

# Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee (RecFAC)

## RecFAC 84 Meeting Minutes

Location: IMAS, Nubeena Crescent, Tarooma  
Date: 21 November 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

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### Present (in Person):

<b>Name</b>	<b>Membership Position</b>
Max Kitchell	Chair
Rod Pearn	NRE Tas
Eileen Langford	Tasmania Police
Nick Dingle	Tasmania Police
Mike Stevens	TARFish
Kelly Hunt	TARFish
Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
David Hawley	Recreational Member

### Present (via Zoom):

Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
Sean Tracey	IMAS
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member

### Apologies:

Nepelle Crane	NRM South
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member
Jane Johnson	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member
Tony Eldridge	Recreational Member

### Guest Presenters/ Observers:

Sonja Hempel	Principal Fisheries Management Officer (Crustacean and Scallop Fisheries) NRE Tas
Katherine Farage-Page	Senior Fisheries Management Officer (Abalone) NRE Tas

Minutes: Vicki Wilshaw, NRE Tas

# Meeting Minutes

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## 1. Meeting Formalities

### 1.1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies were noted for Nepelle Crane, Anna Minchin, Tony Eldridge, Stephen Scott, Kimbilli Johnson and Jane Johnston.

The Chair welcomed Nick Dingle as the new representative from Tasmania Police.

### 1.2. Adoption of Agenda

TARFish requested Agenda Item 7: Presentation “Segmentation of Recreational Fishers” be rescheduled to the next RecFAC meeting. The remainder of the Agenda was adopted without further amendment.

### 1.3 Register of Interest

No updates were advised for the Register of Interest.

### 1.4 Minister’s Correspondence/ Decisions from Previous Meetings

The Scalefish Review recommendations were submitted to the Minister. However, a further extension to the consultation period since occurred and subsequent amendments were made to the final decisions. This was further discussed at Agenda Item 5.

### 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: This was discussed further at Agenda Item 3.

*Action Item 2: The Chair requested NRE Tas circulate the subsequent Striped Trumpeter scientific advice to the Committee.*

Outcome: The scientific data has been collated and is based on previous catches. NRE Tas is to circulate the information as soon as it is released.

*Action Item 3: TARFish to make a presentation on their project “Segmentation or Recreational Fishers” at RecFAC’s next meeting.*

Outcome: TARFish requested this Action Item be deferred to next meeting.

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## 2. Fishery Advisory Committee Review

NRE Tas has recently engaged Dr Rachel Baird, a legal and governance specialist, to prepare a consultancy report on Fishery Advisory Committees, including insights on arrangements used in other mainland states. The report is for use by NRE Tas as one source of information to consider ways of providing advice to the Minister on future options and recommendations for fisheries sector inputs and advice on fisheries management.

Dr Baird has interviewed the FAC Chairs, fishing sector Peak Bodies, IMAS and Tasmania Police. Fishery Advisory Committee members were not approached to provide input into the review.

RecFAC members were concerned they were not afforded the opportunity to provide input. The NRE Tas member suggested RecFAC members complete a survey at the conclusion of the current term of appointment seeking their feedback on the effectiveness of RecFAC. Surveys have been provided at the conclusion of previous FACs seeking feedback on the effectiveness of the meetings and committee structure. The RecFAC members requested the survey results and comments be provided to the Minister before decisions are made about FACs. RecFAC also requested to see the Terms of Reference for the review.

**Action Item 1:**

- a) *NRE Tas to develop a survey for RecFAC members seeking their views on the effectiveness of the Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee at the expiry of the appointments; and the outcomes of the survey are provided to the Minister before decisions are made about FACs.*
- b) *NRE Tas to circulate the Review's Terms of Reference to RecFAC Members*
- c) *NRE Tas to provide RecFAC with the process for finalising the review.*

### 3. Rock Lobster

#### 3.1 Recreational catch estimates

The IMAS report *Tasmanian Recreational Rock Lobster and Abalone Fisheries: 2022-23 Fishing Season* was provided to the Committee as part of the background papers.

The recreational catch estimate for the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone (ECSRZ) of 72 tonnes has exceeded the notional catch share of 35 tonnes. The increase in the recreational catch was expected and is in response to the stock rebuilding.

There are no changes proposed for the 2023/24 recreational fishing year.

RecFAC reinforced its advice to the Minister that the Government deliver on its commitment to rebalance the catch share on the East Coast in favour of recreational fishers.

