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FISHERIES RESEARCH &
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Australia's National Recreational Fishing Conference 2019

Final Report

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In submitting this report, the researcher has agreed to FRDC publishing this material in its edited form.

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Acknowledgments

Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation Board who committed resources and the drive to ensure the conference was strategically focused.

Conference presenters who provided insightful views on strategically important topics to the recreational fishing sector.

Conference Steering Committee who provided guidance and support to ensure the conference management was structured and on track in the lead up to the conference.

FRDC for providing the core funding and support to ensure the conference was held.

Conference Sponsors for providing additional funding to ensure that the conference quality was maintained at a high level with appropriate internationally recognised Keynote speakers.

Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation Chair, Mr Brett Cleary, who provided the leadership that the national conference required.

Abbreviations

ARFF Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation

FRDC Fisheries Research & Development Corporation

Introduction

1. Background

Following on from the success of the 2012, 2015 & 2017 National Recreational Fishing Conferences, the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation was successful in securing a funding grant from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) to deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference in 2019. Holding a National Conference every two years allows sufficient time for issues, concerns and suggestions to proceed in a considered way and for actionable items to commence. The National Conference sought input from multi-jurisdictional and internationally recognised speakers and developed a forum to question the current, and drive the future, direction of recreational fishing in Australia. A regular National Conference also provides the opportunity for peer networks to meet, discuss and learn from other jurisdictions about how the challenges that the recreational fishing sector faces are being addressed.

The 2019 National Conference was held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart, Tasmania on the 10th & 11th December 2019. The theme of the conference was focused on *Citizen Science: Our Fishing. Our Research. Our Recreational Future*. 127 people attended the 2-day conference which included a broad spread of people from peak bodies, state and federal government agencies, key industry stakeholders and grass roots fishers. Conference attendees also received entrance to a special screening of Al McGlashen's film *Life On The Line: The story of the Southern Bluefin Tuna*.

Recfishing Research extended an invitation to all recreational fishers to apply for their bursary program to attend the 2019 National Recreational Fishing Conference. Recfishing Research aimed to send two representatives from each state in Australia to the Conference and all interested recreational fishers across Australia were invited to apply. The bursary program included a half-day introductory workshop for bursary recipients and Recfishing Research committee members, Networking opportunities with leaders in the recreational fishing community during the 2 days of the conference and half-day closing workshop to share lessons learned and future plans. The program was the continuation of an emerging leaders program for the rec sector which has been in place for a number of years. Identifying and developing people as part of a structured ongoing program will ensure continued positive engagement with rec sector representatives in a challenging and constantly changing environment.

2. Need

The National Recreational Fishing Conference 2019 successfully enabled the recreational fishing community to gather and discuss issues of local, state and national strategic importance. The value of regular fishing sector conferences is recognised among the fishing community, and supported by FRDC, to facilitate continued progress, coordination and recognition of achievements.

The primary aim of the 2019 conference was to engage the largest cross-section of Australia's recreational fishing community possible to discuss key issues of relevance, develop a shared vision for the future and agree upon strategic actions to pursue this vision.

The 2019 event was re-focused to more directly benefit grassroots recreational fishers, involving a new format, lower costs to participate, higher levels of involvement of well-known fishing personalities in the program, a focus on increased levels of participant interaction, engagement and a series of presentations designed to be both informative and thought provoking.

Objectives

There were 4 main objectives for the conference.

1. *Deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference which increases the level of meaningful engagement with the recreational fishing community in national issues of importance.*
2. *Engage with participants at the National Conference to identify priority actions to be progressed.*
3. *Acknowledge recreational fishing community achievements.*
4. *Publication of extension products from the event.*

Methods

Objective 1: Deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference which increases the level of meaningful engagement with the recreational fishing community in national issues of importance.

Methods:

A Steering Committee was established in June to underpin planning for the conference. The Steering Committee comprised:

- Project Manager – Mark Nikolai
- FRDC representative – Josh Fielding
- Recfishing Research Representative – Owen Li
- ARFF representative – Mike Burgess
- High Profile Recreational Fishing Representative – Jo Starling

The Steering Committee held regular monthly meetings from June to November 2019 and worked through a detailed project plan in the lead up to the conference commencement.

