

Abstracts

Frank B. Prokop

Recreational Fisheries And Its Management – Looking Back And Looking Forward

Keynote address to Recfish Australia Conference, Canberra 2008

Recreational fishing is the largest unrecognised industry in Australia. Worth billions every year and with between ¼ and 1/3 of the adult population participating, it is the ultimate ubiquitous activity. Everyone says it is important until it comes time to do something about it.

In looking at recreational fisheries and its management in Australia, it is important not just to see how far we have to go – but how far we have come! It is essential to know our history, but to learn from it, and not be constrained by historical imperatives.

Dedicated recreational fisheries management has a relatively recent history in Australia. While there has been recreational fisheries management particularly in fresh water over a considerable period, marine recreational fisheries management was largely implemented on an ad hoc basis.

In 1940 in Western Australia it was written by the Chief Secretary “the provision of fish food is considered to be of very much greater importance from the point of view of the population as a whole than the sporting side of fishing, and consequently the professional fisherman must, and always will, receive greater consideration than the angler.”

Only in 1988, Western Australia commenced a two year review of recreational fisheries and in 1989 NSW appointed the first full-time dedicated recreational fisheries manager in Australia.

Since that time there has been a revolution in community attitudes which has sometimes been driven by management and has sometimes driven management. Recreational fishing has gone from a situation where all bag limits were seen as an infringement of individual freedoms to the introduction of saltwater angling licenses and recreational anglers lobbying for seasonal fishing closures to protect stocks

Today, recreational fisheries are recognised as an important component of the resource consumption. However, it is frequently stated that the recreational catch for some species is greater than the commercial catch therefore recreational catches are the ones that must be controlled.

Recreational fishers in Australia often think that they are a long way behind many parts of the world. Issues such as catch and release, coordination of the various forms of fishing through peak bodies and respect from other sectors are areas in which we excel.

Australia is a long way behind in terms of corporate recognition, co-management with government and recognition of the conservation efforts which have already been put into place.

Recreational fishing must learn to address these issues and to work more closely with local government, tourism and health agencies to ensure that recreational fishing can continue. The leadership role of recreational fishing needs wider recognition and the benefits of this healthy, outdoor activity need to be services, rather than managing only the impacts.

In this way, a multi-billion dollar industry can take its rightful place in Australian society.

Andy Bodsworth, Director, Cobalt Marine Resource Management

Resource Allocation: A Fair and Equal Outcome?

A fair and reasonable allocation of fishery resources across the commercial and recreational sectors is one of the key challenges of contemporary Australian fisheries management. Historically, and in general terms, high value fish species have been allocated primarily to the commercial sector and commercial fishing has been the most obvious cause of direct pressure and subsequent depletion of many fish stocks.

The contemporary Australian regulatory framework for commercial fisheries centres on strong commercial access rights for many of the species that are also highly valued by recreational fishers. This, and the fragmented nature of representative groups from the recreational fishing sector, has challenged the development of more equitable fisheries resource allocation policy and practice. The direct cumulative impacts of both sectors on high value target species can be very significant. These impacts are increasingly compounded by human impacts from population growth, pollution and habitat degradation, invasive species, and now climate change. A co-operative approach to managing the cumulative impacts on these species and their environment has never been so important.

The most recent Commonwealth fisheries policy initiatives have again identified the importance of resource sharing across the commercial and recreational sectors although real progress continues to be slow. Whilst not explicitly developed to deliver more formal resource sharing outcomes, the recently developed Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy may offer an effective interim solution for resource sharing in some cases.

The recently developed harvest strategy for the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery (which predominantly targets blue or slimy mackerel, yellowtail scad, jack mackerel, and redbait) offers an interesting and relevant case study in how to deliberately balance the needs of commercial and recreational fishers, and the ecosystem, when setting sustainable commercial harvest levels. The importance of targeted, efficient, and collaborative research from all sectors to support such an approach is also of fundamental importance.

In conjunction with other contemporary fisheries management practices like species specific catch limits and spatial and temporal access restrictions, this harvest strategy based approach can offer an effective way forward for fair and equitable commercial and recreational access to high value sport and/or game fishing species until more formal resource allocation approaches are developed and implemented.

Jo-Anne Ruscoe

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation

The fishing leader you use can make a difference on how many fish you catch. Developing key skills, knowledge and capabilities within the recreational fishing community, and encouraging and supporting new generations of leaders are vitally important strategies to enable the recreational fishing sector to reach its potential to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits, and to meet the significant challenges facing the sector.

In this presentation, the need for people development and capacity building is discussed with reference to the National Recreational Fishing Policy, Labour's Plan for sustainable fisheries, and the key challenges facing the sector. Opportunities through the FRDC's People Development Program for professional development and capability building are shared.

2008 RECFISHING
2020

Abstracts

Cameron Westaway, Senior Fisheries Manager Inland, Daina Aspin, Fisheries Manager Saltwater Access, Alistair McBurnie, Fisheries Manager Freshwater Access, NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Meeting The Challenge For Recreational Angling Access:

Maintaining access to fishable water is one of the key challenges facing recreational anglers. Anglers are losing access to rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal and offshore fishing sites through an increasing number of processes. These include aquatic protected areas, national parks, urban sprawl and industrial development, conversion of public roads, TSRs, leases and other crown land to freehold status, cost, safety and liability concerns from local councils, water management authorities and private landholders.

