

**Submission
No 875**

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Lakeside Fly Fishing Club

Name: Mr David Screen

Position: President

Date received: 18/03/2010

Submission
to the
Legislative Council Select Committee
on
Recreational Fishing

by
The Lakeside Fly Fishing Club Inc



Table of Contents

- Page 3. **Introductory Letter****
- Page 5. **Response to Section A:**** - The current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks.
- Page 8. **Response to Section B:**** - The effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities
- Page 12. **Response to Section C:**** - The value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales.
- Page 14. **Response to Section D:**** - The gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens.
- Page 16. **Response to Section E:**** - Ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.
- Page 19. **Conclusion****

Lakeside Fly Fishing Club Inc

Po Box 72, NARWEE NSW 2209

www.lakesideflyfishing.com



The Hon Robert Brown MLC.
Director,
Legislative Council Select Committee on Recreational Fishing
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

RE: Submission to Select Committee on Recreational Fishing

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Lakeside Fly Fishing Club Inc, I write in response to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Recreational Fishing's call for public submissions into "the benefits and opportunities that improved recreational fisheries may represent for fishing licence holders in New South Wales".

At the outset, our Club supports the Government's recreational fishing licence scheme and firmly believes that the monies generated from it make a substantial contribution to the management and ongoing viability of the State's recreational fishing industry as a whole.

Our Club was established in 1951 by a group of freshwater fly fishing enthusiasts and is one of the oldest fly fishing clubs in the Sydney Metropolitan area with approximately 75 active members. We are somewhat unique amongst other fly fishing clubs in that we only fish for trout, with most if not all of our members practising catch and release fishing. Our members travel to recognised trout waters across the State including the areas west of Sydney (Blue Mountains, Lithgow, and Bathurst), the Southern Highlands, Snowy Mountains and Monaro regions and Barrington Tops and New England regions throughout the year.

As a result, the comments we wish to make and ask the Standing Committee to consider during its deliberations into this matter are primarily targeted at freshwater angling, in particular Trout. Our comments are based on our collective knowledge, experience and concerns in this area. However, more general comment will be made on issues that surround the creation of Marine Parks and Wilderness Areas and the ever increasing restrictions we are facing on accessing rivers in our national parks.

As Fly Fishing Club members and NSW Fishing Licence holders, we welcome this opportunity to provide comment on this important matter and trust that we will assist in adding value to your process.

Our following responses are framed with reference to the five major stated objectives of the Standing Committee, which are:

- (a) The current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks;
- (b) The effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities;
- (c) The value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales,
- (d) The gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens, and,
- (e) Ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

In conclusion, we also welcome any opportunity to assist the Select Committee during public sitting, should we be called on to do so. My contact details are as follows:

Or by writing to:

Yours sincerely,



DAVID SCREEN Dip. App. Bus (UTS), M.P. Admin. (USYD).
President

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

The following responses are provided in good faith by the Lakeside Fly Fishing Club Inc to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing.

- (a) **The current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks.**

At the outset, the Lakeside fly Fishing Club would like to acknowledge the very good work the Government has undertaken with regards to the management of the State's fishing resources. We support the introduction of the recreational fishing licence and the various rules and regulations that govern fishing such as: bag limits, fish sizes and the operation of the various fishing seasons for different fish species. We also see value in the various brochures and publications that are produced and circulated throughout the angling community each year, and the continued proactive management of these processes will go a long way to support and protect our fisheries well into the future.

Nevertheless, we strongly believe that our "freshwater" fisheries can be managed a lot better than they are now. In particular, we feel that there is little or no coordination between the various government departments, local councils and private land holders to make it work as effectively as it could. The potential is enormous in terms of what we could create, but there seems to be little driving force to make anything happen.

If it wasn't a serious matter, we would laugh at the efforts of one government department to stock our rivers with trout, paid from our licence fees, whilst another government

department seeks to not only eradicate trout from these waters but also goes out of its way to make it difficult for us to access these rivers by locking fire tracks or draws up plans to create wilderness areas that will exclude all access to particular regions, including waters that have been stocked and used by trout anglers for many years. How can two conflicting objectives exist under one Government?

For us, there seems to be a perception that some elements in National Parks believe that if you fish or own a 4WD, you are some form of environmental vandal and have no right to undertake any of these activities within their area of influence. I can tell you that as fly anglers we are very environmentally aware as it is of paramount importance to us that our waterways and the environments in which they flow are kept in the most pristine condition as possible. Achieving this outcome does not involve locking gates and keeping people out, but it does involve responsible water management and ensuring water quality, weed control, the appropriate maintenance of tracks and culverts in our national parks and ensuring that those visiting these areas adhere to the rules in terms of for example, staying on tracks and taking their rubbish home with them.

