

Submission  
No 913

## INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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New South Wales  
Council of  
Freshwater Anglers

Fostering a sustainable  
freshwater fishery

Director  
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing  
Parliament House  
Macquarie House  
Sydney 2000  
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**Parliamentary Inquiry into Recreational Fishing – March 2010**

Dear Director,

**Introduction**

This submission is made on behalf of the New South Wales Council of Freshwater Anglers (NSWCFA). NSWCFA is a voluntary organisation primarily concerned with the development and maintenance of freshwater fisheries in the State of New South Wales and among its more than 3,000 members are the major fishing clubs of New South Wales as well as representatives of the major Australian Capital Territory fishing organisations. The NSWCFA is recognised by the NSW Department of Industry and Investment as the peak representational body for freshwater anglers in NSW. The NSWCFA participates with NSW Fisheries in the stocking of fresh water lakes and rivers, maintenance of habitat, contribution to policy and legislation affecting freshwater in NSW.

While the NSWCFA is primarily concerned with freshwater fishing matters, many of our members take a keen and active interest in saltwater fishing. To provide a wide and encompassing response to the Committee this submission from the NSWCFA will not be restricted to freshwater issues.

**The NSWCFA makes the following comments in regard to the inquiry.**

We are pleased to make a submission to this inquiry and representatives of the NSWCFA would be available to attend a public hearing and given a verbal presentation on this issue. A preferred venue would be in the Monaro or South Coast Regions.

The Terms of Reference for the inquiry relate to the benefits and opportunities that improved recreational fisheries would represent for fishing license holders in NSW with particular reference to the following:

(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.

**(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.**

The NSW Government, through NSW Fisheries has implemented a host of regulatory, policy and decision making processes over the last decade, the most important of which is the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and its associated Fisheries Management Strategy for Recreational Fishing. While anglers can see some benefit in having this initiative the interpretation, implementation and ongoing attention to many aspects of the Act and Strategy leaves a lot to be desired. The *Fisheries Management Act 1994* makes specific provision for the enhancement of recreational fishing opportunities such as:

**The Objects of the Act are:**

(1) to conserve, develop and share the fishery resources of the State for the benefit of present and future generations.

(2) In particular, the objects of this Act include:

(a) to conserve fish stocks and key fish habitats, and

(b) to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities of fish and marine vegetation, and

(c) to promote ecologically sustainable development, including the conservation of biological diversity,

and, consistently with those objects:

(d) to promote viable commercial fishing and aquaculture industries, and

**(e) to promote quality recreational fishing opportunities, and**

(f) to appropriately share fisheries resources between the users of those resources, and

(g) to provide social and economic benefits for the wider community of New South Wales.

In addition the Act references:

1. the Common Law right of access to tidal waters for recreational fishers,

2. the legislative basis for the recreational fishing fee,

3. the obligation of the fisheries management agency to consult with the fisheries advisory committee on issues such as bag and size limits, and

4. the provision for the declaration of Recreational Fishing Havens and recreational only species.

While these issues are noteworthy it is often the implementation that lets anglers down such as:

### **Fishing Opportunities**

Earlier this year the NSWCFCA met with the Minister for Water the Hon Philip Costa on the matter of access to water supply storages. While we were well received by the Minister it is appropriate to inform this Committee that the situation as it relates to such reservoirs is frustrating to anglers. In some regions anglers have unfettered access to such waterways, in others there is limited access and in others no access at all. The trouble with this is that there is no rhyme or reason for the various attitudes towards angler access. As we indicated to the Minister we would be supportive of a public inquiry into access to such waterways, but then this inquiry might suffice instead, we will wait and see. It should be noted that most of the excluded waterways are close to Sydney, while the ones with good access are further away.

### **Access**

Anglers believed they had a strong right to access tidal waters but the Common Law right was summarily removed during the creation of Marine Parks. Anglers are now of the opinion that a Common Law right amounts to nothing and that access needs to be enshrined in legislation. An attempt has been made to define access rights to freshwaters in the Act, but this is untested, complex and vague. This leads anglers to conclude that they have no access right whatsoever to waters. A legislative overhaul of angler access rights to waterways needs to be undertaken.