**Action Item 2:** *The Chair to write directly to the Minister restating the RecFAC's alternative catch sharing provisions for the recreational rock lobster fishery on the east coast.*

#### 3.2 Rock lobster translocation

The Rock Lobster Translocation Program translocates undersized rock lobster from the southwestern region to the east coast. A translocation committee comprising of TARFish, Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishing Association, IMAS and NRE Tas collaborates on identifying the release sites.

Currently funding for the translocation program is sourced from commercial levies and government, noting there is no Fishwise funds being used for the program. There is a two-year commitment for funding the Government program.

Undersize rock lobsters are taken from the south-west region where there is a high density of rock lobster population and currently there is no indication of any significant impact from the take sites.

Translocation sites are chosen based on where it will most benefit fishers. Information obtained from the catch app may contribute to identifying additional areas for translocating rock lobsters.

### 3.3 Rock Lobster TAC

The RecFAC Rock Lobster Working Group met on 8 November 2023, to consider the 2022/23 rock lobster stock assessment and discuss the proposals for the 2024/25 Total Allowance Catch and the Rock Lobster Catch Caps for 2024/25.

The Working Group advice to RecFAC was to recommend that the status quo remains for the 2024/25 commercial licence year. The Working Group also indicated that although many areas appear to be rebuilding at decadal record levels that caution is needed as areas 2 and 5 have not yet reached the minimum target levels and new targets need to be developed in the harvest strategy.

RecFAC supported the Working Group's recommendation for the Rock Lobster TAC 2024/25 without amendment.

#### **Recommendation 1 – Rock Lobster TAC 2024/25**

*RecFAC recommends that the Rock Lobster TACC remains unchanged for the 2024/25 commercial license year.*

*RecFAC indicated that although many areas appear to be rebuilding at decadal record levels that caution is needed:*

- *As areas 2 and 5 have not yet reached the minimum target levels;*
- *New targets need to be developed in the harvest strategy.*

### 3.4 East Coast Catch – including Commercial catch caps and future direction

The Working Group advice for RecFAC was that the status quo remains for the ECCC and NECC.

- The East Coast Catch Cap remains at 94 tonnes for the 2024/25 commercial fishing year.
- The North East Catch Cap remains at 100 tonnes for the 2024/25 commercial fishing year.

The status quo is recommended noting the following:

- Areas 1, 3 and 4 have reached the interim rebuilding target of 20% unfished biomass and are projected to increase further.
- Projections indicate Area 2 is likely to reach the rebuild target by 2025. It is noted that previous projections indicated targets would be achieved, however were not met and timelines changed. The planned translocations and IMAS advice provide more confidence that the targets will be met.
- This would maintain the rebuild of the East Coast while new biological management targets are progressed under the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy.
- The Group reiterated the need to develop a resource sharing arrangement as a matter of priority.
- The Group also noted that the planned translocation numbers were not certain, noting that the predicted marine heat wave may delay translocation.

RecFAC supported the Working Group's recommendation without amendment.

### **Recommendation 2 – Rock Lobster East Coast and North East Catch Caps**

*RecFAC recommends that for the 2024/25 commercial fishing year the:*

- *East Coast Catch Cap. remains at 94 tonnes.*
- *North East Catch Cap remains at 100 tonnes.*

*The status quo is recommended noting the following:*

- *Areas 1, 3 and 4 have reached the interim rebuilding target of 20% unfished biomass and are projected to increase further.*
- *Projections indicate Area 2 is likely to reach the rebuild target by 2025. It is noted that previous projections indicated targets would be achieved, however were not met and timelines changed. The planned translocations and IMAS advice provide more confidence that the targets will be met.*
- *This would maintain the rebuild of the East Coast while new biological management targets are progressed under the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy.*
- *RecFAC also noted that the planned translocation numbers were not certain, noting that the predicted marine heat wave may delay translocation.*

*RecFAC reiterated the need to develop a resource sharing arrangement as a matter of priority and emphasises its previous position that it has not supported the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Catch Share, and a greater share is needed for the recreational fishery on the East Coast, as it is the most important area for the recreational fishery.*

### 3.5 Catch reporting/App update

The Fishing Tas App is now available to download. The App includes the function for fishers to report their rock lobster catch.

The initial published notice set the date for mandatory reporting from 4 November and included the requirement to complete a Going Fishing report. Due to concerns from fishers, plus some developmental issues, the Going Fishing report was removed for this season and mandatory reporting delayed to 2 December. NRE Tas will conduct a review of the rock lobster reporting at the end of the east coast rock lobster season.

