

Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee (RecFAC)

RecFAC 85 Meeting Minutes

Location: via Teams
Date: 28 May 2024
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
Rod Pearn	NRE Tas
David Hawley	Recreational Member
Sean Tracey	IMAS

Present (via Teams):

Eileen Langford	Tasmania Police
Nick Dingle	Tasmania Police
Kelly Hunt	TARFish
Jane Gallichan	TARFish CEO
Brody Corbett	Recreational Member
Stephen Scott	Recreational Member

Apologies:

Kevin Bennett	Recreational Member
Kimbilli Johnson	Recreational Member
Anna Minchin	Recreational Member
Jane Johnson	Recreational Member
Jo McBain	Recreational Member
Mike Stevens	TARFish

Guest Presenters/ Observers:

James Parkinson	Senior Fisheries Management Officer (Crustacean and Scallop Fisheries) NRE Tas
Anne Crosby	Senior Fisheries Policy Officer NRE Tas

Minutes: Vicki Wilshaw, NRE Tas

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Formalities

1.1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies were noted for Jane Johnston, Jo McBain, Kimbili Johnson, Mike Stevens and Anna Minchin.

The guest observers, Anne Crosby and James Parkinson were introduced to the Committee. James Parkinson is the Scallop fishery manager leading the changes to the Scallop rules. Anne Crosby is currently leading recreational fisheries communications.

1.2. Adoption of Agenda

The NRE Tas representative requested "Updates" be added to the agenda at "Other Business".

1.3 Register of Interest

No updates were advised for the Register of Interest.

1.4 Minister's Correspondence/ Decisions from Previous Meetings

The Minister supported the advice from RecFAC 84 relating to the rock lobster TAC, East Coast and Northeast commercial catch cap. The recommendations are:

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.*

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.

The RecFAC advice was combined with the advice provided by CFAC, IMAS and the Department to the Minister. The Minister decision was to not change the TAC. The translocation of rock lobster has also occurred.

The Department did not receive any additional notification from the Minister regarding RecFAC's recommendation on catch sharing.

The RecFAC members were also informed that Minister Eric Abetz is the new Minister for Marine Resources.

The TARFish member requested the table of Ministerial Decision continued to be maintained and provided to the Committee.

1.5 Action Items from Previous Meeting(s)

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

Outcome: Completed

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

Outcome: This Action Item is deferred to the next meeting. TARFish has recently presented the report to the Flathead for the Future Steering Group. The member provided the link to the report <https://www.frdc.com.au/sites/default/files/products/2021-116-DLD.pdf>.

Action Item 3:

- 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;*
- b) NRE Tas to circulate the Review's Terms of Reference to the RecFAC Members;*
- c) NRE Tas to provide RecFAC with the process for finalising the review.*

Outcome: RecFAC expressed concern that an action item for the Department to provide more information about the review of Fishery Advisory Committees, including the Terms of Reference and process for finalising the review have not been provided. RecFAC have requested the Chair to include a request for this information be included in the Chairs report.

They further requested the Committee be provided the advice contained within the report which relates to RecFAC.

Action Item 4: 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.

Outcome: Completed

Action Item 5: 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?

Outcome: Future meeting/ Ongoing

2. Scallop Fishery

D'Entrecasteaux Channel Scallop Survey

IMAS presented the results from the biennial survey. The results indicate that scallops are very patchy and in low densities in most areas. RecFAC supported the IMAS survey results and advice that opening the D'Entrecasteaux Channel (DEC) for recreational scallop fishing would risk further depletion of adult stocks. The stock status in the DEC has remained the same since the closure in 2011. Therefore, NRE Tas have recommended the DEC should remain closed.

There was some discussion regarding the effectiveness of implementing a scallop reseedling program. Previous trials of reseedling were conducted in Tasmania during the 1990's, plus trials have also been conducted in New Zealand. Results from these trials have indicated reseedling is not very viable or successful.

RecFAC supported NRE Tas position of not proposing to open the DEC. NRE Tas advised it would explain the stock status and reasoning for a continued closed status when the report is released.

Developing group fishing/ scallop catch sharing arrangements on a recreational boat

NRE Tas tabled a proposal to facilitate scallop catch sharing as outlined in the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy (Strategy) and the Tasmanian Government's 2022 election commitment.

Members reiterated they supported implementing catch sharing arrangements for recreational scallop diving. The Department's proposal included the ability for all divers and one non-diver to share the catch, as well as a temporary tolerance limit to cater for other divers under catch and clackers (dead shell). Members emphasised the need that any rules relating to catch sharing must be practical, simple to understand, and contain compliance risks. The Department will work with Tasmania Police to develop the proposal.

Some members did not support the additional complexities of introducing various tolerance levels. Some of the proposed changes to cater for non-divers have the potential to cause unnecessary safety risks. A member also queried whether catch sharing would increase the scallop catch and increase the risk for localised depletion.

There was general support for implementing catch sharing arrangements for recreational scallop diving; however, the members were not able to reach a consensus on the options that were tabled.