### **Crown Lands**

A number of fishing organisations are trustees for Crown Lands – something they do to preserve access to the resource. However the NSWCFCA notes that Crown Lands adjacent to waterways are continually being divested or sold and this affects access significantly. We appreciate that NSW Lands has a process to inform concerned members of the public of such intentions, but that process is not very efficient. As it stands the Lands Department places an advertisement in the local press indicating a potential sale of Crown Land. This results in an ad hoc advising process where organisations such as the NSWCFCA and others have no real way of knowing what is being disposed of across the State. The NSWCFCA can see great value in the NSW Lands Department placing all proposals to dispose of Crown Lands on a dedicated part of the Department's web-site. By doing this any person in the State or elsewhere can readily respond to such proposals and the Department would likely save a substantial amount of money on advertising.

### **Recreational Fishing Fee**

The recreational fishing fee has been of great benefit to NSW anglers. It has allowed anglers to prop up an ailing government infrastructure; however anglers are concerned that their fee is being used to pay the wages of government workers. Currently, the freshwater recreational fishing fee portion pays the wages for the staff at Gaden Trout Hatchery and six NSW Fisheries Compliance Officers, one Access Officer and two Conservation Managers. The saltwater fee pays for even more positions with NSW Fisheries. All up, the anglers of NSW fund approximately 30 positions within NSW Fisheries. No other Government Department has this number of staff directly supported by a discrete section of the community. This freshwater portion of the fee also funds a substantial amount of research such as the interaction between salmonids and frogs, redfin effects and carp control and a similar proportion is expended by the saltwater trust. Also our money is used for many habitat

project works such as removal of barriers to fish passage, bank-side and in-stream habitat restoration. No other conservation minded organisation contributes so much in material support to the environment, a fact often missed by those who choose to denigrate anglers.

### **Bag and Size Limits**

The current process adopted by NSW Fisheries in consulting with anglers over issues such as bag and size limits generally works well. While anglers would always like more time during such processes we concede that the process is about the best we can hope for. Generally anglers are well received during these review processes and it is interesting to note that many restrictions to bag limits actually stem from angler requests.

### **Conservation**

Until the recent phenomenon of aquatic minded conservationists, anglers have been the guardians of the aquatic resource. Anglers have fought against many indiscretions over the years, yet for some strange reason conservationists (whatever they are) try to paint anglers as purely concerned with unsustainable take. The NSWCFCA would like to remind the Committee of a few of the many issues anglers have fought for over the last 50 years. It was anglers who actively campaigned against snag removal from our western flowing rivers during the expansion of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme – many of our members were jailed during quite heated demonstrations. Ultimately we failed at that attempt, but now we are actively involved in putting the snags back. It was anglers who noticed that the Blue Groper was declining due to intense fishing pressure. Anglers and divers implemented a moratorium on the taking of Groper in NSW, which was backed by regulation. Today we see that Blue Groper are no longer threatened and the Groper has responded to a level that now sees it abundant and limited angling is allowed. It was anglers who first documented the plight of the Trout Cod and encouraged research and a ban on fishing for this species. It was anglers who fought for over 20 years to have a closed season (for both recreational and professional fishers) implemented for spawning Bass and Estuary Perch.

It is against this history that the anglers of NSW have always accepted the need for various protection measures to ensure the sustainability of the resource, but this tenant has been sorely tested by the method which marine parks were established in NSW. Rather than having a strong ally committed to such reserves, the process caused bitterness and division with other elements of society. The overwhelming sentiment of anglers is that it was the biased process that caused a good concept to be held in contempt by many anglers. Anglers only ask for a science based approach to marine parks, rather than the current land-grab that is taking place.

Anglers can make this claim as they have and continue to provide revenue for the employment of Conservation Officers within the NSW Fisheries Department. While anglers continue to support these positions the Department continues to abolish the positions. In a response form the previous Minister Macdonald he stated that the positions of Conservation Managers were non-crucial positions. Is it any wonder anglers are very frustrated with the current state of things in NSW.

The NSWCFCA would prefer to see the Government recognise the economic value of recreational fishing to the economy of the State and support the NSW Fisheries Department. The NSWCFCA cannot understand why such a small Department is constantly down-sized when it oversees, at minimal cost, one of the largest revenue producing industries in the State.

