
RecFAC 78 Meeting Minutes

Location: Lands Bld, 134 Macquarie Street, Hobart

Date: 3 June 2022

Meeting Open: 9:35 am

Present (in Person):

Max Kitchell	Chair
Rod Pearn	NRE Tas
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
David Hawley	Recreational Member
Sean Tracey	IMAS
Nepelle Crane	NRM South
Ben Cunningham	Tasmania Police
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member
Tony Eldridge	Recreational Member
Andrew Hart	Recreational Member
Vicki Wilshaw	Executive Support (NRE Tas)

Present (via Teams):

Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
Jane Bendall	Recreational Member
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member
Richard Sherriff	Recreational Member

Apologies: Mike Stevens TARFish

Guest: Sven Frijlink NRE Tas
David Mossop NRE Tas
Alyssa Marshall IMAS

1. Meeting Formalities

- **Adoption of Agenda**

The NRE Tas member requested to discuss Atlantic Salmon limits immediately after the discussion regarding Gillnetting.

- **Register of Interest**

Register of Interests was updated. One member is still to declare if there are any interests. The Executive Officer is tasked with following up with that member.

- **Meeting Formalities (Communications)**

The members indicated they support sharing email address amongst RecFAC members, with the understanding that they are not to be shared outside RecFAC.

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

There has been a recent change in the Minister. The decision sheet from the previous meeting has not yet been received from the Minister's Office.

The Committee supported the Chair inviting the Minister to a RecFAC meeting.

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

Previous Actions have been completed.

2. Rock Lobster Fishery snapshot of consultation

The NRE Tas member advised RecFAC that around 80 submissions were received from the recreational fishery and 90 from the commercial fishery.

Public consultation meetings were held around the State to discuss the Rock Lobster Discussion Paper. There was relatively low attendance at most meetings – possibly due to the acceptance of the proposals or the engagement through other activities. NRE representatives also received feedback about risks of Covid in attending meetings. NRE reported analytics of their engagement activities through multiple posts of Facebook (11,000 followers), Fisheries Tasmania email news service (34,000 subscribers), and you tube and social reach of animated videos of 29,000 to 38,000 views.

IMAS has been requested to model the impacts of proposed size limit changes, plus the introduction of 60 pots in area 5.

The proposal to introduce catch sharing for the rock lobster fishery was fully supported.

A member noted a trend of Government mistrust on social media about the treatment of public submissions.

Rock Lobster App

There is a high level of support for the app and feedback is that it is quite practical to use. There are 380 registered users of the app and around 1700 rock lobsters recorded. A member suggested the app may be used when transiting rock lobster from one area to another.

Rock Lobster Working Group

The working group consists of Brody Corbett, Nepelle Crane, David Hawley, Ben Cunningham, Jane Gallichan, Rod Pearn and Sean Tracey.

The Working Group nominated Max Kitchell to Chair the meetings.

The inaugural meeting for the Working Group is 1:00 pm, 16 June.

3. Identifying Pathways to transition away from recreational gillnetting

The RecFAC interpreted the phrase “transition away from recreational gillnetting”, as it appears in the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy to mean “there will be no recreational gillnet fishing at the end of ten years”.

The Committee supported the Chair seeking confirmation from the Minister that recreational gillnetting will be phased out in the next ten years.

RecFAC nominations for the NRE Tas Recreational Gillnetting Working Group are Tony Eldridge and Mike Stevens. Nepelle Crane will attend the working group “as required” as the NRM Representative.

TARFish requested they be tasked with seeking views of gillnetters to provide information on the impacts of gillnetting.

RecFAC considered transitional arrangements as follows:

- education campaigns highlighting alternative gear types/ species and promote awareness of why this is important
- species-based protection for at-risk species, with particular emphasis on the endangered Maugean Skate in Macquarie Harbour
- grandfathering licences
- further limitations on soak times and/or netting attendance
- area closures
- restricting activity to Atlantic Salmon removal in defined areas following notifiable outbreaks

The Committee did not support encouraging more responsible netting practices as this could give the impression that netting might continue beyond the phase-out period.

The committee noted the potential for interactions between recreational gillnets and the endangered Maugean Skates and encourages NRE Tas to urgently investigate options for reducing the interaction in Macquarie Harbour.

Action 1:

Invite IMAS to present current information to RecFAC on Maugean Skate.

By: NRE Tas

Deadline: before next meeting

Recommendation 1:

RecFAC congratulate the Government on taking this approach to gillnetting. RecFAC requests the Minister to confirm “transition away” means the same as “phase out”, ie, that recreational gillnetting will cease by 2030.

The use of Gillnets to catch Atlantic Salmon

The NRE Tas representative tabled feedback from IMAS surveys on escaped salmon outbreaks, with fishers indicating concerns about having to return dead fish to the water from nets during the last marine farm outbreak.

RecFAC resolved not to increase bag limits on the basis that it sent mixed messages about transitioning away from gillnetting. It was stated that there is no evidence of escaped salmon having adverse environmental impacts noting that they lose condition and eventually die. After

several decades of breakouts, there is no evidence of self-sustaining Atlantic Salmon populations in Tasmania.