There was considerable discussion about the frequency of rule changes and the complexity of the rules for recreational sea fishing. It was suggested that NRE Tas communicate and engage with recreational fishers more frequently to discuss the reasoning behind the introduction of Rock Lobster Catch Reporting. The Community Engagement Team will be visiting boat ramps to engage with fishers about the recent rule changes.

### 3.6 Research Areas/ Recreational pot only areas update

The Research Areas are scheduled to open for recreational rock lobster pot fishing on 2 December 2023, for a three-year period. A temporary bag limit of one rock lobster will apply to these areas for the first season. The bag limit will revert to the east coast bag limit of two for the remaining two years. IMAS will be conducting a research project over the first season to understand recreational fishing values.

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#### 4. Harvest Strategy Development – Abalone Harvest Strategy

The draft Abalone Harvest Strategy will be released for formal public consultation period early in 2024. The Harvest Strategy will outline the objectives for stock and protecting spawning biomass levels through setting of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), bag and possession limits and size limits; and how to set the limits.

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#### 5. Scalefish Review Overview and FAC debrief/ feedback

The NRE Tas representative gave a brief overview of the status of implementing the newly announced scalefish review rule changes. Due to the extension of the consultation period and delay in finalising the rules, the 2023/24 Recreational Sea Fishing Guide and fish measuring rulers are still not available in Service Tasmania and tackle shops; plus, the signs at the boat ramps still require updating to reflect the new rules.

The proposal to introduce registration, compulsory catch records and rules regarding retention of tuna over the boat limit for charter boat operators was not implemented. It was identified that charter fishing extends beyond scalefish and NRE Tas will undertake further assessment, policy development and industry consultation on developing arrangements for charter fishing and tourism fishing.

The proposals for Calamari were not implemented. NRE Tas now aims to implement Calamari measures by November 2024 after further analysis and consultation in early 2024.

In previous meetings, RecFAC had suggested proposals for managing recreational catch for Striped Trumpeter, including introducing a season. However, during the review these alternative proposals were not brought forward. The TARFish member and several other members stated they had requested additional information in numerous meetings about the potential impact on the commercial fishery and Striped Trumpeter stocks and wrote to the Department further requesting information. These requests were declined, and they were advised by the Department the information was not available in the public domain. In addition, RecFAC expressed concern that the review was legislatively centric in that alternative proposals, such as extending season closures were not encouraged in the review.

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#### 6. Flathead – survey of rec fishers IMAS project overview

The report is due for release in December 2023. The preliminary results from the survey assisted with the management changes for Flathead, the results have also supported and validated the decision which have since been made (ie targeted management required for the south east).

The survey will assist with the FRDC Flathead project and Flathead for the Future and TARFish's stewardship programs.

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#### 7. Presentation “Segmentation of Recreational Fishers”

Removed from the Agenda at the request of the TARFish CEO until FRDC clearance was received. Rescheduled for a future RecFAC meeting.



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## 8. Research and Management Updates

### 8.1 Research

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

- Sand Flathead project was recently announced. The project is a collaboration between UTAS, TARFish and Tasmanian Government.
- Maugean skate has just received significant funding.
- Rock Lobster and Abalone Fishery Survey – the current survey is being conducted concurrently with the mandatory catch reporting.
- Statewide Recreational Fishing Survey – expect to have results early in 2024.

### 8.2 Management

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

- Identifying marine habitats requiring protection or rehabilitation – TARFish asked if the Marine Atlas could provide potential opportunities to identify areas that need attention. They also asked if there is an opportunity to seek funding from the Federal Government to in the wake of the recent Senate Enquiry into Marine Invasive Species.
- A recreational fisher noted the Department has not conducted annual Fishing Forums for some time.
- A member noted fishing rules are now the most complex they have ever been, which does not align with the Recreational Fishing Strategy to make fishing rules clear and easily understood. The NRE Tas representative responded saying that complexity mainly arose from trying to limit impact on fishers and targeting the most restrictive management to the areas of most need. The consequences include areas of different limits and boundary lines. NRE Tas aim to make these as practical as possible through the development phase and subsequent consultation. The alternative and much simpler approach would be to apply the most restrictive management statewide.

#### *Handfish Conservation*

The NRE Tas member provided a brief overview on the National Handfish Recovery Team project. RecFAC indicated support for the recovery of Handfish, however agreed that the matter is more of a conservation matter than fisheries and emphasising that this Committee is for recreational fisheries. RecFAC (and TARFish) requested that they be consulted on any management proposals that potentially impact recreational fishing activities.

