

Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee (RecFAC)

RecFAC 80 Meeting Minutes

Location: Conference Room, Mt Pleasant
Laboratories, Prospect
Date: 30 September 2022
Meeting Open: 9:30 am

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Acknowledgement

In recognition of the deep history and culture of this island, we acknowledge the palawa people as the traditional and original owners and ongoing custodians of land and sea country of lutrawita/Tasmania and pay respects to their elders past and present.

Attendees

Present (in Person):

Name	Membership Position
Max Kitchell	Chair
Rod Pearn	NRE Tas
David Hawley	Recreational Member
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member
Mike Stevens	TARFish
Richard Sherriff	Recreational Member

Present (via Teams):

Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
Sean Tracey	IMAS
Eileen Langford	Tasmania Police
Jane Bendall	Recreational Member
Tony Eldridge	Recreational Member
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member

Apologies:

Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
Ben Cunningham	Tasmania Police
Nepelle Crane	NRM South
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member
Andrew Hart	Recreational Member

Guest Presenters/ Observers:

Sven Frijlink	NRE Tas- Policy Officer Recreational Fisheries
Matt Bradshaw	NRE Tas – Principal Fisheries Manager, Dive Fisheries
Katherine Farag-Page	NRE Tas - Senior Fisheries Management Officer (Abalone)
Tom Marr	NRE Tas - Fisheries Engagement Coordinator (North)
Holly Rickards	NRE Tas - Policy Officer Wild Fisheries Management Branch
Alexia Graba-Landry	IMAS – Research Fellow Recreational Fisheries
Jayson Semmens	IMAS – Assoc Professor/ Assoc Head Research
David Moreno	IMAS – Research Fellow Salmon Interactions Team

Minutes: Vicki Wilshaw, NRE Tas

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Formalities

1.1. Adoption of Agenda

The NRE Tas representative requested the following topics be added to the agenda for discussion:

- Garfish seasonal spawning closure for discussion prior to Agenda Item 6
- Update on biotoxin management for discussion after Agenda Item 7.

With these changes the agenda was adopted.

1.2 Register of Interest

Two members advised the Committee of updates. The Register of Interests has been updated accordingly.

1.3 Minister's Correspondence/ Decisions from Previous Meetings

Decisions from previous meetings were tabled.

- RecFAC 77 Calamari Squid Spawning Closure
RecFAC recommended a six-week closure.
Minister Palmer applied a five- week closure.
- RecFAC 78 Recreational Gillnetting

Minister Palmer confirmed that “transition away from the use of recreational gill nets over the next ten years” used in the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy means the same as “phase out” and that recreational gillnetting will cease by 2030.

- RecFAC 79 Abalone Harvest Strategy

The Minister noted RecFAC's views regarding resource sharing arrangements and indicated she looks forward to further input as the Harvest Strategy is developed.

- RecFAC 79 Proposed Rock Lobster Rule Amendments

Minister Palmer agreed with almost all RecFAC's recommendations, and these have been included in the Rock Lobster Rules. The exceptions were:

- RecFAC recommended three size limit zones but two zones have been implemented
- RecFAC recommended not to expand the 60 pot area and reiterated the previous RecFAC advice; 60 pots on the west coast, 50 pots on the north coast and 40 rock lobster pots in the east coast. The expanded area did not proceed. The Minister did not provide specific feedback on the suggestion for 40 pots for the East Coast, however noted the RecFAC views on resource sharing arrangements and indicated she looked forward to further input as the harvest strategy is developed.

RecFAC's recommendation that the season dates for the commercial and recreational fisheries remain the same as last year was adopted by Minister Palmer.

Action Item 1:

Provide RecFAC with the timelines for the development of the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy.

1.4 Action Items from previous meeting(s)

Action Item 1 is on the Agenda for discussion.

2. Abalone Size Limits for Commercial Fishery (Submissions and Advice)

Guest presenter, Matt Bradshaw, Principal Fisheries Manager (Abalone), provided the Committee with background information regarding the submissions received during the public consultation period. The TARFish submission was the only submission received from the recreational sector.

AbFAC reviewed the same documents at their meeting of 21 September 2022. AbFAC's recommendation to the Minister is to proceed with the size limit schedule as consulted.

