

Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee (RecFAC)

RecFAC 83 Meeting Minutes

Location: IMAS, Nubeena Crescent, Tarroona
Date: 19 July 2023
Meeting Open: 9:00 am

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
Sven Frijlink	NRE Tas
Sean Tracey	IMAS
Mike Stevens	TARFish
Kelly Hunt	TARFish
Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
Ben Cunningham	Tasmania Police
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
David Hawley	Recreational Member
Jane Johnson	Recreational Member

Present (via Zoom):

Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member

Apologies:

Nepelle Crane	NRM South
Eileen Langford	Tasmania Police
Nick Dingle	Tasmania Police
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member
Jane Johnson	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member
Tony Eldridge	Recreational Member
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member

Guest Presenters/ Observers:

Kylie Chatfield	Acting Principal Fisheries Management Officer (Recreational) NRE Tas
Frances Seabourne	Senior Fisheries Management Officer (Scalefish) NRE Tas

Minutes: Vicki Wilshaw, NRE Tas

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Formalities

1.1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies were noted for Nepelle Crane, Anna Minchin, Tony Eldridge, Brody Corbett, Eileen Langford and Nick Dingle.

1.2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without change.

1.3 Register of Interest

The Chair advised the Committee of an update. The Register of Interests has been updated accordingly.

1.4 Minister's Correspondence/ Decisions from Previous Meetings

The Minister noted from the previous RecFAC meeting the proposals for the Scalefish Review.

1.5 Action Items from Previous Meeting(s)

Action Item 1: IMAS, NRE Tas and Peak Bodies to work collaboratively to develop a proposal for an orderly opening of Elephant Rock and North Bay Research Areas and determine the research required.

Outcome: The Minister has recently announced the opening of both areas. Details regarding the opening still need to be worked through.

Action Item 2: NRE Tas to provide RecFAC an outline for the public consultation period, including a public education program for the Fisheries (Scalefish) Rules 2015 Review at the next meeting.

Outcome: This action item has been completed.

2. Scalefish

2.1 Scalefish Review Proposals

Amend limits for depleted and depleting species by public notice.

To facilitate responsive fisheries management, it is proposed to introduce a rule that would allow the Minister, or their delegate, to introduce or amend catch limits and/or size limits that apply to any part of a fishery, by published notice.

This will allow for timely management responses when a species moves into a depleting or depleted stock status and fishing mortality must be reduced to support recovery of that stock. Any proposed catch and/or size limits would be consulted on with the recognised fishing bodies but would take effect through published notice, rather than requiring an extended rule review process.

This proposal was not discussed at RecFAC Meeting #82 and the proposal has since been revoked by NRE.

RecFAC supports the NRE Tas recommendation not to implement the proposal.

Proposed prohibition on spearing certain species

For some key recreational species, compliance with minimum and maximum size limits (i.e. a 'slot limit') is critical to allow opportunities to spawn and protection for larger spawning females. For these species there are additional risks of spearing fish that are 'undersized' or 'oversized'. Unlike other fishing methods, released speared fish have a negligible chance of survival.

It is proposed to stop the spearing of banded morwong, sand flathead, bastard trumpeter, and striped trumpeter given their stock vulnerability and susceptibility to spearing. Spearing of other species, such as flounder, will still be allowed.

At meeting #82, RecFAC did not support a prohibition on spear fishing (except for sand flathead) due to the relatively low cumulative impact from spearfishing, and a relatively minor activity. For sand flathead however, RecFAC acknowledged difficulties 'sizing up' fish under the proposed slot size limit.

RecFAC now supports NRE Tas's recommendation that this proposal does not proceed for all species canvassed by the proposal.

Sand flathead: size limits

It is proposed to increase the minimum size limit from 32 cm to 35 cm statewide for recreational and commercial fishers to provide protection for fast-growing fish. The proposed increase supports increased spawning biomass and provides protection for female fish that grow larger and faster than males and are less protected by current size limits.

It is also proposed to introduce a maximum size limit for recreational and commercial fishers in specific regions to increase the quality or quantity of eggs produced and provide additional protection for larger fish. Where a minimum and maximum size limit occur at the same time, it is known as a 'slot limit'.