The Scallop Rules are scheduled to be reviewed by 1 April 2025.

Action Item 1: *NRE Tas to consult with both Tasmania Police and TARFish to develop more detailed proposals for catch sharing, that ensure any changes are practical, simple to understand and are enforceable. The proposals are to be provided to RecFAC for consideration prior to the release of the draft scallop rules for public comment.*

3. Rock Lobster

Harvest Strategy

A Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy Working Group has been established. The Department has called for nominations for recreational rock lobster fishers to attend workshops scheduled for early June. 22 nominations have been received from the recreational rock lobster fishers.

TARFish are also planning to hold a webinar to broaden the understanding of recreational fishers on what a Harvest Strategy is.

The members who were on the Harvest Strategy Working Group commented favourably on the work of the Group and the responsiveness of the Department in listening to ways to involve the recreational community.

Catch Reporting

The Department provided an update on catch reporting including communications, modifying processes, and evaluating catch reporting now the peak fishing period has ended.

Reminders and procedures have been communicated through social media, the recreational fishing email newsletter, and SMS reminders, NRE Tas staff actively engaged with rock lobster fishers at boat ramps and at community events demonstrating the App.

The Department informed RecFAC that preliminary evaluation indicates that the rate of catch reporting is less than 50%. This is indicated through buoy checks on water with subsequent no catch reports, and comparison of some statistics with the IMAS 2022/23 season.

The Tasmanian Police representative stated that they have a low ability to enforce catch reporting without going fishing reports and have requested NRE Tas to reinstate Going fishing reports. The going fishing report was removed for this season due to App development issues and high angst from fishers of that reports requirements. At this stage NRE Tas are considering the request, and tabled other options that may assist the rate of catch reporting, receive less angst from fishers and require less changes to the App.

RecFAC reiterated their support for catch reporting and acknowledged many of the reasons for the low catch reporting rate, including it is the first year of introducing such a monumental change for fishers. They did not provide advice on options to change going fishing and catch reporting procedures, however indicated they were reluctant to support the reinstatement of going fishing reports without more substantive data.

Some members indicated increased compliance, engagement and stewardship may assist reporting levels; focussing on the benefits of reporting to get an accurate and precise estimate of the recreational rock lobster catch for Tasmanian waters which supports the stock assessment for sustainability. An accurate rock lobster catch would also assist with stock sharing arrangements and the Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy.

4. Research and Management Updates

Research

Maugean Skate: IMAS have undertaken a project into the oxygenation in Macquarie Harbour. To date the project is showing positive results. In addition, IMAS have undertaken a captive breeding program, to date thirty eggs have hatched.

Integrating Recreational Information into Harvest Strategies for Multi-Sector Fisheries Project: The project to identify values and objectives of recreational fisheries to achieve targets. Due to report in the near future.

Management

Maugean Skate: A Conservation Action Plan (CAP) has been released and outlines actions for Maugean Skate in Macquarie Harbour. The restricted use of nets in Macquarie Harbour have been incrementally introduced since 2015, including the additional area closures, nighttime restrictions, and soak time restrictions in 2022. The CAP states that recreational gillnetting in Macquarie Harbour should cease before the Statewide cessation by 2030. An option seriously being considered is banning all recreational gillnetting in Macquarie Harbour at the end of the current licence year.

TARFish

Recently launched weather stations at four sites around Tasmania: St Helens, Burnie, Marion Bay and Southport.

4.5 Rec Fisher Representatives

Notable comments from RecFAC members include:

Calamari: A Recreational Member queried what was happening with Calamari – recreational limits and closures. The Department responded that there will be no catch limit changes for the upcoming year, however the closed season for the North needs to be set. The extension of the Lemon Rock closure to a greater part of the east coast – as advised by RecFAC previously is being considered, however this is more likely a matter for future years. RecFAC emphasised the importance of providing ample notice of the closure period.

10 Other Business/ Dates for future meetings

Next Meeting: June 2024

Meeting Closed: 12:05 pm

Appendix 1: RecFAC 85 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. Scallop Fishery
 - D'Entrecasteaux Channel Scallop Survey (Sean Tracey)
 - Fishery overview/DEC status
 - Developing group fishing/scallop catch sharing arrangements on a recreational boat (Rod Pearn)
3. Rock Lobster Update (Rod Pearn)
 - Harvest Strategy
 - Catch Reporting
4. Other Business/ Dates for Future Meetings
 - Next Meeting
 - Proposed for 20 – 27 June

Appendix 2: Action Items

	Meeting #	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe
1	RecFAC 83	TARFish make a presentation on their project “Segmentation of Recreational Fishers” to RecFAC’s next meeting	TARFish	Next Meeting
2	RecFAC 84	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	NRE Tas	June 2024
3	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/ Ongoing
4	RecFAC 85	NRE Tas to consult with both Tasmania Police and TARFish to develop more detailed proposals for catch sharing, that ensure any changes are practical, simple to understand and are enforceable. The proposals are to be provided to RecFAC for consideration prior to the release of the draft scallop rules for public comment.	NRE Tas	Next Meeting