

Enhancing Recreational Fishing in NSW

A five-year action plan to make recreational fishing in NSW even better

2026–2031



Foreword



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Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional NSW and Minister for Western NSW

The equivalent of one in every eight NSW residents fishes recreationally and knows first-hand that our State has some of the best fishing locations of anywhere in the country.

Over the past two decades, the NSW Government, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Fisheries, the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW), recreational fishers and other stakeholders have worked together on a wide range of initiatives to create a thriving recreational fishing industry that contributes billions to the NSW economy each year; maintains more than 14,000 jobs, and supports hundreds of tackle, charter and tourism businesses.

To ensure the benefits of recreational fishing continue to flow to our coastal and inland communities, the Department has worked with RFNSW to develop a plan to make fishing even better, both now and into the future.

The 2026 – 2031 Enhancing Recreational Fishing Action Plan recognises our strong fundamental recreational fishing programs and identifies **a range of additional initiatives** to ensure our recreational fishing sector continues to thrive and supports regional businesses and communities.

No matter your age, gender, culture or ability, fishing is a pastime that everyone can enjoy. Its diversity is what makes fishing so unique and attractive to so many people in our community. Under the Plan, more targeted Try Fishing sessions, Fishing Workshops and ‘Fish for Life’ initiatives will be run to increase participation in fishing, particularly for women and people with disabilities.

The Plan aims to boost construction of accessible fishing platforms, as well as upgrading fish cleaning tables and associated shelters and lighting.

Another key element of the five-year action plan includes growing our hatchery capacity and fish production to boost fish stocking, with a target to stock 30 million fish over the five years. This will not only deliver great fishing experiences, but it will help our aquatic resources to thrive.

The Recreational Fishing Action Plan is a clear path forward for recreational fishing in NSW including initiatives and opportunities for everyone to benefit from. Combined with the array of world-class programs implemented over the past decades, this five-year roadmap will ensure the long-term viability of the NSW recreational fishing sector in providing great fishing for the one million people who enjoy the sport each year.

I look forward to working with the recreational fishing community to bring this plan to life and help grow this important and enjoyable pastime.



Delivering Quality Recreational Fishing into the future

A five-year Action Plan to make recreational fishing in NSW even better

Recreational fishing in NSW is pretty good with many current initiatives on the go. But why stop there? **Let's make it even better!**

Sure, there are some challenges, but there is so much that we can all do to:

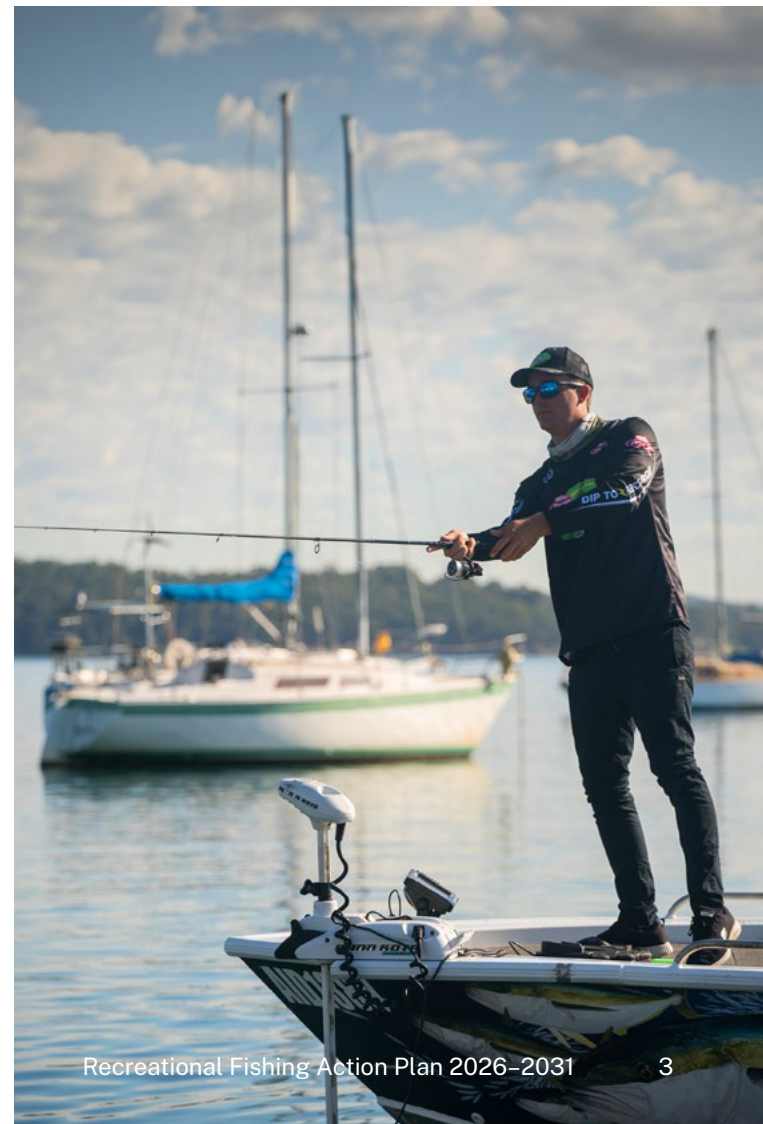
- Increase participation to get more people into fishing
- Create more fishing locations
- Improve access to waterways, especially in inland regions
- Improve the health and resilience of our fish stocks and key habitat
- Have more accurate, up-to-date information on recreational fishing to support sound decisions