Region	Current minimum size	Proposed minimum size	Proposed maximum size
Southern region (Cape Pillar west to Whale Head)	32 cm	35 cm	38 cm
Bass Strait islands	32 cm	35 cm	-
Other waters	32 cm	35 cm	40 cm

Due to feedback from public submissions, additional scientific advice was sought from IMAS to clarify likely outcomes on sand flathead stocks in the southern region if the proposed slot limit for this region were the same as for 'other waters' i.e. 35-40cm. Advice received indicates that this would likely impede recovery in the southern region due to slow fish growth, a lack of larger fish and relatively low biomass.

There was discussion about compliance implications of not having a maximum size limit in the Bass Strait Islands. In particular, some members acknowledged that some fishers leave Bridport and Musselroe to fish in the Furneaux Group and return with fish on board. The Tasmania Police member stated he had some reservations about the ability to enforce proposed changes in these areas.

RecFAC stressed the need for the imminent and timely development of a harvest strategy for sand flathead with reference points pegged to the relaxation of fishing constraints, particularly in the southeast region. The need for a recovery plan timeframe was also stressed.

RecFAC supported the proposal to increase the minimum size to 35 cm. However, there was no consensus on a maximum size limit with views being split between the positions of NRE Tas and TARFish who support a maximum size limit of 40 cm for the east and south coasts only.

Sand flathead: Recreational catch limits

A regional reduction in sand flathead bag limits is proposed to reduce fishing mortality, particularly in the proposed southern region, where there are extremely high levels of fishing mortality and critically low biomass.

Limits	Current	Southern region*	Bass Strait Islands and Other Waters
Bag limit	20 fish	2 fish	5 fish
Possession limit	30 fish	10 fish	10 fish

NRE Tas recommends the proposed changes to sand flathead recreational catch limits proceed with one amendment – to increase the bag limits for the Bass Strait Islands from 5 fish bag to 10 fish. The amendment was made in recognition of the relatively healthy sand flathead stocks around the Bass Strait Islands, low fishing pressure plus their isolation reduces scope for transiting issues between different management zones.

The Tasmania Police member stated it will be difficult to police the bag and possession limits proposed between the Bass Strait Islands and other State waters.

RecFAC noted the reluctance of recreational fishers to support the proposed management changes due, in part, to a lack of a publicly articulated recovery strategy including time-bound modelling of the recovery. To encourage recreational fisher support, RecFAC requested a staged approach to implementing sand flathead restrictions, until this information is available. This sentiment was also expressed in relation to bag limits (below).

RecFAC congratulated NRE Tas on dropping proposals for boat limits (discussed at RecFAC 82).

RecFAC noted TARFish’s preference for a bag limit of 10 from Eddystone Point westward to Whale Head (including the Bass Strait Islands), and 5 for remaining areas.

Consensus was unable to be reached. A slight majority supported the TARFish proposal while others agreed with the NRE Tas position.

RecFAC agreed with the principle that the possession limit should be double the bag limit (including for the Bass Strait Islands).

Sand flathead: Commercial catch limits

Commercial catches of sand flathead from Danish seining and handlining contribute about 2 per cent to statewide catch each year. Currently there are no limits on taking sand flathead for commercial fishers, other than for rock lobster licence holders. To limit the risk of catch increasing in the future while the stock is recovering, a daily sand flathead trip limit of 25 kilograms is proposed for commercial scalefish fishers and a lower limit for commercial rock lobster fishers

Licence	Current	Proposed (per day)
For holders of a scalefish licence (excluding rock lobster)	No limit	25 kg (sand flathead)
For holders of a rock lobster licence	30 fish (combined flathead limit)	10 kg (sand flathead)* 20 kg (other flathead species)*

NRE Tas has modified this proposal for holders of a rock lobster licence to an overall limit of 20 kg of flathead species combined, of which only 7 kg can be sand flathead.

RecFAC support the proposal for the proposed daily sand flathead catch limit, including the amended proposal for holders of a rock lobster licence.

RecFAC were concerned that the current interim prohibition of taking sand flathead in Frederick Henry and Norfolk Bays will not continue from 1 November.