RecFAC has previously supported an increase of the abalone size limit to 145 mm on the east coast and reaffirmed that the increased size limit be introduced as soon as possible. RecFAC were reminded that the recreational size limit increases will be included as part of the development of the Abalone Harvest Strategy.

RecFAC members requested that ample lead time be scheduled in review and implementation phases to provide opportunities to consult and educate more widely with the recreational abalone sector regarding the proposed future size increase.

Recommendation 1:

That the Minister implements the proposed size limits for the commercial fishery within the timeframe proposed which reflects the "three year rule".

RecFAC discussed the possibility that older gauges may become a compliance issue with the introduction of new size limits. Concern was raised about plastic gauges and NRE Tas were asked if steel gauges were an option. NRE Tas responded that the stainless-steel gauges were not cost effective to be supplied by government and private suppliers made quality stainless steel or bronze gauges for fishers to purchase. In addition, it was noted that the plastic gauges are recyclable. The RecFAC requested the Department consider introducing a replacement gauge program. This will also have an added benefit of reducing plastic waste.

Some suggestions for a gauge replacement program are as follows:

- Return gauges to Service Tasmania to receive a new gauge (exchange program)
- Fishcare Volunteers set-up collection points
- Develop a multi-gauge which is fit for purpose across all size limits and fisheries

NRE Tas indicated they will take the suggestions on board, and also said they will promote fishers to use conventional recycling to dispose of gauges.

3. Abalone Harvest Strategy Development

Guest presenter, Katherine Farag-Page presented to RecFAC on the development of harvest strategies; what a harvest strategy is and how they work. NRE Tas are developing a Harvest Strategy Framework which will guide the development of harvest strategies. The aim is to have new harvest strategies for Abalone and Rock Lobster by the end of 2023.

Harvest strategies are currently non statutory, however, with the current review into the *Living Marine Resources Management Act*, consideration is being given as to whether they might be contained within the Act.

4. Identifying Pathways to Transition Away from Recreational Gillnetting

Guest presenter, Sven Frijlink, NRE Tas, updated RecFAC on the recent outcomes from the first meeting of the Recreational Netting Reference Group, held in July. RecFAC was requested to provide comment on the preliminary transitional management timeframe and other ideas, including incorporating the following actions in the Scalefish Rules next year:

- ~2023 reduced soak time/attendance netting requirements/banning deep water netting;
- ~ 2025 ceasing netting in Shark Refuge Areas;
- ~ 2027/28 restricting recreational netting to escaped salmon events.

Other ideas include buying nets from fishers, grandfathering licences, increasing net licence costs.

Some members suggested the key dates be brought forward – including the 2030 recreational cessation date. Members were reminded that it is a transitional phase-out, and it is important to provide rationale for each of the steps and acknowledge that users need time to adjust to the changes and understand reasons behind the steps.

Consultation on the steps and dates for the netting restrictions will be part of the Scalefish Management Plan review in 2023.

During this transitional phase, it was identified we need to be mindful of the social impact of people based on the West Coast. Plus, how to manage the mixed messages of the use of nets to fish for farmed Atlantic salmon escapes.

RecFAC indicated preliminary support for the timeline and stages for phasing out recreational gillnetting no later than 2030.

NRE Tas and the working group will refine the proposals for RecFAC consideration by the end of 2022.

5. Macquarie Harbour – Reducing Fisher Interactions with Maugean Skate

The NRE Tas and IMAS researchers provided a briefing outlining the critical population status and proposed actions for the critically endangered and endemic Maugean Skate. . NRE Tas Threatened Species Unit are working on a conservation action plan to address environmental threats, and Marine Resources have been tasked to reduce fishing related risks.

Guest presenters from IMAS, Jason Semmens and David Moreno, provided an overview and results from scientific monitoring. The Maugean Skate population has declined significantly in recent years and is now at an unprecedented low level. Environmental influences such as reduced water flow from major rivers and low dissolved oxygen levels have impacted on skate recruitment and the way

they move around the Harbour. Skates appear to be associated with particular areas and, therefore, area closures could be an important management tool.