The Board of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation also received weekly updates on conference activities and planning requirements and ensured appropriate resources were allocated to the conference planning, organising and scheduling.

Conference organisers deliberately aligned the conference timing with the 39th World Fly Fishing Championships which were held in Tasmania from the 30th November to the 8th December. The intention of aligning the two events was to provide the opportunity for mutual benefit flow for championship participants and conference attendees.

International Speakers:

Two Internationally recognised speakers were engaged as Keynote speakers for the conference.

Julian Pepperell is a fisheries scientist, writer and a recognised authority on large oceanic fishes, especially billfish, sharks and tuna. He has been active in marine research for over forty years and is especially well known for his work in developing the Australian Gamefish Tagging Program.

He has authored or co-authored over 120 scientific papers, reports and book chapters and published more than 850 columns and 170 feature magazine articles on marine science. He has also authored four books, including the award-winning 'Fishes of the Open Ocean'. Julian is a past President of the Australian Society for Fish Biology, a recipient of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) Conservation Award, an inductee of the Cairns Professional Game Fishing Hall of Fame, a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from The Billfish Foundation and was this year inducted into the IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame.

Dr. Pepperell, as Keynote on Day 1, opened the conference proceedings with his presentation titled *The Scientific Legacy Of Five Decades Of Angler-based Gamefish Tagging In Australia*.

Gerry Kristianson is an avid angler who has spent the last 24 years immersed in fisheries politics. Following a career that combined academic, public service and business activity centering around the relationship between public and private interests, Gerry now enjoys the good fortune of being able to spend his time advancing the cause of recreational fishing on two international bodies — the Pacific Salmon Commission and the North Pacific Anadromous fish Commission — as well as being a lead player on the Canadian Government's longest established fishing advisory body, the Sport Fishing Advisory Board, as a director of the Sport Fishing Institute, the industry association for recreational fishing service providers on the West Coast, and as a board member responsible for securing private funding for two important fisheries science projects in his home country of Canada.

Gerry was the Keynote on Day 2 with his presentation on *The Role Of Citizen Science In The Canadian Recreational Fishery*

Official Opening:

Senator Jonathon Duniam officially opened the conference.

Local Indigenous commercial fisher, Bryan Denny, gave an insightful Welcome to Country ceremony that highlighted the importance of Indigenous culture, expectations and his passion for the fishing sector.

Media Campaign:

The services of a well-known recreational fishing creative strategist were contracted as the Conference Communications Manager. The Communications Manager provided, and worked within, an agreed framework for the delivery of marketing and communication services. A Conference Communications Plan was developed early which provided the structure for the delivery of a coordinated range of service provision. Conference branding, 4 media releases published, Social media management, website management and relevant email communications were services developed and coordinated by the Communications Manager. Planning and associated marketing was integrated through social media, website, mainstream media and strong peer networks.

Live Stream:

Both days of the conference were livestreamed by a professional local supplier with free access for those who wanted to engage/participate in the conference presentations. Some of the statistics from the provider included:

- Average viewers over both days: 80
- Total Views: 220
- All states of Australia were viewing with NSW and Darwin having the highest number of viewers.

- Other viewers were recorded from Auckland and Dunedin in New Zealand plus a few from the United States.
- Day 2 had more interest than day 1 although day 1 had a reasonably constant number of viewers while day 2 spiked for the morning then tapered off through the afternoon

This was the first time that the national conference had been livestreamed and the feedback received from those who were watching the livestream feed indicated that the service was of very high quality and professionally presented. Given the good numbers of people who used the livestream service the objective of increasing the engagement with grassroots fishers was achieved, with more total views than people who attended the conference in person.

Objective 2: Engage with participants at the National Conference to identify priority actions to be progressed following the conference.

Methods:

A facilitated panel session was held at the end of each session to answer specific questions/comments from the audience on the grouped session presentations.

Steve Starling, well known recreational fishing identity, was the Master of ceremonies for the conference. Steve was given the overall objective to make sure the conference presentations moved along in sync with the Conference Program timings. Given the audience, the MC did this in an informal/assertive way as there were strict timings around breaks and end of day as far as supporting catering services were concerned. The MC did an outstanding job with the overall conference program management and numerous people publicly noted that given the talkative nature of recreational fishers it was a job well done to keep the conference on track and on time.