The Access program in NSW is supported through the Recreational Anglers Trust (via licence fees) and seeks to protect and enhance angler access through a number of measures. GIS systems are used to identify all existing and potential access points where Crown Lands or public roads intersect fishable waters. Approximately 200,000 freshwater and 1.2 million coastal access points have been identified so far. The program aims to publicise the most important of these points, educate fishers as to their rights and obligations, engage other state and local govt agencies pointing out the socio-economic importance of the issue, highlighting their statutory or state planning obligations to support sustainable recreation, and also addressing their imperatives such as conservation, safety, water quality and security of neighbours. Staff from the Access Program will negotiate formal agreements with these bodies and with private landholders that provide access and wherever possible establish anglers and angling groups on trusts which manage parcels of Crown Land. Maintaining recreational angler access is a huge task which requires dedicated resources, however quality long term outcomes can be achieved.

Acknowledgements: Bryan Vanderwalt, John Diplock.

Kim Ritman

The National Climate Change and Fisheries Action Plan

Climate change will pose both challenges and opportunities for Australia's fishing (including commercial wild-catch, recreational and Indigenous fishers) and aquaculture sectors. Early indications are that the adverse impacts on fisheries are likely to be most severe within the south east due to the influence of the strengthening East Australian Current, warmer water and air temperatures, and projected reductions in rainfall. The National Climate Change and Fisheries Action Plan (the Action Plan) is being developed by the Australian Government as a means to facilitate adaptation to climate change by fisheries sectors and identify actions to reduce the climate impact of fisheries operations. The Action Plan identifies strategies and actions to guide future management, policy, research and operational decisions in response to climate change. That is, it outlines steps that can be taken by fishers and managers to prepare for climate change. As our knowledge and understanding of the possible impacts evolves, our ability to adapt to climate change will improve. The Action Plan does not, therefore, prescribe actions in specific detail; rather, it provides fishers, managers and researchers with a climate change response framework. The Action Plan is expected to be finalised in December 2008.

Steve Sutton

Improving the engagement of the recreational fishing community in fisheries management.

In 2007, we conducted a survey of recreational fishers to better understand their attitudes and beliefs regarding the 2004 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan and the associated consultation process. Most fishers surveyed believed that the rezoning plan was necessary and would have positive impacts on conservation of

the GBR and the sustainability of its fisheries. However, many recreational fishers expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which the recreational fishing community was engaged in the rezoning and consultation process. Results also show that recreational fishers seek many things from public consultation processes including: outcomes that result in effective conservation of the environment; a process that is easily understood by everyone; and a process that allows local concerns to be considered in decision making. Results demonstrate the value and importance of engaging the recreational fishing community in fisheries decisions that affect them, and provide some guidance for improving the engagement of recreational fishers in the fisheries management process.

Bob Audsley

The Role of Volunteers And Education in Building A Better Future

NSW DPI, Fishcare Volunteers are people from a wide variety of backgrounds who help promote quality recreational fishing into the future. Volunteers are part of a growing team of community members who are taking practical steps to increase awareness and the values of sustainable fishing practices. Fishcare volunteers have proved to be very successful in these roles and can take a great deal of the credit for community support for conservation of fish stocks, and community acceptance of personal responsibility for the aquatic environment. Volunteers work in their local areas, and understand the angling issues unique to their own region.

Bill Sawynok

Community Involvement in Collecting Fisheries Information

Community monitoring programs have long played a role in areas of natural resources management in areas such as monitoring birds, wetlands, marsupials and water quality. In those areas there has been, to varying degrees, the integration of community and scientifically collected data which has improved understanding and management in those areas.

Currently community involvement in collecting data in fisheries is still in an embryonic phase and there is a lot of uncertainty in the value and accuracy of data collected and whether it has a place in providing information that can be used in management decisions.

The role of community groups in collecting information on which to base fisheries management decisions and how best to engage and work with these groups is a vexed issue for fisheries agencies but it need not be. In reality recreational fishers and fisheries managers are seeking the same thing – factual information on which to base decisions.

Falling participation in recreational fishing, rising costs of research and a diminishing research funding base will inevitably lead to new solutions being necessary if we are to have the level of information being sought to make management decisions.

Two community monitoring programs will be examined in relation to the data they are collecting and how it has been or can be used to improve management decisions. These are the Suntag fish tagging program and the CapReef monitoring program in Queensland.

Michael Sawyer

Innovative solutions to information sharing

As part of the FRDC National Seafood Industry Leadership Program I took on the task of creating an online logbook for recreational anglers. This began as an ambitious project for the program and has now snowballed into a fulltime career developing the logbook with potential for a nation-wide rollout. My talk will consist of a powerpoint presentation outlining the steps I've taken so far and will conclude with a live website demonstration of the logbook trial.

2008 RECFISHING
2020