### **Marine Parks**

The NSWCFA encourages the Committee to examine the whole concept of Marine Parks their future expansion and the lack of consultation with anglers. Anglers remain fearful that these parks will only serve to restrict fishing further and it is our contention that this process is being used for the sole purpose of eliminating recreational fishing. The recent clamouring for the expansion of Sanctuary Zones is testament to this.

The NSWCFA would like to see Marine Parks Sanctuary Zones treated in the same manner as National Parks. The NSWCFA notes that supporters of Sanctuary Zones make no contribution to their upkeep, monitoring, research or compliance. This is to be contrasted with anglers who pay an annual fee to access fishing, contribute to the wages for NSW Fisheries staff, and pay for research and habitat restoration. It is entirely feasible for advocates of Sanctuary Zones to adopt a similar user pays system; after all we enjoy the privilege of paying for access to many national parks, so we could also pay to access Sanctuary Zones in Marine Parks. Achieving this could be as simple as a receipt similar to the fishing fee receipt to be purchased by users of Sanctuary Zones – a receipt would entitle a person to access and use all Sanctuary Zones for a prescribed period.

It is fair to note that the only real area of contention with Marine Parks is the concept of the Sanctuary Zones. Anglers have noted that these zones have been established without any underpinning science indicating they are needed and thus the concept is rejected. Anglers believe that better results could be obtained by having differing fishing rules for areas within Marine Parks without the blanket exclusion offered by Sanctuary Zones unless it is scientifically demonstrated as needed for a particular purpose.

The NSWCFA is also concerned about the capacity of the Marine Parks Authority to properly undertake its legislative requirements for marine parks. The NSWCFA cites the reviews into the Jervis Bay and Solitary Islands Marine Parks. It is our understanding that marine parks must be reviewed within specific time frames. For these two parks we believe that the reviews have been completed, but the review has been kept secret and not released. Anglers are justifiably sceptical of processes that seek to remain secret and are not completed with due transparency. This scepticism will undoubtedly affect how anglers and others view the review when or if released. The NSWCFA is of the opinion that if a simple matter such as a review cannot be properly completed for the current level of zoning, then zones should not be increased or changed.

### **Freshwater Sanctuary Zones**

Recently, uninformed conservationists have called for freshwater sanctuary zones. Once again we see no science to indicate that such zones are required. While these zones will stop fishing they will do nothing to limit water extraction, fish passage barriers and pollution. Anglers have already demonstrated with the Trout Cod Project that recreational angling can co-exist with conservation and lead to an increase in bio-diversity. Calls such as this do not take into account the successful stocking programs and catch and release programs that support sustainable fishing. Freshwater Sanctuary Zones will see an increase in undesirable species such as carp as they will not be removed from the system. Before any attempt is made to foist Freshwater Sanctuary Zones on the public of NSW the proponents of such a cause should be required to provide conclusive and agreed evidence that such zones are needed.

## **National Parks Expansion and Loss of Representation**

The number of National Parks continues to expand under the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and the NSWCFCA generally welcomes this concept, however; we are concerned that there is an undercurrent of bias against fishing within the administration teams of the DECCW. The NSWCFCA has been informed by its constituent clubs that all recent Plans of Management released by DECCW that include recreational fishing sites fail to mention fishing as a part of the history of the proposed Park.

The NSWCFCA finds it hard to believe that DECCW would include such things as horse riding, gold mining, skiing, garbage tips, cattle yards and poplar trees as historically relevant in Plans of Management, but conveniently neglect to mention fishing. This has resulted in traditional access points being closed or made difficult to access by the closure of access roads. This action has particularly affected the disabled, infirm, aged and very young.