A conference survey was developed, and approved by the ARFF Board, prior to the conference commencement. Following completion of the conference, attendees were sent a copy of the survey to provide feedback on any aspect of the conference/strategic priorities. 32 responses were received from attendees and will be used as input for continual improvement processes and strategic development activities in the foreseeable future.

Objective 3: Acknowledgement of recreational fishing community achievements.

Methods:

A Gala Dinner was held on the 11th December at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, as part of the national conference. 100 people attended the Gala Dinner which included the national recreational fishing sector community recognition awards presentations. The awards recognised individuals and groups who have helped to advance recreational fishing in Australia in the fields of Environment, Education and Research.

An Awards Steering Committee was established to decide award recipients with the ARFF Chair noting the tireless efforts of volunteers over the long term on behalf of recreational fishers at a regional, state and national basis. The Gala Dinner showcased the high quality of Tasmanian food and beverages.

Objective 4: Publication of extension products from the event.

Methods:

The presentations, discussions and action items from the conference form a valuable reference for the recreational fishing sector, government bodies and political leaders going forward. Copies of all conference presentations/recorded livestreams have been uploaded onto the conference website (<http://www.arff.net.au/nrfc/>) and communicated by email directly to conference

delegates by personal email and to the broader recreational fishing sector via the broad and extensive networks throughout the peak bodies and fishing clubs across Australia. This Post Conference Report also forms part of the conference outputs and will be placed in the public domain following acceptance of the report by the FRDC. This document will help maintain momentum of the event and drive delivery of priority actions identified.

Results/Identified Key Priorities

- *Voluntary capacity in the rec sector is amazing sophisticated with high level abilities to undertake projects. Support is required to sustain these activities into the future*
- *ARFF has cohesion and momentum across the sector and we collectively need to work together to continue to achieve amazing outcomes.*
- *It is important that Peak bodies at a state and national level receive support moving forward. Unity within the sector provides increased abilities to get things done.*
- *There is a diversity of passion across the rec sector. We need to embrace diversity in participation to leverage non-traditional diversity channels.*
- *Collecting data via citizen science without knowing why you are collecting is a waste of time. Data is critical! A future issue for the sector is how to deregulate data and maintain ownership of the data.*
- *Decouple from government. Time and time again the rec sector achieve great things without government.*
- *To maintain recreational fisheries, you need to improve habitat and get biomass up. Rec sector needs evidence of what biomass we need to have successful rec fishing. We need a definition of what a successful rec sector experience is. Will be required in future discussions/processes around resource sharing.*
- *Registration and licensing are critical for future development. All rec fishers in Australia need to get registered and licensed.*

Discussion/Conference Feedback

Feedback extracted from the conference survey

- I think the bursary recipients should be held accountable to what they said they would do and a couple of those should be selected to attend and present at the next NRFC. A full contact list of participants should also be distributed. Lastly talking to Owen Li, I think the bursary program should be advertised sooner and advertised more through the peak bodies and fisheries to ensure the best applicants will attend.
- As a bursary recipient, I think it would have been beneficial for us to have the option of perhaps running a Q&A session or presenting as a group or hosting a table maybe. Other than that, I thought the conference was awesome and really beneficial.
- Info I would have liked to had; -Contact information for all whom took part -Info on the organisations attending -Having the leaders of the industry work the floor, perhaps alternate tables for optimal networking opportunities
- Felt that more advantage of the very high level of expertise attending the conference should have been taken. Suggest an extra day of pre-conference workshops, networking, introductions, should be considered next time to consolidate and enhance this rare meeting of rec fishing leaders.
- I would like to encourage a joint event in 2021, AFTA, ARFF Conference and Seafood Directions. AFTA are sending invites or suggestions with deep respect. Not with expectation.
- I was impressed by the high calibre of research and projects showcased
- Add extra day for workshops, develop action items. Do a local tour.
- Had a great time and hope to attend another event by ARFF in the future!
- Congratulations to ARFF and the organisers - General feedback was that this was one of the best and most topical recreational fishing conferences ever held.
- Apart from sharing information on best practise and novel ways to engage and improve recreational fishing outcomes - it might be useful to consider how ARFF, Recfish Australia, State Recreational Peak bodies, national bodies and others can use the conference to ensure they are focusing a "National Strategy" in the right areas.
- As suggested by bursary participants a brief background on speakers and bursary winners to help identify key people and match faces to names and fields/responsibilities/home base
- Generally, a well organised and ran conference which was well worth my time and money to attend although a printed agenda would no doubt have helped.
- Table rotations during speeches
- Thank you for the opportunity to attend as a bursary.
- Congratulations on a great event. Thanks to Mark for organizing it.
- A BIG thank you to Brett Cleary and Mark Nikolai for all your efforts to bring to Tasmania such an inspirational event.
- I really enjoyed the range of speakers and associated events. I felt there was a lot of information presented which other recreational groups could learn from, particularly around stewardship.
- Well done to all the organisers, Best rec fishing conference so far