As trout anglers, we are very concerned at any possible attempt to exclude freshwater fishing should "Wilderness Areas" be created in regions such as the Kosciusko National Park. As you may or may not be aware, trout angling is limited only to cold water streams and rivers, therefore the exclusion of any part of this area could severely restrict our fishing territory and result in a boycott of the area by trout anglers in general. This in turn would then have a negative impact on the local communities that depend on the angling dollar to supplement their incomes.

Therefore, we strongly believe that prior to the declaration of such sites, the angling advisory committees be consulted and to have input into the future management of these areas. Suitable arrangements could be developed whereby a workable compromise could

be reached between Park administrators and fishing clubs, similar to those that allow the shooting clubs to hunt for feral animals on Crown Land.

Other issues surrounding access in general and uncertainty of access to water that flows through private land is also a matter that needs addressing through a coordinated approach between government, landholder, angling clubs and individuals alike. The Fisheries Department in Victoria has recently done some very good work in the Goulburn Valley area around the towns of Eildon, Thornton and Alexandria in terms of access to waterways through private property.

We would strongly suggest that you make contact with your Victorian counterparts, in particular The Victorian Minister Joe Helpers' office, and find out how they went about achieving the results they have. Their efforts to date have helped to create an excellent fishery that not only serves the needs of the angler, but also greatly assists the economic well-being of the many small communities that they visit.

With regards to the creation of marine parks, we believe that the creation of such places has merit. The banning of commercial fishing in and near to these areas is also strongly supported. However, believe that access to and use of marine parks could be better handled. From what we understand, in the United States recreational fishing is still allowed within a marine park, however, we would hesitate to guess that strict bag limits or licensing requirements would restrict what can and cannot be caught and at what times of the year that this can be done, which again is strongly supported. Perhaps this is a course of action we could take as well thus ensuring that future generations of Australian families are not denied the same rights as their forefathers.

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

- (b) The effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities**

To determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the various representative bodies that advise government departments and statutory authorities on recreational fishing issues, is a difficult matter indeed. Before we can answer this question, we believe that the Government should first ask its self the question, "how well does it want this process to work?" It is our experience that representative bodies can be either very effective to a Government that wants to listen and act on community concerns and then develop public policy to address issues. Or, be just as effective in tying up representative bodies in bureaucratic red tape and departmental "double speak", thereby ensuing that community concerns are effectively gagged whilst still appearing to be doing something.

Whilst the following comments may not be in direct response to the overarching paragraph, we nevertheless believe that the issues raised stem from the overall effectiveness of the representational system and willingness of the Government to listen and act upon the advice received from them.

The first of our concerns is how the monies collected from our fishing licence fees are distributed and how these are allocated to activities in conjunction with or along side the core roles and responsibilities of the Department of Industry and Investment (Fisheries). Following the battle to save the Gaden Trout Hatchery, the deal that was brokered to save this facility involved reallocating monies collected from our fishing licences to meet its on-going operating costs.

In our eyes, the Government or Department of Industry and Investment or both forced this entire issue on the trout angling community, with the sole purpose of directing part of our licence monies to make up the general funding shortfalls within the Department itself. The effectiveness of the representative bodies representing us during this time was to do nothing more than basically rubber stamp the decision. After all, the fishing trust fund is a nice pool of money to dip into now and then.

Whilst the economic worth of our recreational fisheries to the NSW economy is raised in the next section, we strongly believe that the worth of our recreational fishing industry is such that it should not necessitate dipping into our fishing licence monies to be used to make up for shortfalls in funding for any activity that falls under the core responsibilities of the Department of Industry and Investment. In this we mean the Department's legislative responsibilities and or obligations to the industry / community that it serves. Our concerns in this area originate from the fact that our licence fees are used to:

- Partly fund the Department's law enforcement responsibilities
- Meet the salary costs of staff employed at our fish hatcheries
- Help pay for general research particularly into matters that do not impact on recreational angling and,
- Help to fund other activities involving commercial fishing operations.

Whilst we have no objection to enforcement or research programmes or any other worthwhile activity that the Department undertakes, a line needs to be clearly drawn as to what our fishing licences monies actually fund. It is our position that if our licence fees are to be used to fund programmes such as enforcement, then any revenues generated from it should be automatically returned to the fishing trust for obvious and relevant use elsewhere.