RecFAC recommended that the Minister continue the ban indefinitely.

Landing all flathead species whole or as fillets with frames

It is proposed that all flathead species be landed whole, or as fillets with heads and frames by both recreational and commercial fishers. This rule will assist the Marine Police to enforce species-specific size and catch limits, which cannot be accurately applied to fillets.

There was considerable discussion regarding the practicalities of landing sand flathead whole. RecFAC were concerned about the smell of rotting fish waste, the attraction of unwanted species (and their potential impacts on water users, including swimmers) and the potential for fish waste not being disposed appropriately at boat ramps. While NRE Tas maintain that fish waste disposal is ultimately the responsibility of fishers, they also recognise that fish waste disposal may be an issue and have committed to undertake an awareness and engagement program, including with coastal councils.

Some members discussed the use of size identifying technology on mobile phones as an alternative to landing fish whole. However, this was dismissed by the NRE representatives as unachievable in the short to medium term based on an investigation into available technologies. Another suggestion was to trial the proposal for 12 months and then review.

RecFAC were not able to reach consensus on this proposal. They understand the compliance issues, however, the members were significantly concerned about the waste, pest attraction and smell issues at boat ramps.

Striped trumpeter: Size limit

The current minimum size limit of 55 cm is below the estimated size at maturity for striped trumpeter, estimated to be greater than 62 cm for females and 61 cm for males. It is proposed to increase the minimum size limit to 62 cm to allow a greater proportion of the population to reach maturity and spawn.

After reviewing submissions, scientific advice was sought from IMAS by NRE Tas to estimate the potential impact of an increase to the minimum size limit to the recreational catch and to estimate unintended fishing mortality due to additional seal depredation and barotrauma associated with releasing a greater proportion of fish, particularly in the southeast. IMAS advised that, in the south-east, the proportion of additional fish that would no longer be

available to the fishery under the proposed MSL would be approximately 75%. However, it is estimated there would be little or no impact on the west coast due to a high proportion of larger fish. With regard to seal depredation and barotrauma, there is currently no data to make an assessment.

RecFAC were concerned the increase to the MSL in combination with the proposed reduction to bag limits would effectively close the recreational striped trumpeter fishery on the east coast.

RecFAC supported increasing the minimum size limit to 62 cm.

RecFAC also noted that information requested at RecFAC 82 regarding the impact of the size limit change to inform their advice was not provided before the meeting.

Action Item 1: *The Chair requested NRE Tas circulate the subsequent Striped Trumpeter scientific advice to the Committee.*

Striped trumpeter: Recreational catch limits

A regional reduction in bag limit and boat limit is proposed for striped trumpeter to support stock recovery on the east coast. A reduced boat limit is also proposed for the western region. The current possession limit will be maintained statewide.

Limits	Current statewide	Proposed Western	Proposed Eastern
Bag limit	4 fish	4 fish	2 fish
Possession limit	8 fish	8 fish	8 fish
Boat limit	20 fish	12 fish	6 fish

NRE Tas recommends this proposal proceeds with an amendment to the eastern region boat limit from 6 fish to 8 fish. The extension from 6 to 8 fish was proposed in view of concerns from many recreational fishers about a potential loss of fishing amenity and participation.

Fishers transiting from the western region to the eastern region, must comply with the eastern region limits.

RecFAC did not support the proposed reduction to recreational catch limits. Some members felt that the size limit increase would offer sufficient additional protection.

Striped trumpeter: Commercial catch limits

Since 2001, striped trumpeter has been part of a combined trip limit of 250 kilograms—along with snapper and yellowtail kingfish—for holders of a fishing licence (personal). It is proposed to replace the combined trip limit with a single species limit for striped trumpeter of 50 kg in the

	Current Statewide	Proposed Western	Proposed Eastern
For holders of a scalefish licence (including a rock lobster licence)	250 kg (part of combined limit with snapper and yellowtail kingfish)	150 kg species limit	50 kg species limit
For Commonwealth licence holders	150 kg	50 kg	50 kg

eastern region and 150 kg in the western region. NRE Tas considers that regional management is appropriate considering differences in stock status between the regions.