The changes implemented in 2015 assisted to reduce skate interactions. Gillnetting was prohibited in waters deeper than 5 m throughout Macquarie Harbour and around the key habitat area of Table Head. The declining oxygen levels in their preferred depth range (5-15 m), however, has influenced skate to move into shallow water. As such, the restriction of netting to waters less than 5 m does not offer the protection that it was intended to provide, particularly in times of significantly low oxygen, with the most dramatic declines occurring in summer.

Overnight netting presents a particular risk as Maugean Skate move from deeper water during the day into shallower water at night and are at risk of capture in gillnets. There has also been an increase in sea lice, which increase the chance of mortality when skate are captured in nets. They also move more during the night, so they are more likely to be captured in a net.

NRE Tas have presented proposals to TARFish, TSIC and the West Coast Recreation Association. After feedback from the WCRA, some proposed restrictions were amended to offer a period of night netting – up to 2 hours after sunset to give local fishers access to catch flounder. Daytime soak time is reduced to 2 hours. NRE Tas are also consulting on similar proposals for the two commercial net fishers endorsed for Macquarie Harbour. Some RecFAC members stated they would prefer closing all gillnetting in Macquarie Harbour to reduce interaction. RecFAC noted the need for an educational campaign to promote the importance and the seriousness of the risk to the critically endangered Maugean Skate. Cradle Coast NRM has received commonwealth funding to educate and inform on the plight of the Maugean Skate.

RecFAC supported the proposal to reduce fishing related risks on the Maugean Skate, which included:

- Closure the gillnet fishery with the following exemptions:
 - Allow gillnetting in some areas, including the north-eastern shoreline and Swan Basin;
 - Allow daytime and limited night netting (one hour after sunrise to two hours after sunset); with 'soak times' up to two hours.
- Prohibit the take of all skate species in Macquarie Harbour (to avoid misidentification with other skate species).
- Changes to apply from 1 November, and further consultation to occur during the scalefish review next year.
- Consider further changes for commercial netters.

RecFAC did not object to the NRE Tas position that commercial restrictions may be finalised after the recreational mitigation actions and that those actions may be slightly different than recreational actions, as the imperative is to reflect the changes in the Recreational Sea Fishing Guide.

6. Recreational Seasonal Garfish Closure

Garfish stocks have been assessed as depleted.

There has been a commercial seasonal closure for Garfish for some time and, given the depleted status of the fishery, it has been suggested that the closure should also apply to the recreational sector. RecFAC acknowledged that the recreational catch is relatively low in comparison to the

commercial catch and that any restrictions or closures are, therefore, unlikely to have a material effect on stocks. Notwithstanding the Committee resolved to support the suggested closure applying to the recreational sector.

Recommendation 2:

That the recreational fishery be closed for the same period as the commercial fishery.

RecFAC noted that this fishery has been assessed as depleted for five years and suggests there should be a more comprehensive and timely approach with a recovery plan to guide rebuilding.

7. Flathead for the Future

The NRE Tas representative provided an update on the Flathead for the Future project. He advised that a Flathead Workshop is scheduled to be held in mid/late October to which all Committee members are invited. The Workshop will include an up-to-date flathead assessment, with expert researchers providing updates on their respective projects. Key points were:

- IMAS reported that the preliminary assessment of the sand flathead fishery indicates that the stock status is further declining and may warrant serious attention.
- A confirmed assessment status, along with all other relative information will be presented at the Flathead Workshop in late October.
- NRE Tas is drafting a communication plan and engagement strategies. Also in accordance with the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy a recovery plan is being developed, which includes evaluation of management options such as regional (eg south east) or species (sand flathead – not tiger) targeted management.

The outcomes from the workshop will be presented and discussed at the next RecFAC meeting.

8. Research Area Review – Elephant Rock and North Bay

The Elephant Rock and North Bay Research Areas were set aside in 2008 to conduct research assessing management options to tackle the impacts of the long spined sea urchin (*Centrostephanus rodgersii*). Taking lobster and all fish by diving, potting and rings was prohibited. The research in the Elephant Rock and North Bay Research Areas has since concluded and in 2021, the Minister approved the area should open in an orderly manner. In this instance, initial restrictions such as reduce bag limits/special size limit/controlled access may reduce an extreme fishing pulse, avoid overcrowding and avoid rapidly eroding all stock gains from the long-term closure and previous translocation activities.