Conclusions

Holding a National Recreational Fishing Conference on a regular basis provides the impetus to review the state of recreational fishing across Australia, learn from your peers, foresee the oncoming issues and challenge the future direction of the sector. As has been noted by previous conference organisers it is imperative for the future of a strong recreational fishing sector that regular biennial conferences are held.

The future of representation of the recreational fishing sector lies in continuously developing future leaders and unity within the sector. Peak bodies and fishing clubs have limited programs in place and there were many attendees who participated in the conference who were part of such programs or past participants. The quality of future leaders coming through programs is exciting but more work in the area is necessary to lessen the workload and spread the responsibility more broadly across the recreational fishing sector. The same comments relate to increasing female participation and it was heartening to see a greatly increased number of female attendees at this year's conference.

Participation in the "greater good or national focus" by grass roots fishers remains a hurdle that is challenging to overcome. Generally, unless the issue (bushfire) is in their back-yard engagement is frustratingly limited.

There are many challenges facing the fishing industry, including the recreational fishing sector, and a resilient and strong sector remains our best strategy to take on the future effectively. Independence, skilled people and a consistent sustainable funding models are the keys to effective representation and remain key priority areas at both a state and national level.

Citizen Science is changing and developing and is expected to be used more broadly in the future. Current data collection techniques are outdated as the need for data and evidence increases for future resource management needs. The rec sector has shown impressive outcomes through many projects across Australia and there will be an increased need for diversity and expansion of programs in a changing environment.

Project materials developed

In 2020 ARFF will review its Strategic Plan and incorporate the Identified Key Priorities into the planning process and implement a structured work program to address the key priorities. The review of ARFF's Strategic Plan will include all member entities to ensure a broad range of input and collective agreement about the way forward for recreational fishing at a national level.

Electronic copies of all presentations/livestream recordings are available from the conference website at <http://www.arff.net.au/nrfc/>

A Post Conference Report also forms part of the conference outputs and will be placed in the public domain following acceptance of the report by the FRDC. This document will help maintain momentum of the event and drive delivery of priority actions identified.

Appendix 1 – Conference Program



ARFF NATIONAL RECREATIONAL FISHING CONFERENCE
NRFC 2019
HOBART

OUR FISHING
OUR RESEARCH
OUR RECREATIONAL
FUTURE

PROGRAM

Welcome to the 2019 National Recreational Fishing Conference hosted by the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation.

It is fitting that this year's conference is in Hobart Tasmania, a small state but with a very large population of recreational fresh and salt water fishers. Fishing to our Indigenous and recreational anglers and our community is a way of life for all Tasmanians and we welcome you to this beautiful state. The theme of this year's conference "Our Fishing Our Research Our Recreational Future" is all about taking control and caring about our resources and the future of fishing for generations to come. Please enjoy your time, meet like-minded people, ask questions and be part of a strong informed recreational fishing community.