NRE Tas recommends that the proposal is **not** implemented as drafted and instead recommended maintaining the current trip limit of 250 kilograms for the western region and introducing a trip limit of 150 kg for the eastern region.

RecFAC asked for information regarding the anticipated effect of the commercial proposals but it was not able to be provided. As a result, RecFAC were not able to offer a view on this proposal.

Bastard trumpeter: Size limit

It is proposed to increase the minimum size limit for bastard trumpeter to 42 cm to better align with the estimated size at maturity of 50 cm. A minimum size limit of 42 cm would protect smaller fish while still allowing access to the fishery.

Fish larger than 50 cm are rarely caught in Tasmanian waters as they migrate to deep offshore waters to spawn and do not appear to return. Consequently, the fishery is based almost exclusively on immature fish. This has almost certainly been a major factor in the depletion of the species. A further increase in the minimum size will be considered in the remake of the scalefish rules scheduled for 2025.

NRE Tas recommends that the proposed increase to the minimum size limit for bastard trumpeter is implemented.

The majority of RecFAC supported the NRE Tas recommendation while those members who did not support, suggested that the recreational gillnetting phase-out would be sufficient.

Bastard trumpeter: Recreational catch limits

It is proposed to regionally reduce bag limits and introduce boat limits to support recovery on the east coast. Proposed regional boundaries are the same as those proposed for striped trumpeter. NRE Tas considers that spatial management is appropriate considering differences in stock status between the regions.

Limits	Current	Proposed Western	Proposed Eastern
Bag limit	5 fish	5 fish	2 fish
Possession limit	10 fish	10 fish	10 fish
Boat limits	No limit	15 fish	6 fish

RecFAC note the phase out of recreational gillnetting will have a positive impact and assist in the recovery of bastard trumpeter stock.

RecFAC supports NRE Tas recommendation that the proposal is implemented. TARFish did not support.

Bastard trumpeter: Commercial catch limits

Bastard trumpeter are currently subject to a 200 kilogram trip limit statewide for holders of a scalefish licence and a 30 fish trip limit for holders of a rock lobster licence. A regional trip limit reduction is proposed for holders of a scalefish licence. NRE Tas considers that regional management is appropriate considering differences in stock status between the regions.

Existing trip limits for rock lobster fishing licence holders are proposed to be converted from 30 fish to the weight equivalent of 30 kg statewide.

Licence	Current	Proposed Western	Proposed Eastern
Holders of a scalefish licence (excluding rock lobster)	200 kg	150 kg	50 kg
Holders of a rock lobster licence	30 fish	30 kg (statewide)*	

NRE Tas recommend the proposal is **not** implemented as proposed. Instead, NRE Tas recommend maintaining the current trip limit of 200 kg for the western region and introducing a 75 kg trip limit for the eastern region. It is recommended that there is no change to the proposed limit for holders of a rock lobster licence.

It was mentioned that bastard trumpeter have relatively high post release survival rates when nets are checked regularly. It was also acknowledged that the phase out of recreational gillnetting will assist in the recovery of this species in addition to the increase in minimum size.

There was no consensus on proposed commercial limits.

Garfish: Recreational catch limits

A reduction in bag limit and possession limit and introduction of a boat limit for southern garfish is proposed. These rules aim to reduce recreational fishing pressure.

Limits	Current	Proposed
Bag limit	15 fish	10 fish
Possession limit	30 fish	20 fish
Boat limit	No limit	30 fish

NRE Tas does **not** recommend the proposal is implemented noting that recreational fishers take a very small proportion of overall harvest.

RecFAC supports the NRE Tas recommendation that the proposal is not implemented.

Garfish: Commercial catch limit

No commercial catch limits currently exist for southern garfish. This proposed rule will introduce a commercial trip limit of 300 kilograms for holders of a scalefish licence and aims to limit the risk of catch increasing in the future while the stock is recovering.

Licence	Current	Proposed
Holders of a scalefish licence (excluding a rock lobster licence)	No limit	300 kg
Holders of a rock lobster licence	20 kg	No change

NRE Tas recommend amending the original proposal such that it be implemented as a **daily** limit rather than a trip limit. This would allow for multi-day trips and prevent multiple trips being conducted on a single day.

