

RECREATIONAL FISHING MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2005

3.30-6.30pm, Office of the Minister of Fisheries, The Beehive

Present:

David Benson-Pope, Minister of Fisheries (Chair)
Peter Ellery
Sheryl Hart
Max Hetherington
Lorraine Hill
Bob Meikle
Geoff Rowling
Kim Walshe

In attendance:

John Glaister, Chief Executive, Ministry of Fisheries
Mark Edwards, Manager Fisheries Policy, Ministry of Fisheries
Emma Taylor, Senior policy analyst, Ministry of Fisheries
Tim Ingleton, Private Secretary (Fisheries), Office of David Benson-Pope
Steve Hurring, Ministerial advisor, Office of David Benson-Pope

Agenda item 1: Welcome and introductions

The Minister of Fisheries, David Benson-Pope, welcomed the Committee members to the first meeting of the Recreational Fishing Ministerial Advisory Committee. A round of introductions was made, and the Minister outlined what he wanted to achieve from the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Role and operation of the Committee

The Minister proposed some operating procedures for the Committee, covering matters such as minute-taking, confidentiality, and the focus of the Committee's work. He noted the terms of reference of the Committee.

The Minister noted that he expects future Committee meetings to be longer than the first meeting, and that his schedule means it would not be possible for him to commit to attending a full day meeting. In his absence, the Chief Executive of the Ministry, John Glaister, will chair the meetings.

The Minister noted that he sees the Committee as a vehicle for providing him with independent advice about strategic recreational fishing matters. He expressed his hope that the Committee would be able to come to a position regarding the vision for the New Zealand recreational fishing sector, and focus on a pathway forward.

The Minister noted that Committee members have been appointed as individuals, not representatives of particular aspects of the sector. He is seeking candid advice on

matters from Committee members. While it may be useful for Committee members to canvass the views of others in forming their perspective on issues that may be discussed at these meetings, members are not expected to represent particular fishing clubs or regions in their discussions at this Committee.

The Minister was asked to clarify the relationship of the Committee with the regional recreational fishing forums that are being established by the Ministry. He advised that the regional forums would be focused on operational issues and statutory consultation processes, in contrast to the focus of Committee discussions. The Minister gave a number of examples of issues he envisaged the Committee would consider, including:

- what improvements could be made to provide more certainty around allocation decisions – but not the merits of specific allocation decisions made under the current framework
- How to improve the capacity, capability and mechanisms for the sector to participate in fisheries management – but not the ‘politics’ associated with current representative bodies
- The compliance regime for recreational fishing – but not individual regulations, and
- how to improve information for management of recreational fisheries – but not research proposals for particular fisheries.

The Minister noted that operational issues were important, but such issues are more appropriately discussed and resolved within the statutory processes that provide for the views of representative interests to be considered. He noted that Bob Meikle is a member of the existing South Island forum, and that other members have put their names forward for the regional forums, and thanked them for their willingness to participate.

The Minister noted the legal constraints he faces and his view that debating the detail of operational discussions in this forum could be unproductive.

A Committee member asked whether this meant that the Committee’s discussions are therefore constrained by the existing management framework. He noted that some of the matters he wishes the Committee to discuss would involve considering changes to the current framework, and that in his view there are options for resolving issues using more cost-effective means than are available at present.

The Minister replied that he is comfortable with the Committee discussing options to improve the way we do things, including possible changes to the current legislative framework – in his view such discussions would fit well with what he wants the Committee to focus on.

Agreed:

- minutes of each Committee meeting would be kept, recording the key matters of discussion, conclusions and agreed actions
- the minutes will be placed on the Ministry’s website once they have been checked for accuracy by Committee members and approved by the Minister
- draft minutes will be circulated to Committee members by email
- transparency is desirable but discussions of Committee meetings will be kept confidential where necessary

- the agenda and any accompanying papers will be provided to Committee members at least one week prior to future Committee meetings
- the Chief Executive of the Ministry, John Glaister, will chair meetings in the absence of the Minister of Fisheries
- the Committee envisages it will discuss issues at the strategic level as outlined in the examples provided by the Minister

Agenda item 3: Background / context

The Minister provided a brief outline of the recent history of recreational fisheries management, including the Soundings consultation process and the Reference Group convened by his predecessor, Pete Hodgson. He noted his view that three of the key issues facing the recreational fishing sector are:

- the need for improved understanding of recreational rights
- the relationship of those rights to others, and
- the need for greater involvement of recreational fishers in fisheries management.

The Minister noted that he is not sure that legislative change is necessarily required in order to address these issues, but he wants to see a higher level of debate occur. He noted that there are many demands on the Government's legislative programme given the amount of Parliamentary sitting time that is available, and he would prefer to see improvements made non-legislatively where possible.