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## 9. Emerging Issues and Matters of Importance

### 9.1 Marine Police

Marine Police have encountered several licence holders setting Rock Lobster pots before the opening of the Rock Lobster season. They have also encountered several licence holders using excess rock lobster pots and rings.

The compliance members reported that there appears to be a lack of compliance with the new Sand Flathead size and bag limits. Some fishers were quickly filleting Flathead, which were most likely Sand Flathead and claiming they are Tiger Flathead. The removal of landing whole (or with frames) made enforcement difficult. NRE Tas indicated they had been in

discussions with the Marine Police and IMAS. NRE Tas have provided Marine Police with images and descriptions that can be used for evidential identification including photo imaging distinguishing Flathead species. IMAS are also able to conduct DNA analysis to identify Sand Flathead fillets. IMAS have also indicated they can develop a rapid test if required, however this is a substantial cost. The NRE Tas representative said substantial compliance, community engagement and stewardship efforts are being undertaken and that compliance will be reviewed after Easter, and it is in recreational interests to comply with the rules.

NRE Tas is meeting regularly with the Marine Police to work through identified compliance issues. The Department representative acknowledged the rules need to be simplified and consistent across the different fisheries which would reduce the complexity of compliance and management.

RecFAC suggested, with the introduction of the catch reporting and/or telephone reports, they could potentially be used to allow transiting between different zones and regions, for example Striped Trumpeter and Rock Lobster.

**Action Item 3:** *NRE Tas to investigate how the rules can be simplified for recreational fishers while still ensuring ease of enforcement, maintaining fisher access to the resource and sustainable fisheries management. Are there opportunities to standardise season opening dates and utilising tools to allow transiting?*

## 9.2 TARFish

TARFish are installing four weather stations located around Tasmania (three located on the east coast and one on the north-west coast). There will be an interface on the TARFish website so fishers are able to get access to localised weather.

The recreational fisher hub has proven to be a success. The hub is an informal way of getting groups of recreational fishers to talk about topics of interest.

## 9.3 Rec Fisher Representatives

Notable comments from RecFAC members include:

- Snapper – small Snapper are currently in the River Tamar. Is it possible to increase the minimum size from 30 to 35 cm to ensure protection until sexual maturity?
- There should be population assessments to better understand emerging species, which would provide information to implement rules for sustainable fisheries management. There is a risk there will be a shift of effort from Sand Flathead to the emerging species.
- There was a request to add Silver Drummers to the Fishing Tasmania App.

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## 10 Other Business/ Dates for future meetings

Next Meeting: early March 2024

Meeting Closed: 12:30 pm

## Appendix 1: RecFAC 84 Agenda

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- 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 (Rod Pearn)
  - Action items from previous meeting (Rod Pearn)
2. Fishery Advisory Committee Review (John Lloyd)
3. Rock Lobster – Recommendations for
  - Recreational catch estimates
  - Rock Lobster translocation
  - Rock Lobster TAC
  - East Coast Catch – including Commercial catch caps and future direction.
  - Catch Reporting/App update (note – update at the meeting – no paper)
  - Research Areas/recreational pot only areas update (note – update at the meeting – no paper)
4. Harvest Strategy Development - Abalone Harvest Strategy
5. Scalegfish Review Overview and FAC debrief/ feedback (Rod Pearn)
6. Flathead – survey of rec fishers IMAS project overview (Sean Tracey)
7. Presentation “Segmentation of Recreational Fishers” (TARFish)
8. Recreational Research and Management Updates
  - Research (Sean Tracey)
  - Management (Rod Pearn)
    - i. Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy update
    - ii. Handfish conservation
    - iii. other
9. Emerging Issues and 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 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
3	RecFAC 84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) NRE Tas to develop a survey for RecFAC members seeking their views at the effectiveness of the Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee at the expiry of the appointments;</li> <li>b) NRE Tas to circulate the Review’s Terms of Reference to the RecFAC Members</li> <li>c) NRE Tas to provide RecFAC with the process for finalising the review.</li> </ul>	NRE Tas	December 2023
4	RecFAC 84	The Chair to write directly to the Minister restating the RecFAC’s alternative catch sharing provisions for the recreational rock lobster fishery on the east coast.	Chair RecFAC	
5	RecFAC 84	NRE Tas to investigate how the rules can be simplified for recreational fishers while still ensuring ease of enforcement, maintaining fisher access to the resource and sustainable fisheries management. Are there opportunities to standardise season opening dates and utilising tools to allow transiting?	NRE Tas	Future meeting