RecFAC supports the NRE Tas recommendation that the proposal is implemented.

Blue warehou: Boat limit

It is proposed to introduce a boat limit for blue warehou to reduce the incentive to target the species, which suffers high post-release mortality.

Limits	Current	Proposed
Bag limit	10 fish	10 fish
Possession limit	20 fish	20 fish
Boat limit	No limit	30 fish

NRE Tas recommends the proposed recreational boat limit is implemented.

RecFAC does not support the introduction of a boat limit.

Blue warehou: Commercial catch limits

No commercial catch limits currently exist for blue warehou. It is proposed to introduce a commercial trip limit of 300 kilograms for scalefish licence holders except for rock lobster licence holders, aiming to limit the risk of catch increasing in the future while the stock is recovering.

The existing rock lobster limit is proposed to be converted from 60 fish to the weight equivalent, 80 kg.

Licence	Current	Proposed
Holders of a scalefish licence—excluding holders of a rock lobster licence	No limit	300 kg
Holders of a rock lobster licence	60 fish	80 kg*

NRE Tas recommends implementing the proposed limit for holders of a scalefish licence. NRE Tas recommends implementing the limits for rock lobster fishers as proposed.

RecFAC discussed the potential application of a TAC rather than the proposed trip limits. The NRE Representative advised that the department has insufficient resources to implement a TAC.

RecFAC indicated a need for further information on commercial blue warehou fishing and were not comfortable forming a position on this proposal until it is available.

As a result, RecFAC expressed no view on this proposal.

Jackass morwong: Boat limit

It is proposed to introduce a recreational boat limit to reduce the incentive to target the species.

Limits	Current	Proposed
Bag limit	10 fish	10 fish
Possession limit	20 fish	20 fish
Boat limit	No limit	30 fish

Some members did not support the introduction of a boat limit given the relatively low recreational catch for this species. They also noted that jackass morwong was assessed as Sustainable in the most recent statewide stock assessment. It was then pointed out that, since then, the Commonwealth have assessed jackass morwong stocks as Depleted.

A request was made for an analysis on the effectiveness of boat limits as a measure to protect jackass morwong stocks.

A consensus on this proposal was not reached by RecFAC.

Jackass Morwong: Commercial catch limits

No commercial catch limits currently exist for jackass morwong. It is proposed to introduce a commercial trip limit of 300 kilograms for scalefish licence holders, excluding rock lobster licence holders, and aims to limit the risk of catch increasing in the future while the stock is recovering.

The existing rock lobster limit is proposed to be converted from 60 fish to the weight equivalent, 40 kg.

Licence	Current	Proposed
Holders of a scalefish licence (except holders of a rock lobster licence)	No limit	300 kg
Holders of a rock lobster licence	60 fish	40 kg

RecFAC discussed the commercial proposals and noted that the Commonwealth Government have introduced a reduced TAC, trawl free areas and a buy back of commercial trawl licences as

part of recovery for the species. NRE Tas had not examined the recovery plan and therefore could not advise on the potential influence it may have on recovery for the species.

RecFAC supports the NRE Tas recommendation to introduce commercial trip limits.

Calamari: Recreational catch limits

It is proposed to reduce bag limits and possession limits and introduce boat limits statewide to reduce fishing pressure and support rebuilding of the stock in all areas.

Limits	Current	Proposed
Bag limit	10 fish	5 fish
Possession limit	20 fish	10 fish
Boat limits	No limit	15 fish

There was general support for extending the spawning closure in the northern region to two months. RecFAC did not suggest dates for the spawning closure, however in consideration of the current oceanic conditions there was general support for the closure to at least include the months of September and October.

RecFAC do **not** support the proposed changes to the statewide recreational bag and possession limits as they consider them to be excessive.

In the meeting, RecFAC developed and supported an alternative proposal.

RecFAC supported the proposed NRE Tas bag and possession limits in the months before the spawning closure to protect pre-spawning stocks. Following the closure, they supported reverting to current limits given that calamari die after spawning. The support for this proposal was contingent on (1) the extension of the spawning closure and (2) applying to the north of the state only. The TARFish representative did not support changes to current bag and possession limits.