The Department advised RecFAC, Commercial Rock Lobster East Coast catch cap has been reached and is currently closed to commercial rock lobster fishing until 1 March 2023. This will effectively enable recreational rock lobster fishers first access when the season opens in November/December 2022.

There is strong support, within the recreational community, for recreational only fishing areas and this will also provide a rebalance to offset the size limit increase on the east coast.

The opening of the Research Areas will also provide a rare opportunity to measure economic and social values of recreational fishing. An on the ground survey would investigate the choices made by recreational fishers in relation to where they live and the trade-off of higher catch rates/quality lobsters (size) versus lower bag limit or lower catch rates with higher bag.

Options discussed for opening the Research Areas included:

- Introduce a ballot, with the condition fishers are to fill in a survey;
- Stagger the opening date to spread the effort;
- Restrict the area(s) to rock lobster pots only;
- Only open on particular days, to restrict activity (ie weekend only);
- Reduce the bag limit to 1;
- Introduce a maximum size limit;
- Allow a fisher a number of fishing days;
- Individual season limit
- Requirement to report on the App – may assist monitoring the above.

The compliance member advised the Committee that consideration needs to be given to compliance and monitoring if adding additional area fishing restrictions. In addition, the member also highlighted safety concerns regarding potentially many participants aggregating into a small area with boats, fishing gear and the risks with interactions between potters and divers etc.

The NRE Tas representative also reported recent discussions with TARFish about extending these areas to be recreational only areas for a limited period and studying the benefits. In discussing this possibility, the following matters were noted:

- Recreational only areas are an action item in the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy but to date there have been no candidate areas or process for their identification developed.
- The areas are small and would not have any significant commercial fishery economic input relative to recreational and community gain –
- Elephant Rock is a highly favoured candidate area due to its close proximity to St Helens.
- The inclusion of abalone would also make these dual purpose – with no real loss to commercial abalone as diving for abalone has not occurred in the last decade.
- An additional 1-3 small recreational areas near Bicheno, Coles Bay, Orford / Tasman Peninsula area could be considered.
- This is an opportunity to study the efficacy of recreational only areas, and at the same time progressing positive ideas gaining support from the recreational sector who feel that recreational values are not considered.

RecFAC strongly supported the concept that the two research areas should be interim recreational only fishing areas and studied to address the question whether recreational only areas have value. RecFAC will discuss and develop a more specific proposal at a future meeting and agreed there should be an orderly opening of the two research areas. The nature of the opening will be determined by the research objectives and outcomes

Recommendation 3:

- a. That the Elephant Rock and North Bay Research Areas be opened initially under a restricted fishing framework to allow research that could assist in future management responses to recreational rock lobster fishers' preferences
- b. That the Elephant Rock and North Bay Research Areas be set aside for an interim period as recreational-only areas to allow the efficacy of such areas to be assessed.

9. Biotoxin Management

Guest presenter, Holly Rickards, NRE Tas, briefed RecFAC on biotoxin management in wild fisheries. NRE Tas are reviewing how biotoxins and harmful algal blooms (HAB) are monitored and managed, with view to adopting a more integrated approach for all sectors and fisheries.

During the discussion the NRE Tas representative advised recreational rock lobster will not be closed by NRE Tas when lobsters exceed the prescribed PST levels. An exception may be in high-risk events, such as extreme PST levels in which a very small amounts could lead to grave illness.

Rock lobster will be treated like other recreational fisheries, and NRE Tas will communicate the Dept of Health Public Health alerts through the Fisheries Tas web site and social media. Health advice includes not eating certain fish or parts of fish.

10. Research and Management Updates

10.1 Research

Recreational State-wide General Fishing Survey – this survey is conducted every five years and is a general fishing survey which uses a community wide, population base to sample from. IMAS are currently contacting households and canvassing for recreational fishers, this also provides demographic information and participants for the survey are sourced. This is the fourth General Fishing Survey.