The NSWCFCA is concerned that this type of anti-angler sentiment has come about largely by the dilution of the Fisheries Department into the Super Department of Industry and Investment. The continual cost cutting and down grading of the Fisheries portfolio has meant that it is unable to gain adequate and effective representation with other departments.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The NSWCFCA recommends that:

1. The NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994 is reviewed to adequately define anglers' access rights to the resource. This access should encompass marine and freshwater environments.
  2. The NSW Government accepts its responsibility to support the recreational fishing industry and that the Government then provides adequate funding to the Department to ensure all current services are maintained, but are all paid for from Government revenues and not the Recreational Fishing Fee.
  3. The Recreational Fishing Fee is maintained.
  4. The current process of consultation over bag and size limits is reviewed to see what improvements can be made to the process.
  5. Users of Sanctuary Zones in Marine Parks pay an access fee.
  6. Freshwater Sanctuary Zones should not be implemented on NSW rivers or lakes. Management of these waterways and their fish should be through the NSW Fisheries Management Act.
  7. DECCW Plans of Management pay due recognition to recreational angling.
  8. The Government appoint a Director of Fisheries who reports directly to the Minister.
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**(b) The effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities.**

The NSWCFCA is not pleased with the current trusts and advisory committees. While the NSWCFCA notes that individual members on these trusts do their best, they do not necessarily represent the true picture of angling in NSW. Neither do they necessarily speak on behalf of anglers in the State.

The NSWCFCA understands that ACoRF is designed to be an advisory committee to the Minister; however those currently advising the Minister have no allegiance to other anglers because they represent as individuals. The NSWCFCA believes that ACoRF would be improved substantially if it also consisted of representatives from significant fishing organisations. The Minister would then be receiving advice from individuals and clubs and this would improve the decision making process.

The NSWCFCA is aware that an internal Departmental review was conducted of the ACoRF systems and recommended that the chairperson of these committees should be independent and appointed by the membership of the respective committees not the Minister. Our advice is that this review and its report have been "buried" by the Government. The NSWCFCA is concerned that reform of the system of ACoRF and its Committees will not take place while the current Government maintains its hostile attitude towards anglers.

The NSWCFCA is concerned that ACoRF and its subsidiary trusts meet in secrecy. This comes about by the Committees not being allowed to publish minutes of meetings until they are approved by the Minister. It is common for minutes to sit on the Ministers desk for up to six months before approval. Membership appointment decisions often occur late and in some cases have not been communicated to those selected. This hardly contributes to the transparency of the decision making process.

The NSWCFCA also notes that published minutes of such meetings are difficult to find in the NSW Fisheries web-site.

Recent changes to the Fisheries Management Act have allowed Trust Expenditure Funds to be used for a wider range of activities. However the Trust is still severely restricted in allowing these funds to be used for legal advice or court action on recreational fishing matters. The NSWCFCA believes that this is because it could see the possibility of the Trust Funds being used to challenge other Government Departments. Anglers would welcome the opportunity for their funds to be used in worthwhile legal cases to protect the fishery. One case as an example is the NSW Government decision to allow a paper mill in Albury discharge untreated effluent into the Murray River. As it currently stands the anglers of the region would like to take legal advice and possibly instigated legal action on this matter but are prevented from doing so by the way the Trust funds are administered. For this to be successful ACoRF would need to be able to take this decision at arms-length from the Minister.

Funds from the Recreational Fishing Fee are expended each year. The NSWCFCA would like to see a percentage of these funds banked to provide for future contingencies. While the NSWCFCA is not convinced that ACoRF should be replaced with a Statutory Authority, this should be explored. Perhaps as the best compromise the NSWCFCA would support the terms



of reference of ACoRF being expanded to mirror, as closely as possible, those of a statutory authority.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The NSWCFR recommends that:

1. ACoRF and the Salt and Freshwater Committees include representatives from substantial fishing organisations. The NSWCFR would suggest that the NSW Recreational Fishing Alliance, the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers, the Australian National Sportfishing Association and the Fishing Clubs Association be considered for inclusion.
2. The minutes from ACoRF and subsidiary committees are published in a timely manner. While this may require the Minister to attend to this the NSWCFR believes that 10 working days is more than adequate. Should the Minister be unable to attend to his duties then the NSWCFR recommends that the task of approving the minutes be delegated.
3. The rules of the various ACoRF Committees are amended to allow anglers to use funds for the purpose of taking legal action to defend the entire fishery.
4. The roles and functions of ACoRF and its Committees are expanded to at least mirror those of a statutory authority.
5. The NSW Fisheries web-site is revised to make it simple to access minutes of meetings.