NRE Tas and the Tasmania Police member raised concerns about the administrative and public communications complexities of RecFAC’s alternative proposals.

Calamari: New commercial licence types

It is proposed to introduce two new limited licence types for the north-west and north-east regions for southern calamari. Under this proposal, commercial fishers that do not qualify for the proposed licences would have a trip limit for southern calamari.

The aim of the proposed licences is to reduce the number of vessels targeting calamari and limit the risk of increased fishing pressure in these regions.

NRE Tas does not recommend proceeding with this proposal. NRE Tas instead recommends the introduction of a catch limit of 100 kilograms per day for holders of a scalefish licence, excluding holders of a rock lobster licence and holders of a seine licence (including Danish seine).

RecFAC supported the amended position of NRE Tas to revoke plans to implement new licenses for the northern region and limit daily commercial catches to 100 kg/day. RecFAC felt that this would provide a greater degree of assurance of reduced commercial take.

Calamari: Commercial catch limits for other licence types

A 10 kg per day trip limit is proposed for holders of a scalefish licence fishing a region where they do not hold a calamari licence. An extended day limit of 100kg is proposed for holders of a seine licence fishing in Furneaux Group waters. For rock lobster licence holders, the current limit of 15 fish per day was proposed to be changed to 10kg per day.

As NRE Tas have since recommended revoking the calamari licences, the revised proposals are indicated below:

Amended Proposal		
Licence	Current	Proposed
Scalefish licence holders not qualifying for calamari licence (excluding Furneaux Group)	No limit outside south-east waters. 10 fish in 24 hour period in south east waters	100 kg per day outside south-east waters. 10 kg per day in south-east waters
Rock lobster licence holders	15 fish	10 kg per day (unchanged)
Seine licence holders	No limit	10 kg per day in State waters except Furneaux Group where 100 kg per day would apply

The revised proposals were supported by RecFAC.

Gillnetting

The phase-out will be undertaken through a series of management changes between 2023 and 2030.

Proposed changes for 2023 are:

- *Reducing the maximum soak time in State waters from 6 to 2 hours;*
- *Requiring recreational nets set in Shark Refuge Areas to be attended by the licence holder at all times;*
- *Prohibiting the use of recreational gillnets in water greater than 20 metres in depth; and*
- *Prohibiting the use of recreational gillnets in waters further than 250 metres from the high-water mark.*

NRE Tas recommend proceeding with a minor amendment replacing the term “attendance of...” with “within 50 metres of...”

RecFAC has supported the proposals for recreational gillnetting at previous meetings and the members continued to support the implementation of the proposals as tabled.

Protecting Maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour

Management	Rule	Recreational	Commercial
Area closures	Schedule 2, item 18	Formalisation of extended closed areas in Macquarie Harbour Internal Waters	Commercial gillnetting will be prohibited within closed areas in Macquarie Harbour Internal Waters
Soak times	Rule 133 Rule 104	Recreational fishers will be restricted to a maximum soak time of 2 hours, from sunrise to 2 hours after sunset	Endorsed commercial fishers will be restricted to a maximum soak time of 2 hours, from 1 hour after sunrise to 1 hour before sunset
Night netting		No night netting for recreational fishers	Endorsed commercial fishers will be allowed to set a gillnet from 1 hour before sunset to 1 hour after sunrise
Summer closure		Does not apply	Macquarie Harbour is closed to commercial gillnetting from 15 November to 14 April

Protecting Maugean skate: Gillnetting closed areas

The proposed rules will expand the definition of Macquarie Harbour Internal Waters to include additional waters increasingly important for the skate's habitat. This will expand the waters in which a person must not set or use a gillnet and includes waters in Pine Cove, Table Bay, Rum Point and Birches Inlet.

RecFAC have endorsed the proposals for protecting the Maugean skate at two previous RecFAC meetings and continue to endorse the proposals as tabled.

Vessel monitoring systems

Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) enable the location and movement of vessels to be monitored using satellite technology. When installed on commercial vessels, this information assists compliance, supports enforcement and can improve fisheries management in several ways.