Brett Cleary
ARFF Chair



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and help ensure access to a wide range
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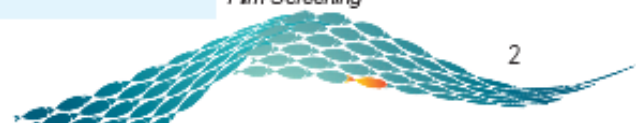
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8:30am	Registration	
9:00am	Welcome To Country	<i>Bryan Denny</i>
9:10am	Opening Remarks	<i>Brett Cleary – ARFF Chair</i>
9:15am	Official Opening	<i>Senator The Hon. Jonathon Duniam</i>
9:20am	The Scientific Legacy Of Five Decades Of Angler-based Gamefish Tagging In Australia.	<i>Keynote 1 Dr Julian Pepperell</i>
9:50am	Participating in citizen science allows recreational fishers to demonstrate their stewardship of the ocean	<i>Rachel Kelly – IMAS</i>
10:20am	Could Citizen Science Save Rec Fishing?	<i>Steve Stirling</i>
10:40am	Morning Tea	
11:00am	Target 1 Million: Phase II – More People Fishing More Often	<i>Travis Dowling – VFA</i>
11:20am	The Next Generation Of Aussie Fisho's Doing What They Love To Make A Difference.	<i>Dean Jackson</i>
11:40am	National Recreational Fishing Survey Update	<i>Andy Moore – ABARES</i>
12 noon	Recreational Fishing in the Northern Territory; Land Rights and The Blue Mud Bay Decision	<i>David Ciaravolo – AFANT</i>
12:20pm	Panel Discussion	
12:30pm	Lunch	
1:30pm	Sunfish citizen science contributions to priority fisheries issues in Queensland	<i>Dr Barry Pollock – Sunfish QLD</i>
1:50pm	Monitoring and Management of the NSW Recreational Fishery – Current and Future Directions	<i>Julian Hughes – DPI NSW</i>
2:10pm	Reef Vision: Driving better fishing in WA	<i>Andrew Rowland – Recfishwest</i>
2:30pm	A Synthesis Of The Value Of Contributions From Recreational Fishers In Helping Us Understand The Impacts Of Climate Change	<i>Prof. Gretta Pecl – IMAS</i>
2:50pm	Panel Discussion	
3:00pm	Afternoon Tea	
3:20pm	Looking Back and Looking Forward: The Changing Seascape of Recreational Sea Fishing in Tasmania	<i>Rod Peam & Dr Ian Dutton – DPIPWTE</i>
3:40pm	Citizen Action to improve our Fisheries: The role of OzFish Unlimited	<i>Craig Copeland – Ozfish Unlimited</i>
4:00pm	Inspiring recreational fishers to be Tuna Champions	<i>Sean Tracey – IMAS</i>
4:30pm	Panel Discussion	
4:50pm	Day 1 Wrap Up	<i>Brett Cleary – ARFF Chair</i>
5:00pm	Day 1 Close	
5:15pm	Life on the Line: The Story Of Southern Bluefin Tuna	<i>Film Screening</i>



9:00am	Day 1 Recap	Brett Cleary – ARFF Chair
9:10am	The Role Of Citizen Science In The Canadian Recreational Fishery	<i>Keynote 2</i> Gerry Kristianson
9:30am	Building An Open Access Ciguatera Risk Map: How Fishers Can Help	Dr Andreas Seger – SARDI
9:50am	Women In Recreational Fishing Network	Belinda Yim – VFA
10:10am	Reinforcing Anecdotal Observations Using Citizen Science: Implications For Eastern Gulf Of Carpentaria Fishery Future	Dave Donald
10:30am	Panel Discussion	

10:40am Morning Tea

11:00am	Initiatives And Plans For Both Native And Trout Fisheries Programs In NSW	Nathan Miles – NSW DPI
11:20am	Recreational Fisher Representation And Advocacy: Insights From Victoria	Mike Burgess – VR Fish
11:40am	Australian Marine Parks	Parks Australia
12 noon	The Tacklebox Project	Adam Martin – ARFF
12:20pm	Panel Discussion	

