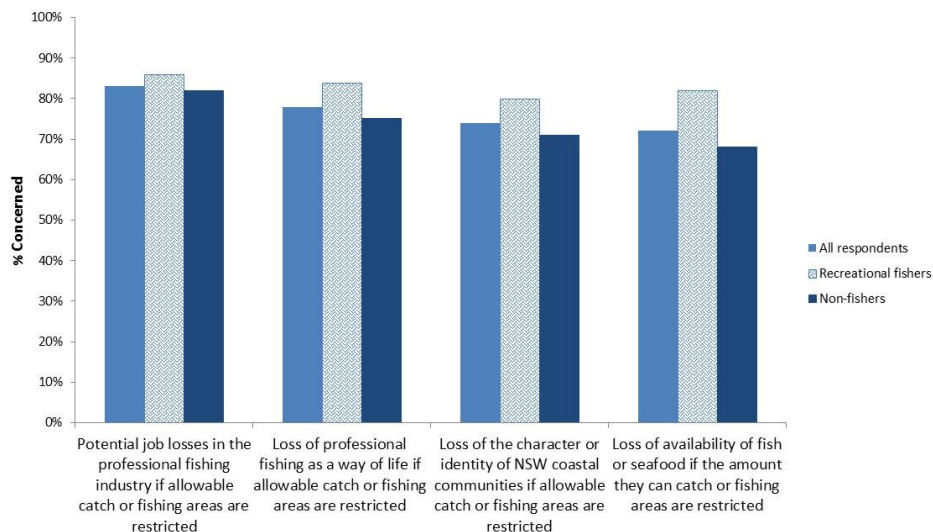
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in the Great Lakes-Hunter community. The Wallis Lake, Port Stephens, Taree, Tea Gardens and Newcastle co-ops and other fish merchant businesses in the area provide sponsorship and donations – especially ice – to local sporting and community groups. The co-op also provides important support services for fishers and their families.

Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations in the Great Lakes-Hunter, especially over the summer period – 72% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 63% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). Other celebrations and cultural events also involved seafood consumption including Easter (71%) and New Years Eve (42%) and Australia Day (38%).

Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the region and the port areas of Nelson Bay, Newcastle and Wallis Lake have strong ties to the industry as working harbours from which fishing operations have been conducted for over a century. Residents expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (74% concerned) and the loss of a ‘way of life’ for fishers (78% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

Over a third (34%) of residents surveyed in the Great Lakes-Hunter were recreational fishers. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 79% preferred local bait even if it was more expensive. The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (91%), 75% thought it was better for the local environment and 53% believed it was more effective in catching fish. In addition commercial wharves in the area are popular recreational fishing spots as well as tourist attractions.