Part 3 of the Fisheries Rules 2019 already allows the Secretary to direct the holder of a scalefish licence or class of licence to have a VMS device fitted and operating while on a fishing trip where scalefish or certain species of scalefish are taken or intended to be taken. It is proposed to formalise this existing rule in the scalefish rules.

NRE Tas intend to direct all active Danish seine vessels to install a VMS, as was identified as a key action under the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy 2021-2030. In coming years, NRE Tas also intends to install VMS devices on vessels operating in other fisheries. The rollout of VMS to any sector will be accompanied by an industry engagement and consultation program.

RecFAC expressed no view on this proposal

Charter fishery: Registering charter business and operators, catch reporting and extending boat limits for some tuna species.

NRE Tas proposed to introduce a register for charter boats and require all charter fishing businesses to register their operation with the Secretary of NRE Tas, require charter fishing operators to submit monthly catch records and allow registered charter fishing operators to retain fish over the boat limit by allowing one fish per patron up to a maximum limit of 6 fish for 5 or more patrons.

NRE Tas have since proposed to suspend these proposals.

RecFAC supported NRE's decision to suspend these proposals.

Additional proposals

The remaining proposals (below) relate to commercial fisheries.

- Commercial banded morwong provisions: Transfer
- Commercial banded morwong provisions: Overcatch
- Australian sardine
- Reporting requirements
- Changes to definitions
- Operational proposals
- Schedules

RecFAC did not discuss or express a view on these proposals:

2.2 Flathead for the Future

NRE Tas provided an update on the Flathead for the Future program. Numerous community awareness and consultation activities have been undertaken prior to the public consultation period for the Scalefish Review.

A cross-agency and key stakeholders working group has been established to consider the overall direction for the program and includes a stewardship program.

Funding has been received from FRDC for a 5-year project to fill identifies knowledge gaps to better understand the sand flathead fishery with a view to effective management and stock recovery. Project partners include IMAS, NRE Tas, TARFish and the School of Behavioural Studies. The project also aims to understand how to best communicate the key messages and understand fisher behaviour.

3. Rock Lobster Season Dates

The RecFAC Members supported the rock lobster season dates for the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone (ECSRZ) and all other state waters as per the NRE Tas proposal below:

Season date proposal

2023

- Commercial Open season Wed 15 Nov: all waters except ECSRZ
- Commercial Open season Fri 1 March: ECSRZ
- Recreational Open season Sat 4 Nov: all waters except ECSRZ
- Recreational Open season Sat 2 Dec: ECSRZ

2024

- Recreational Closed season 1 May: Eastern Region
- Recreational Closed season 1 May: Western Region (Females)
- Recreational Closed season 1 Sep: Western Region (Males)
- Commercial Closed season 1 May: State wide (Females)
- Commercial Closed season 1 Sep: St Helens Point south to Sandy Cape (Males)
- Commercial Closed season 1 Oct: State wide

RecFAC supported the rock lobster season date proposal without further discussion.

Recommendation 1 –

The Minister notes RecFAC's recommendation for the 2023/24 rock lobster season dates:

Opening dates (2023)

- *Commercial Open season Wed 15 Nov: all waters except ECSRZ*
- *Commercial Open season Fri 1 March: ECSRZ*
- *Recreational Open season Sat 4 Nov: all waters except ECSRZ*
- *Recreational Open season Sat 2 Dec: ECSRZ*

Closing dates (2024)

- *Recreational Closed season 1 May: Eastern Region*
- *Recreational Closed season 1 May: Western Region (Females)*
- *Recreational Closed season 1 Sep: Western Region (Males)*
- *Commercial Closed season 1 May: State wide (Females)*
- *Commercial Closed season 1 Sep: St Helens Point south to Sandy Cape (Males)*
- *Commercial Closed season 1 Oct: State wide*

4. Research and Management Updates

4.1 Research

Sean Tracey gave a brief update on current IMAS research projects:

- Danish Seine – IMAS are planning to plant observers on more trips to assess sand flathead bycatch
- Alternative Assessment project – FRDC have funded a project to identify non-destructive methods to assess fish stocks; ie ROV's, cameras and divers,
- FRDC Sand Flathead grant – IMAS are finalising a large multi-faceted and multi-agency project to develop a more sophisticated population model, update reproductive biology parameters, understand spatial connectivity, understand phenotypic variability, and fortify engagement and stewardship needs.
- Rock Lobster and Abalone Fishery Survey – this is completed, and the final report is soon due for release.
- Statewide Recreational Fishing Survey – this is ongoing. Four hundred diarists are contributing their data over 12 months. Data will be collated and analysed in October.