12:30pm Lunch



FISH HABITAT NETWORK



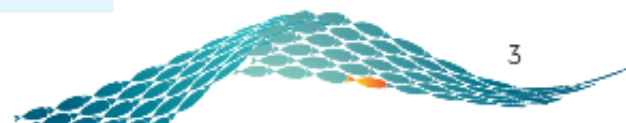
Recreational Fishing Trusts

HABITAT SESSION sponsored by Fish Habitat Network, NSW

1:30pm	Fisher Science: Shellfish Reefs	Ben Cleveland, Robbie Porter, John Larsson and Travis Pierce – Ozfish Unlimited
1:50pm	Mapping And Monitoring Fish Habitats	Cassie Price, Braeden Lampard, Andrew Matthews and Travis Howson – Ozfish Unlimited
2:10pm	National Waterbug Blitz	Cecil Ellis – Nature Navigation
2:30pm	A Native Fish Management And Recovery Strategy For The Murray Darling Basin	Sam Roseby – MDBA
2:50pm	Panel Discussion	

3:00pm Afternoon Tea

3:20pm	Supporting Sustainable Fisheries: Fisheries Surveys And Citizen Science	Jeremy Lyle – IMAS
3:40pm	The Recreational Trout Fishery In Tasmania: Over 150 Years Of Managing Wild Brown Trout	Jonah Yick – Inland Fisheries Service
4:00pm	Conference Report Activity	
4:30pm	Panel Discussion	
4:50pm	Conference Wrap Up	Brett Cleary – ARFF Chair
5:00pm	Conference Close	Dr Patrick Hone – FRDC
7:00pm	(For 7.30 Start) Gala Dinner – Cocktail Dress	



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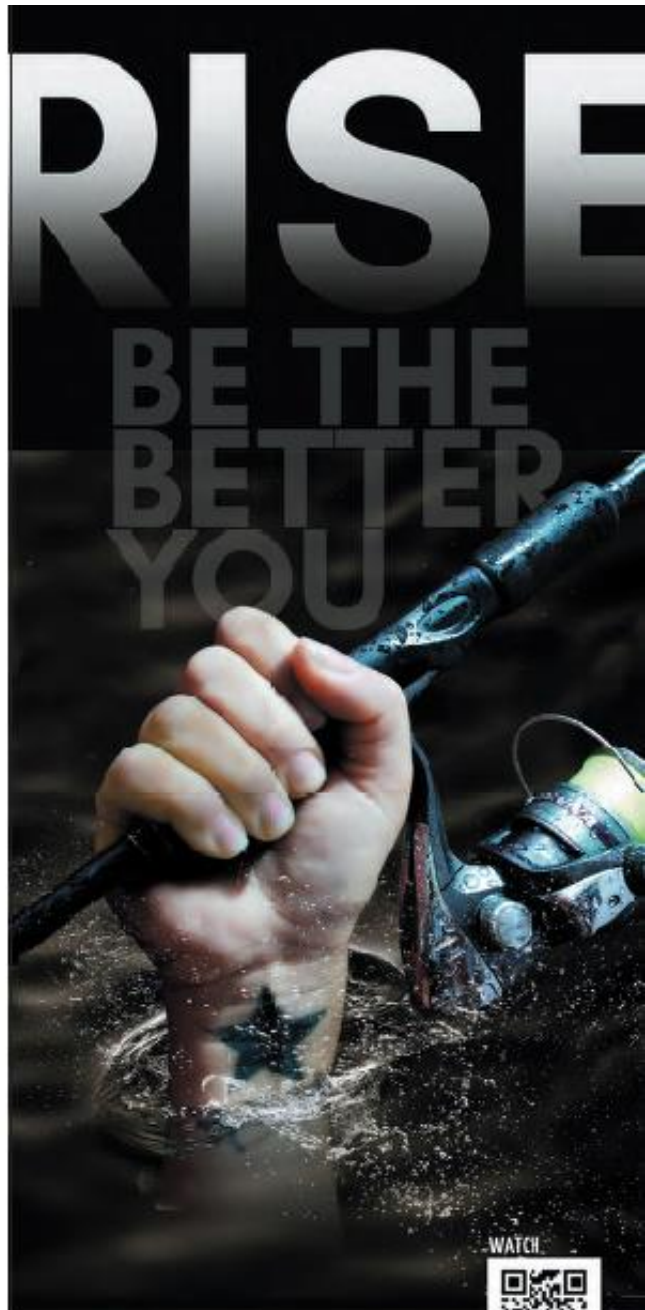
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