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

The value of recreational fishing to the economy of NSW is unknown, but we do know that in the year 2000 trout fishing was worth \$70 million to the economy of the Snowy Mountains Region (*An Economic Survey of the Snowy Mountains Recreational Trout Fishery*, a report to the Recreational Trust fund, NSW Fisheries, Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd, 2001). Apart from a few limited surveys such as the afore-mentioned and all commissioned by angling organisations, there has been no attempt by the Government to establish the worth of the industry. If Government was to work with anglers and the industry to establish the worth of the industry better decisions will be made that reflect that value. Recreational fishing value will be able to be contrasted against other major industries in an attempt to find the right balance in terms of legislation and government involvement.

## RECOMMENDATION

The NSWCFR recommends that:

1. The NSW Government partner anglers and industry in identifying the economic value of recreational fishing to the NSW economy.
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**(d) The gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens.**

Many gaps exist in NSW recreational fishery programs. Two that need to be highlighted here are the review of the Fishery Management Strategy for Recreational Fishing and the use of the Precautionary Principle as the primary management tool.

The Fishery Management Strategy for Recreational Fishing (FMS) underpins the Fishery Management Act 1994 by setting out the processes and procedures required to adhere to the recreational aspects of the Act. This FMS is overdue for review, but the NSW Fisheries Department seems hesitant to conduct that review. It is important for the review to take place as many unintended consequences have stemmed from the implementation of the FMS that have restricted access, stocking of native fish and salmonids and environmental work. An example is that of Dunn's Swamp. Dunn's Swamp is a man made reservoir built in the 1950's to supply water to the Kandos Cement works at Kandos NSW. This reservoir has been stocked with Golden Perch for nearly 40 years. In 2009 the NSWCFCA was advised that Dunn's Swamp could no longer be stocked with Golden Perch as the reservoir is located in a wilderness area. Under the FMS stocking can only take place in a wilderness area if it is the stocking of fish for conservation purposes. At present the Golden Perch is not listed as a conservation species. It is a silly situation to have a well attended camping and fishing site denied stocking of the natural native fish into a man-made reservoir due to some words on a paper.

Over the last 15 years conservationists and Governments have used the Precautionary Principle (PP) to limit activities that may have an impact on the environment. The PP is well understood by anglers. However, we have seen that the PP is always accompanied with a promise to conduct research to establish the truth of the matter. In reality this research rarely occurs. When anglers ask the question "what has the research revealed in relation to a PP issue?" we are often told that the research has not been conducted. This situation only serves to discredit scientists who may mean well but then do not, or are unable to, follow up with the promised research.

However, on the rare occasion that research is conducted we do not see a repeal of the PP if the evidence indicates that the hypothesis was not correct. As an example, freshwater anglers were barred from stocking trout in streams that had been stocked for over 100 years where certain frog species exist. Under the PP it was hypothesised that trout were responsible for the decline in frog numbers. Two subsequent scientific investigations commissioned by NSW Fisheries have indicated that trout have little to no impact on frog species but the PP is still in force and trout cannot be stocked. This attitude places an unfair economic impact on the surrounding towns that have, for years, relied on trout fishing tourism as a substantial part of their economic base and diminishes the respect anglers have for the process. The NSWCFCA believes that in many instances the PP is being used as a defacto management tool, thereby alleviating the necessity to conduct the research or to change personal bias.

The NSWCFCA believes that the use of the PP should be limited so that promised research can be conducted. The NSWCFCA also believes that all PP issues should be accompanied by a sunset clause. This sunset clause should force advocates of the PP to justify, to a public

committee, why the PP should continue. The NSWCFCA takes this stance in the interests of rigorous science as we believe that the aquatic sciences are being debased by the misuse of the PP.

The history of Recreational Fishing Havens (RFH) is an interesting one. Anglers noted that if commercial fishing could be removed from the limited waters of an estuary, then the biodiversity would increase and recreational fishing would improve. This has largely proven to be correct. However angler's instincts were not shared by the Government. Instead of adopting angler recommendations that commercial fishing should cease in estuaries, the Government stated that the only way commercial fishers could be removed from estuaries would be for anglers to buy them out. Anglers accepted the challenge by borrowing \$20 million against future revenue from the fishing fee to buy out commercial fishers from 30 locations. As a result, anglers were able to establish a number of RFH's along the coast. Recreational anglers did not discriminate who could use the RFH's and welcomed all interests. RFH's have now established a thriving biomass with access for all. Anglers are still paying back this buy-out money.