4.2 Management

Harvest Strategies – the public consultation period on the HS policy and guidelines ended in April 2023. Some feedback resulted in changes to the documents. The harvest strategy policy document is the overarching document which commits the Government to develop fishery specific harvest strategies.

A separate *resource allocation framework* document will be developed as a complimentary policy document during the harvest strategy's implementation stage.

RecFAC endorsed the latest version of the harvest strategy policy document and guidelines and anticipate progressing harvest strategies for depleted species and those emerging fisheries. The TARFish representative was not able to provide a position on the documents as they have not been reviewed by the TARFish Board.

The most recent funding round of the *Better Fishing Grants* closed three weeks ago. The next funding round is now open and closes 25 September. The program will continue to the end of 2024.

Recreational Fishing Strategy. Updates on some of the Strategy actions include:

- The Tasmanian Fishing Guide App is currently being upgraded and is anticipated to be live in time for the opening of the next recreational sea fishing year.
- Podcasts on responsible fishing are being developed.
- Annual fishing forums are being planned for the next fishing season.
- An audit on the current fishing infrastructures was completed earlier in the year.

5. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance

5.1 Marine Police

In the past financial year there was a small decrease in the overall number of fishing-related offences. However, there was a 13.5% increase in recreational fishing offences and 28% increase in rock lobster fishery offences.

Tasmania Police have completed a trial on Starlink, and it is now being fitted out on all police vessels. It allows satellite access to the internet while out on the water, and VMS tracking. A new police boat is due in April.

5.2 TARFish

Kelly Hunt was introduced and welcomed to RecFAC. Kelly will be involved in stewardship programs, social media and working on the new membership program.

TARFish have been working on a segmentation study of recreational fishers and asked for an opportunity to make a presentation at the next RecFAC Meeting.

Action Item 2: *TARFish make a presentation on their project 'Segmentation of Recreational Fishers' to RecFAC's next meeting.*

5.3 Rec Fisher Representatives

Notable comments from RecFAC members include:

- It has been a poor season for calamari but a good season for garfish.
- The TARFish and Fisheries Tasmania websites and their community engagement efforts at Agfest were commended.
- The average size of King George whiting appears to be decreasing in the Tamar River. The minimum size limit of King George whiting and snapper should be increased to protect the stocks of emerging fisheries. Snapper under 35 cm are probably immature.

6 Other Business/ Dates for future meetings

Next Meeting: TBA

Meeting Closed: 3:04 pm

Appendix 1: RecFAC 83 Agenda

- I. 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 (Sven Frijlink)
 - Action items from previous meeting (Sven Frijlink)
2. Scalefish (Sven Frijlink)
 - Scalefish Review proposals
 - Flathead for the Future
3. Rock Lobster Season Dates (Sven Frijlink)
4. Recreational Research and Management Updates
 - Research (Sean Tracey)
 - Management (Sven Frijlink)
 - i. Harvest Strategies – policy framework and guidelines, abalone and rock lobster
 - ii. Better Fishing Program
 - iii. Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy update
5. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance
 - Marine Police (Tas Police)
 - TARFish (Jane Gallichan)
 - Rec Fisher reps
6. Other Business/ Dates for Future Meetings
 - Next Meeting

Appendix 2: Action Items

	Meeting #	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe
1	RecFAC 83	The Chair requested NRE Tas circulate the subsequent Striped Trumpeter scientific advice to the Committee	NRE Tas	Before next Meeting
2	RecFAC 83	TARFish make a presentation on their project “Segmentation of Recreational Fishers” to RecFAC’s next meeting	TARFish	Next Meeting