
RecFAC 77 Meeting Minutes

Location: The Grange, Campbell Town

Date: 25 March 2022

Meeting Open: 9:35 am

Present (in Person):

Max Kitchell	Chair
Rod Pearn	NRE Tas
Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
Mike Stevens	TARFish
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member
David Hawley	Recreational Member
Richard Sherriff	Recreational Member
Jane Johnston	Recreational Member

Present (via Teams):

Sean Tracey	IMAS
Nepelle Crane	NRM South
Ben Cunningham	Tasmania Police
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member
Tony Eldridge	Recreational Member
Andrew Hart	Recreational Member
Vicki Wilshaw	Executive Support (NRE Tas)

Apologies: Dane Jones TARFish

Guest: Sven Frijlink NRE Tas

1. Meeting Formalities

- **Adoption of Agenda**

It was requested Agenda Item 3 be moved to later in the program to allow sufficient discussion on the more important topics (ie Rock Lobster Fishery Information Paper and Calamari Management).

- **Register of Interest**

Registration of Interests was updated.

- **Minister's Correspondence/ Decisions from Previous Meeting**

RecFAC Meeting 76 did not proceed due to insufficient members being able to attend the Teams Meeting. No formal advice was given to the Minister regarding the Rock Lobster TAC.

- **Action Items from previous meeting(s)**

The Recreational Fishing Strategy has since been released.

Fishwatch Service: NRE working with Tasmania Police to improve the service. Notably, automating a reporting service for irretrievable and lost gear in the draft rules will free up capacity to focus on illegal fishing reports. NRE and the Marine Police member will periodically report back to RecFAC on the service.

Update on abalone size limits: there is an upcoming Abalone Futures Workshop in April, which will feed into the development of an Abalone Harvest Strategy. RecFAC members and TARFish board have been invited.

2. RecFAC Future Meetings/ Work Plan 2022

The Committee discussed various options on how to best conduct RecFAC business (ie holding face to face meetings, introduce more Team meetings, and/or conduct business through sub-committees).

The Committee supported full day meetings at the current rate of 6 -7 meetings per year to discuss a range of matters. There was support for the establishment of sub-committees for some topics. Such sub-committees would report their views and recommendations to RecFAC which would retain responsibility for providing formal advice to the Minister.

The sub-committee would be required to meet in advance of the scheduled RecFAC meeting, provide a background paper outlining their assessment and/or recommendations prior to the meeting for discussion.

The Committee determined to trial the feasibility of sub-committees by establishing a rock lobster sub-committee. Sean Tracey, Ben Cunningham, Jane Gallichan, David Hawley, Nepelle Crane (tentative) nominated at the meeting. Members to contact the Executive Officer to express their interest in participating in the rock lobster sub-committee.

There was strong support for establishing a good work plan for future meetings to assist members in committing to and attending meetings.

There was no support to meet out of hours or on weekends

Action 1: Finalise the draft RecFAC Working Plan and Meeting Schedule

By: NRE Tas

Timeline: to be sent out with the Draft Minutes

3. Rock Lobster Fishery

The members were briefed on the proposed rock lobster rule changes and East Coast Policy contained within the Rock Lobster Discussion paper and the public consultation process

As the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone Strategy is expiring a new plan with performance targets is being developed. Following advice from NRE that the existing rebuilding strategy

has not achieved all of its targets the Committee recommended that a review of the reasons for this shortfall would be of assistance in the development of a future harvest. The NRE representative stated that the reasons, such as recreational catch exceeding the notional catch amount, commercial effort in Area 2 and poor recruitment were included in the information paper. To assist the new RecFAC Committee to better understand the stance taken by its predecessors on the issue of the east coast catch share, the Chair requested the letter from him to the Minister regarding previous advice be sent to the RecFAC members.

Action 2: Provide the letter from Chair to the Minister regarding catch share arrangements advice to the current RecFAC Committee.

By: NRE Tas

Deadline: before next meeting

4. Calamari Management

The Committee provided advice on calamari management, considering the feedback from the calamari fishery discussion paper that was released in October last year. Recreational fishing members emphasised the need to control commercial fishing catch, which in the view of many members was the dominant catcher in the north. They were very concerned about the high number and intensity of commercial fishing in the north immediately after the season opening. RecFAC indicated that this increased effort needs to be urgently constrained.