Now contrast that to the establishment of Marine Parks 10 years later. At the behest of a few Greens the Government funded a massive buy-out of commercial fishers and restricted angling access to a substantial proportion of the resource. The green lobby (nowhere near as large as the Recreational Fishing Sector) were able, through political convenience, to cater for their own interests at public expense. Anglers are now expected to maintain areas they have no access to through general taxation revenues. As mentioned earlier the NSWCFCA considers it to be wholly appropriate that users of Sanctuary Zones contribute to the running costs of those Zones, just as anglers contribute to RFH's and the fishery as a whole through their access fee.

The NSWCFCA contends that more RFH's should be established along the NSW coast, but unlike the conservationist fundamentalists we believe that all users should be catered for. An immediate area of concern is the NSW coast from the southern end of the Bateman's Bay Marine Park to the NSW / Victoria border. This area is not a Marine Park at present and RFH's should be established as a matter of priority, but unlike previous RFH's the NSWCFCA believes that it should be at government expense, unless a Sanctuary Zone access fee is introduced.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The NSWCFCA recommends that:

1. A public review of the FMS is undertaken as a matter of priority. This review could be facilitated by NSW Fisheries but must involve substantial angler consultation.
  2. The use of the Precautionary Principle as a defacto management tool be reviewed and whenever the PP is used it should be accompanied by a sunset clause.
  3. More RFH's should be established, especially in areas still affected by commercial fishing or not yet covered by Marine Parks.
  4. The residual of the loan taken out by Recreational Anglers to create RFH's be waived by the Government with no subsequent effect on those RFH's.
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**(e) Ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.**

Without a doubt the main theme of proponents of Marine Parks is that “the absence of anglers will fix the marine problem” disregards the truth of the matter. The NSWCFCA notes that precious little is being done on the issue of pollution runoff, excessive extraction of water, legal and illegal dumping of polluted water by industry, urban development, removal of bank-side vegetation and in-stream snags, effluent outfalls, desalination plants, dredging etc. Without a concerted effort to keep our aquatic environment clean with habitat rehabilitation, nothing else we do will matter. In a number of limited examples we have seen how the removal of commercial fishing and the cleaning up of pollution has led to a revived fishery. Sydney harbour is a prime example of a place now getting cleaner, no commercial fishing, an increase in the biodiversity and ample recreational fishing that is sustainable.

One issue that the NSW Government could take the lead on is the concept of a State standard for effluent outfall. The NSWCFCA believes that the NSW Government should mandate a minimum standard for industrial waste water if it is to be released into a NSW waterway. As a starting point the NSWCFCA contends that the standard should be “at least as clean as when it was extracted”. Industry now has the capability to clean waste water to a very high standard – we note the current debate about recycling sewerage effluent as drinking water. Surely this concept can be placed on industry. If this initiative was adopted and enforced we would see a dramatic increase in the quality of all our waterways. Such a far sighted initiative would make NSW the leader in world water quality and our aquatic species would thank us for generations.

Over the last few years NSW Fisheries have run a program titled “Bringing Back the Fish”. This program was aimed at opening up waterways by the removal or remediation of 94 antiquated barriers to fish passage. The project has either removed barriers totally or has replaced them with fish passage friendly barriers. The project resulted in over 1,200 kilometres of additional waterway being opened up to migratory coastal fish in NSW. Also 2,000 hectares of core riverine habitat have been remediated. The Recreational Fishing Fee has made substantial contributions to this work, but now the NSW Government has decided to cease funding the program and anglers cannot go it alone. Anglers get no support for these programs from the so called conservationists.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The NSWCFCA recommends that:

1. The NSW Government set a minimum standard for effluent water released into NSW Waterways.
2. The NSW Government make a commitment to continue the “Bringing Back the Fish” Program in conjunction with NSW Anglers. The angler contribution for this money could come from the waiver of the residual of the loan to establish RFH’s.

**Conclusion**

We trust that our comments prove insightful and useful to the inquiry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information.

Yours sincerely

Steve Samuels  
President  
NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers  
18 March 2010