We would therefore suggest that the Select Committee review the current funding models used to distribute monies from our recreational licence fees and ensure that these are not being used by the Department to supplement its core responsibilities. Further to this, any review of the funding models of either the fishing trust fund or the Department, should take into consideration the overall worth of fishing to the New South Wales economy and ensure that the levels of funding are in some way commensurate with this and that the budgets that are allocated to maintain these programmes are adequately funded from consolidated revenue. Perhaps, the Select Committee could recommend an independent audit of the allocation of monies towards our fisheries to establish if funding has decreased or increased in real terms over the past several decades.

Tying this back now to the effectiveness of our various representative bodies, the Select Committee needs to look into the actual charters that give life to these groups and the effectiveness of these to undertake the duties they are elected to undertake. Further to this, the Select Committee needs to look at the independence of these bodies and their ability to make decisions, and the powers that they can wield especially when at loggerheads with the Department, after all, what is the point of these bodies if the CEO or Minister and overturn every recommendation put forward for action.

The Select Committee also needs to investigate the reporting framework that these representative bodies have back to the organisations they represent. There should be some kind of formal report made to the broader fishing community as very few of us are aware of the work that is undertaken, the progress they are making or the issues that they face. This needs to change. There needs to be total transparency of process.

Further to this, there appears to be a considerable lag in terms of when the minutes of these representative committee meetings appear on the Department of Industry and Investment's web site. To us, this only serves to demonstrate the importance that the

Department places on distributing information to the fishing community. Whilst we realise that the minutes need to go through an approval process, it is still not good enough should we be lead to believe that this is a serious attempt to listen to the voices of the State's 500,000 fishing licence holders.

Finally, the Select Committee should look at the possibility of ensuring that monies collected from our fishing licences are quarantined from the Department and can only be accessed with the approval of the representative group itself, not the Minister.

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

(c) The value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales.

The recent attempt by the New South Wales Government to close the Gaden Trout Hatchery in Jindabyne triggered a substantial backlash from affected rural communities, trout anglers and the fishing tackle industry in general. For a responsible Minister of the Crown and his government department to formulate and then attempt to implement an administrative decision such as this, based on from what we understand to be nothing more than a cost cutting exercise to save less than \$500K a year in running costs, can only indicate that they have completely failed to recognise the economic value of one aspect of recreational fishing to the State's economy.

It further worries us that those responsible for running the State's fisheries do not appear to understand the value of the work they are undertaking or the important part they are playing in administering "our" fisheries in general, if they honestly believe that decisions like this are for the good of the industry that they are employed to serve and protect.

During the battle to save Gaden, figures were thrown around suggesting that the dollar value of "angling tourism" in the Snowy Mountains region alone amounted to many tens of millions of dollars each year, even as much as \$70M worth to the local economy. Other figures used suggested that trout angling alone in New South Wales contributed in order of \$100M into the economy, when taking into account all factors such as purchasing fishing equipment, guiding, accommodation, food, petrol etc.

It would be our suggestion that the Select Committee recommend to the Government that an economic assessment be conducted into each of the major forms of recreational fishing in New South Wales i.e., Salt and Freshwater, with the view to establishing its

contribution and value to the State's economy. In particular, such a review should recognise which regions of the State's economy are highly dependent on the angling dollar in terms of employment, trade and general economic activity.

Another suggestion we can make is for the Select Committee to contact and obtain information from the New Zealand Government on the value of trout angling to their economy and then to understand the proactive management policies they have in place to administer their fisheries to the very high standards that they have achieved.

For us in this State to bring our fisheries up to this level there would need to be extensive cooperation between several Government Departments including National Parks, Fisheries and Local Councils together with other bodies like the National Farmers Federation and private land holders to build a cooperative framework to improve access, the more effective stocking of our waterways and probably the most important thing of all, habitat restoration.

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

(d) The gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens.

We believe that the gaps that exist in the overall recreational fishery programme stem from the lack of cooperation and coordination between the various stakeholders that can influence and those that do have influence over the management of our fisheries. In particular the issue of access and signage are the most obvious.

Again, speaking from a trout angling standpoint, as mentioned previously in this submission, it is suggested that the Select Committee investigate the very good work that has been undertaken in the Goulburn Valley region of North Eastern Victoria. In this region, the Victorian Government is working in conjunction with the local stakeholders to develop solutions and put in place physical assets to enhance their trout fishery in this location. Whilst there is still more work to do, in our mind, they have made significant improvements not seen anywhere else in Australia.

The Victorian solution does not stop at access and signage. They are also removing willows and restoring fish habitat, including the rebuilding of river banks and other riverside features that allow fish to go about their daily business and to hide from predators.