The NRE representative provided advice on spawning closures and recreational catch limits.

- **Spawning closure**

Concerns were raised by members that the seasonal closure does not adequately protect the entirety of the peak spawning period for calamari.

RecFAC recommended the spawning closure apply to both commercial and recreational sectors and that it be extended by one week on either side of the current northern area closure, starting at the beginning of the last week in September and concluding at the end of the first week in November

- **Recreational bag limit**

RecFAC noted the fairly even split of respondents to the discussion paper in relation to reducing the bag limit from its current 10 fish (approximately 40% thought the current bag limit was fair); just over half indicated a bag limit of less than 10 was fair, 15% indicated 8 was fair, 30% indicated a bag limit of 5 was fair. The Committee noted IMAS' advice that the average catch per rec fisher is around 4-5 fish and a reduction in the bag limit to 8 or 5 may only achieve a small catch reduction. The NRE representative acknowledged this and said bag limits and a boat limit would assist to remove latent effort and the reduce the ability of increasing the catch.

The RecFAC recommended the bag limit remain at 10.

- **Recreational boat limit**

The Committee members were not able to reach consensus regarding a recommendation for the introduction of a boat limit.

The Committee noted that responses to the discussion paper were largely in support of imposing a boat limit, however, there was no consensus on the size of the limit with figures ranging from 10-30 being suggested. 17% of respondents favoured no boat limits.

The previous RecFAC had supported introducing a boat limit, but this new Committee was evenly split. Those in favour of a boat limit considered it would assist in reducing pressure on stocks while those opposed fell into two camps; the first believing that it infringed on fisher's rights (ie, a boat limit could restrict individual fishers taking their allowed bag) with one member saying the measure was "a nonsense" and would have no impact on stocks. A couple of those opposed to boat limits indicated that they might be willing to accept a limit of 50 in the future, however, it was noted that only 3% of respondents supported a limit above 30.

Because there was no Committee consensus, no recommendation was made on boat limits.

5. Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy Update

- **Better Fishing Grants Funding Round**

The Committee was asked for nominations from members to join the Grants Assessment Committee for Better Fishing Grants Fund. Kevin Bennett and David Hawley nominated. Another member nominated Andrew Hart (who left the meeting early due to poor video quality).

The Committee supported the Chair's suggestion that the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy be a standing RecFAC agenda item.

6. Research and Management Updates

- **Research Update:**

Sean Tracey provided a paper to the Committee providing an overview of all Australian-wide recreational sector projects which IMAS are involved.

- **Management Updates**

NRE have conducted the state-wide audit of shore based recreational sea fishing infrastructure.

Sven Frijlink provided an infrastructure update - Better Fishing Grants Funding round and artificial reefs.

Flathead for the Future project: NRE Tas has developed a draft scoping paper for this project. Develop good management guided by good science.

Rock Lobster Monitoring App: the trial is continuing and have received good feedback. Over 300 fishers have registered, 500 fishing trips, 1300 rock lobster caught, 700 released. The App has been recently upgraded to include the ability to record sex and size of the caught rock lobster.

7. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance

- **Marine Police**

Covid has impacted on the vessel patrol schedule.

- **TARFish**

Reminded members about the LMRMA review currently open for public submissions.

TARFish keen to support some initiatives based on the east coast of Tasmania – kelp restoration project and *Centrostephanus* management.

- **Rec Fisher Representatives**

Noted some concerns with a lack of garfish in Georges Bay. Is it due to overfishing or an increase in water temperature?

Noted the large amount of long-spine sea urchins in a favoured snorkelling area.

Northern MPA and the loss sea grass habitat – identified Waterhouse and Robins Island may need to be protected to assist in protecting calamari habitat.

8. Other Business/ Dates for future meetings

Next Meeting: early May 2022 – Flathead recovery plan, abalone harvest, recreational gillnetting.

Meeting Closed: 3:06 pm

Action Items

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Action 2: Provide the letter from Chair to the Minister regarding east coast catch share arrangements advice to the current RecFAC Committee.

By: NRE Tas

Timeline: before next meeting