It was also stated that it is not the recreational fishery's responsibility to clean up after salmon breakouts.

RecFAC agreed to retain the Atlantic Salmon bag limits, however, if there is an escape event, the Department could consider using existing exemptions in the LMRMA to temporarily increase bag limits. The Committee also suggested the Department develop a management plan for these events.

4. Flathead for the Future - Update

Alyssa Marshall (IMAS) and NRE Tas provided the Committee with an outline of current Sand Flathead data which indicates stocks are depleting. There were initial indications of stock improvement following the introduction of the increased size limit in 2015, however, data is now showing stocks are declining again.

Ms Marshall stated that the flathead monitoring project clearly demonstrates that Sand Flathead are depleting as measured by the following indicators.

- Catch rates indicate depletion
- Females more vulnerable to fishing depletion
- Size structure in most regions indicates depletion
- Age structure by sex indicates depletion
- Mortality by sex indicates depletion

Previously, Sand Flathead have been on a watching brief while awaiting outcomes from several research and community engagement projects.

Because of the poor condition of sand flathead stocks, the NRE Tas representative recommended interim management measures be introduced before the completion of two research projects embedded within the Flathead for the Future program (results from these projects may not be available for 12-18 months). Most notably, it was suggested that a temporary halving of the bag limit from 20 to 10 would be helpful in protecting flathead stocks.

All members recognised the Depleting status of the Sand Flathead fishery, poor catches in recent years and the need to address this through management changes.

Most members indicated support for a bag limit reduction saying precautionary management should be implemented. However, other members did not support this and preferred to wait for more research results. Some also suggested that the engagement activities could assist fishers to voluntarily reduce catches.

The Committee noted that because Tiger Flathead was classified as sustainable its bag limit should not be reduced if a decision was made to reduce the Sand Flathead bag limit. While this could present difficulties for compliance the NRE Tas representative said they would work through the issues with Marine Police to see if a more targeted approach is feasible.

In the absence of consensus, RecFAC was unable to make a formal recommendation to the Minister on revised Sand Flathead bag limits

5. Research and Management Updates

- **Research Update**

Rock Lobster and Abalone surveys. Respondents are currently providing data which will be used to understand recreational catch and effort.

State-wide General Fishing Survey. This will commence this year. During screening, potential respondents will also be recruited to participate in a separate survey of flathead fishers.

- **Management Updates**

Calamari. RecFAC's views on Calamari were sent to the Minister. NRE Tas is seeking further advice regarding what are appropriate catch limits for both the commercial and recreational sectors. It is anticipated that recreational Rules will be implemented in November 2023.

Abalone. Matt Bradshaw will be invited to provide a brief at RecFAC's next meeting. The briefing will include the commercial fishery size limits and the harvest strategy.

Hazardous Algal Blooms. NRE Tas recently had discussions with TARFish and IMAS regarding sampling. We are considering whether we should undertake sampling for other fisheries (eg scallops).

Potential Research. Heavy metals in tuna, swordfish and shark and the risk to recreational fishers.

- **Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy Update**

Seventeen activities have commenced. Preliminary work has commenced on a further 11 activities. For future updates, it was requested that the activity table include an additional column indicating whether the activities are 'on track' plus an additional column for explanatory comments.

Better Fishing Grants. The first assessment round for applications is due to commence next month. Andrew Hart has confirmed he will participate in the Assessment Committee.

Artificial Reefs. The Turners Beach permit has received approval. Great Bay is now open for public consultation.

FADs. A Code of Practice will be developed in the near future.

- **Communication and Engagement Program overview**

Media Project. There has been good initial feedback for the Rock Lobster videos. Future videos may focus on flathead and calamari management changes.

Fishcare Program Review. Activity constraints associated with Covid have provided an opportunity to review the Program.

6. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance

- **Marine Police**

There have been recent inspections on retail outlets to check that fish have been purchased from licensed sellers resulting in several fines and numerous warnings.

- **TARFish**

TARFish developed a shared position with the Tasmanian Abalone Council, Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fisherman's Association and the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council on kelp and *Centrostephanus* issues to support advocacy efforts during the recent Federal election campaign.

The Organisation Renewal Project has been delayed due to the inability to engage a consultant.

Fisher Engagement Project – through a partnership with OzFish, a Projects and Communications Officer is due to commence in a month at 0.6 FTE.

- **Rec Fisher Representatives**

There is a noted increase in seal interactions and aggressiveness. There is also concern about the impact of seals on stocks of tuna and other species. In addition, there are concerns about injuries to the seals from fishing lines and hooks.

7. Other Business/ Dates for future meetings

Next Meeting: 24 June 2022 – to consider Rock Lobster Submissions

Meeting Closed: 3:06 pm

Action Items

Action 1: Invite IMAS to present current information to RecFAC on Maugean Skate

By: NRE Tas

Timeline: Before next meeting