Some thoughts to assist the Committee could include:

- Liaison with the National Farmers Federation and landholders in relation to improved access to rivers and streams, fencing rivers etc
- Examine the possibility of creating "right of ways" along river banks

- Use or licence fee money to build ladders or swing gates to access water ways where fencing exists
- Erection of signage showing public access points to rivers on Crown and private land

Further to this, the management of the trout fishery in New Zealand could only be described as World Class and the benchmark that we should aspire to replicate here in Australia. Extensive work has been undertaken in New Zealand over a long period of time to establish a nationwide network of signage, access points etc, supported by an excellent educational and awareness programme. Estimates vary as to the economic worth of the trout angling dollar to the New Zealand economy, but an annual figure of \$700M NZD has been quoted the most.

With regard to the establishment of fishing havens, the most important thing here is that these must be established in the right locations based on sound scientific evidence, not on a whim based on emotive reasoning. It is important that the areas selected actually have a significant bearing on the well-being of the targeted fish population, regardless of species. In other words, that the area includes known fish breeding grounds, adequate food sources and a clean environment. In these locations, it would be of paramount importance to ensure that appropriate signage showing bag limits, open and closed season etc are clearly displayed and maintained at all times.

From this viewpoint, we strongly suggest that the Select Committee consider that prior to the establishment of fishing havens, that appropriate research be undertaken to ensure that these are established in the right locations and that buffer zones also be established around such places to ensure that adequate protection be afforded these sites.

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

(e) Ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

The Lakeside Fly Fishing Club and its members strongly support the efforts of Government to protect our environment by encouraging sustainable development at all times. We acknowledge that a lot of good work has been done to date, but acknowledge that a lot more still needs to be done to ensure compliance and improved environmental management on the part of individuals, business and government to better protect our environment.

As trout anglers, we visit many pristine and beautiful locations on a fairly regular basis, so we have a good idea of the state and condition of the environment. Whilst there have been attempts over the years by green groups to remove trout from our waterways, blaming them for eating the native fish and other aquatic organisms such as frogs etc, from our experiences, we strongly believe that the most important aspect associated with cold water fishing environments is water quality and quantity and nothing else.

We know that where you find a healthy trout population, you also find a healthy environment with all other forms of aquatic life in abundance. We also know that if the water quality is in a poor state, then the resultant opposite situation occurs. Siltation, weeds and lack of water are the most common problems that we encounter and whilst we acknowledge that drought is a major contributor to this problem within our National Parks, weeds however, in particular blackberry and willows are a serious problem in some areas.

Other water quality issues resulting from new and established developments on private property are of concern to us. We strongly believe that any development proposed near

to any fishing location, or indeed any water source that has the potential to flow into any fishery should be carefully reviewed, then monitored and regulated once commissioned.

There have been too many instances where water quality issues have been neglected or overlooked that have resulted in fish kill, or in general have denigrated the environment. In this day and age, every attempt should be made to ensure that our fisheries are protected from the impacts of development be it from treated water re-entering the river system, run-off, siltation etc. All have the potential to create an environment that would denigrate the local fishery over night, or over time.

A suggestion for the Select Committee to consider would be to allow a representative from one of the fishing advisory committees to sit on any development committees or process that could affect our waterways in order to ensure that the interests of the State's 500,000 fishing licence holders are addressed.

Another matter regarding water quality that the Select Committee might like to investigate is the issue of farmers allowing their livestock to access streams and rivers unimpeded. This practice from our experience causes fouling of the waterway by excrement either in or adjacent to the waterway; and the trampling of stream/ river beds and banks. This results in degradation through accelerated weathering and erosion and siltation occasioned by bank collapse or softening/ trampling of the bank/ stream bed proper.

Siltation is also caused due to riverine deforestation and grazing by livestock with unlimited access to waterways. At the extreme end of this practice is the creation of an environment that allows aquatic pests such as "Sand Slugs" to take hold in an area, which can destroy fish nests such as those of the Eel Tailed Catfish, which are already a threatened species.

Whilst we appreciate that our farmers have a lot on their plate and the matter of fencing off their paddocks along river banks would add to their costs, we have noticed that in the Southland region of New Zealand, and in fact in some areas around the Goulburn Valley in North Eastern Victoria, there appears to be a concerted effort by graziers, local councils and the Government of Victoria toward fencing streams and rivers in order to prevent direct access by livestock. This activity should be strongly encouraged by our Government.

Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Recreational Fishing

Conclusion

The work that the Select Committee is undertaking is seen by us as highly significant if we are to successfully manage our State's diverse portfolio of fishing resources. Opportunities such as this rarely present themselves for all of us to work together and make this work. I trust that you are as keen to make this work as we are.

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide comment and wish you well in your endeavours to address the many issues that we as a State face to ensure that our fisheries are managed for the good of all.

For and on behalf of the Lakeside Fly Fishing Club Inc,



DAVID SCREEN Dip. App. Bus (UTS), M.P. Admin. (USYD).
President