Abalone and Rock Lobster Survey – this is conducted annually. This survey has just commenced. A proportion of licensed recreational abalone and rock lobster fishers are contacted to participate in the survey.

Striped Trumpeter – this season is currently closed. IMAS are conducting fishery independent work, obtaining samples from around the coast, Bicheno St Helens, Eagle Hawk Neck, West Coast etc. IMAS are looking for trends in recruitment, to ascertain if juvenile fish are coming through, their size compositions etc around the coast.

Flathead – conducting additional reproductive sampling to obtain more information to fit into the stock assessment models. There is also a Literature Review to determine the values for recreational fishers, fishers' knowledge of environmental management, trust in government and the risks of their behaviours. Further information will be presented at the Flathead Workshop.

10.2 Management

Better Fishing Grant Program – The \$2M program aims to improve inshore fishing infrastructure. RecFAC members are asked to encourage councils and others to apply for grants. An audit has been conducted around the state to identify areas, appropriate designs, structures, shelters, floating platforms etc.

Fisheries Tas Website – the new website was launched in August. Over 50,000 hits on the new website

World Recreational Fishing Conference, Melbourne – will be held in February 2023. NRE Tas is considering providing funding for two RecFAC Members to attend the conference.

TARFish also said that each of the State's peak bodies are facilitating bursaries to identify people to attend the workshop.

Agfest – Inland Fisheries, IMAS, TARFish, OzFish and Recreational Sea Fishing were incorporated in the one exhibit for the first time.

10.3 Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy

No updates were provided at this meeting, apart from those directly on the Agenda.

11. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance

11.1 Marine Police

Patrols are continuing. Flathead is still of concern. There are still reports of undersize flathead being used for bait.

11.2 TARFish

TARFish are currently doing a project on Peak Bodies around Australia. The TARFish representative requested to present the RecFAC at the November meeting.

11.3 Rec Fisher Representatives

Anna Minchin recently attended a Tas Marine Atlas Workshop and requested the Executive Officer to circulate the Summary report to RecFAC Members.

Richard Sherriff requested information regarding the Squid Fishery closure for next year to prevent pulse fishing which currently occurs. The Department representative reminded the Committee the proposed introduction of special commercial squid licences should be introduced by July next year before the squid aggregating season in August/September. The Minister has approved the Department to draft rules to progress management changes for both commercial and recreational squid fishing. During the meeting, the confusion and lack of notice for communicating the northern squid closures were discussed. **Other Business/
Dates for future meetings**

Next Meeting: November to discuss Rock Lobster TAC and outcomes from Flathead Workshop.

Meeting Closed: 2:55 pm

Appendix 1: RecFAC 80 Agenda

1. Meeting Formalities
 - Acknowledgement of Country (Chair)
 - Attendance and Apologies (Executive Officer)
 - Adoption of Agenda (Chair)
 - Register of Interests for all members (Chair)
 - Minister's correspondence/decisions from previous meeting (Rod Pearn)
 - Action Items from previous meeting (Rod Pearn)
2. Abalone Size Limits for Commercial Fishery (Submissions and Advice) (Matt Bradshaw)
3. Abalone Harvest Strategy Development (Katherine Farag-Page)
4. Identifying Pathways to transition away from recreational gillnetting (Sven Frijlink)
 - Report on progress
 - RecFAC input
5. Macquarie Harbour – reducing fisher interactions with Maugean Skate. (Sven Frijlink/
Rod Pearn)
6. Flathead for the Future – Brief Update (Sven Frijlink/Rod Pearn)
 - Upcoming Expertise Workshop
7. Research Area Review – Elephant Rock and North Bay (Rod Pearn/Jane Gallichan)
8. Research and Management Updates
 - Research (Sean Tracey)
 - Management (Rod Pearn)
 - Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy Update (Sven Frijlink)
9. Emerging Issues & Matters of importance
 - Marine Police (Tas Police)
 - TARFish (Jane Gallichan)
 - Rec Fisher reps
10. Other Business/ Dates for future meetings
 - Next Meeting

Appendix 2: Action Items

	Meeting #	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe
1	RecFAC 80	Provide RecFAC the timelines for the development of the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategies (and other fisheries).	NRE Tas	Before next Meeting