Some Committee members indicated a view that recently the Ministry has been more receptive to the sector's views / less inflexible than in the past. One member suggested that the presentation and quality of submissions being made by the recreational sector has improved recently, which has also helped. The Minister noted that there is a need for the sector to have confidence that they are being heard and their views are being given due weight. The Ministry reiterated its commitment to improve its engagement with the recreational sector.

Agenda item 4: Identification of key strategic issues facing the recreational fishing sector

The Minister invited each Committee member to identify what they consider to be the key strategic issues facing the sector.

Committee members identified a range of issues. Common themes raised were:

- Capacity
 - the recreational sector faces significant capacity issues (both financial and human resources) that limit its ability to participate in fisheries management
 - the recreational sector faces a large mismatch of capacity against the commercial sector and government departments
 - some members suggested that a legislated structure for the sector, supported by adequate funding, was needed
 - Recreational fishers consider they are disenfranchised from decision-making on fisheries management issues

- MFish places insufficient emphasis on recreational fishing issues and the value provided by recreational fishing. One member suggested that MFish should have a dedicated recreational fishing policy group.
- Information / research
 - Recreational information has many gaps / deficiencies (including critical catch-effort data, and valuation) and the research programme needs to be more strategic
- Sustainability
 - Depletion of stocks (not just inshore stocks)
 - How should recreational fishing pressure best be managed within sustainable limits
 - Effects of poor land management practices – improved coastal management and better linkages with councils needed
 - Environmental effects of and on fishing – including other activities that affect fishing and fisheries such as seabed mining
- Inter-sectoral issues
 - The uncertainty regarding recognition of recreational fishers' interests in the allocation process needs to be resolved / need to better define the recreational right
 - Conflict between commercial and recreational fishers – debate over allocation and access reduces incentives to cooperate
 - Recreational fishing rights and the quota management system do not fit together very well
 - Opposition to total fisheries closures / prefer management to address resource and sustainability issues
 - All aspects of the value of fish to the recreational fishing sector (including income generated from fishing tourism and non-monetary considerations) should be taken into account in allocation decisions
 - Shared interests with Māori; it was noted that Māori have tools available to them (such as taiapure and mātaitai) to address local fisheries management issues.

The value of involving the community to address localised fisheries management issues was also identified, including the need to enable local solutions because a “one size fits all” national approach has limitations. The importance of education was also raised.

The Committee then discussed the capacity issues facing the sector. Committee members noted that there are many issues affecting recreational fishers but the burden of participation falls on a few individuals and the Ministry does not allow sufficient time for consultation. Some felt that without a legislated management structure and funding it would not be possible to overcome the apathy generally found in the sector and build capacity to contribute. The disadvantages of a legislated institutional structure were also noted.

John Glaister was asked to provide his view of how recreational fisheries management in New Zealand differs from Australia. John noted the use of recreational licensing in New South Wales, which has had reasonable success at least in the case of the inland license. He noted that licensing is only one of many options and that much care would

need to be taken if it were to be considered here. He noted that the Government has ruled out imposition of licensing.

Some Committee members noted that the debate in New Zealand has tended to be focused on the licence itself and not the benefits it could deliver, such as a buyback of commercial effort and increased research.

Information and research issues facing the sector, and the basis for decisions allocating fish stocks among users were discussed. It was noted that obtaining good information on the value derived from recreational fishing would assist in making allocation decisions. There was some discussion on whether the recreational sector should be subject to changes in total allowable catch on a proportional basis when other sectors have caused the sustainability issue. It was noted that the commercial sector typically has a different viewpoint regarding who has contributed to a sustainability issue. Others noted that the recreational sector can have an adverse effect on stock levels, and the efficacy of bag limits was questioned. There was general support for the Minister's initiative that key recreational fisheries could be managed above maximum sustainable yield.

The discussion then turned to the roles of the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries. There was dissatisfaction that the two agencies can act in an inconsistent manner. It was noted that the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries have differing roles that flow from the legislation they operate under. The Marine Protected Areas Policy is an example of where there is an agreed Government approach. The Minister clarified that marine reserves are one of a number of marine protection tools that will be considered under that Policy.

Agenda item 5: Forward work programme for the Committee

The Minister noted his pleasure at the Committee members' commitment to the process, and at the level and breadth of issues that had been raised. He proposed that the issues raised would form a basis for further work to occur at the next Committee meeting to discuss a vision and strategy for the sector.

The Minister indicated that the Committee is expected to meet quarterly, and that the next meeting will probably be in November. He noted that this is, however, dependent on the outcome of the election.

Agreed:

- the issues raised would be noted, grouped and used as a basis to develop a vision to advance recreational fisheries management
- as much notice as possible is to be given regarding the date of the next meeting

Agenda item 6: Meeting close

The Minister thanked Committee members for their contribution and drew the meeting to a close.