Taking it to the next level!

This Plan has been developed by the NSW Government and the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council to build on our strong fundamental recreational fishing programs with a **range of additional initiatives** to make fishing even better in NSW!

Let's focus to keep the momentum going on our many existing programs, and build on them over the next 5 years to enrich our fishing experiences further and enhance our recreational fishing sector that thrives and supports regional businesses and communities.

The Plan highlights all the good things that recreational fishers are already doing to improve our fisheries and aims to take fishing forward in NSW with a wide range of additional activities to provide quality recreational fishing into the future.





What are we doing right now?

Many successful programs are already underway to provide great recreational fishing opportunities which are being run by DPIRD Fisheries and external partners. These programs are funded by the NSW Government and the Recreational Fishing Trusts.

Here is a snapshot of what's happening now:

Fishcare volunteer program – engages with keen grassroots fishers across NSW to help promote responsible and sustainable fishing.

Fishing workshops – provide hands-on learning to teach fishers skills, safety, and sustainable fishing practices.

Recreational fishing infrastructure – boosting fishing facilities to support and improve fishing experiences.

Schools education program – teaching students in NSW primary and high schools core fishing skills and promoting care for our waterways to encourage lifelong participation and appreciation.

Increasing fishing access – identifying, protecting and enhancing fishing access.

Fish for Life - Building a Healthy Fishing Future – initiatives to promote sustainable, inclusive, and responsible recreational fishing to grow participation, diversity, and community support in NSW.

Fish stocking – stocking priority fish species to improve recreational fishing experiences in lakes, dams, estuaries and rivers across NSW.

FADs (Fish Aggregating Devices) – creating offshore fishing hotspots each spring and summer.

Artificial reefs – installing artificial reefs to create productive new fishing locations.

Fish habitat restoration – on-ground actions to improve key fish habitat and recreational fishing.

Essential fisheries research – providing crucial scientific information to understand current fish stocks, including citizen science programs (Game Fish Tagging and Research Angler Program).

Fisheries Officers – enforcing fishing rules, protecting fish stocks, and promoting responsible fishing.

Keep reading to check out the plan to build on this great work with an exciting array of new initiatives!



What you told us

The 2024 Recreational Fishing Licence Holder Survey showed strong support for these programs, and they will continue to be delivered into the future under this plan.

Building a healthy fishing future in NSW

Building on decades of great work here in NSW, we are forging ahead to create even more sustainable fishing opportunities, ensuring everyone can *'Fish for Life.'*



Here's what we will deliver

There are lots of additional things we're planning to do, but the key new initiatives we aim to deliver under this Action Plan are:

10% more
women, kids and
families in fishing
**Fishing For
Everyone**



More Fish Stocked

Outcome:

Boost hatchery capacity and fish production supporting healthier fisheries and better fishing experiences

30 million
fish over
5 years



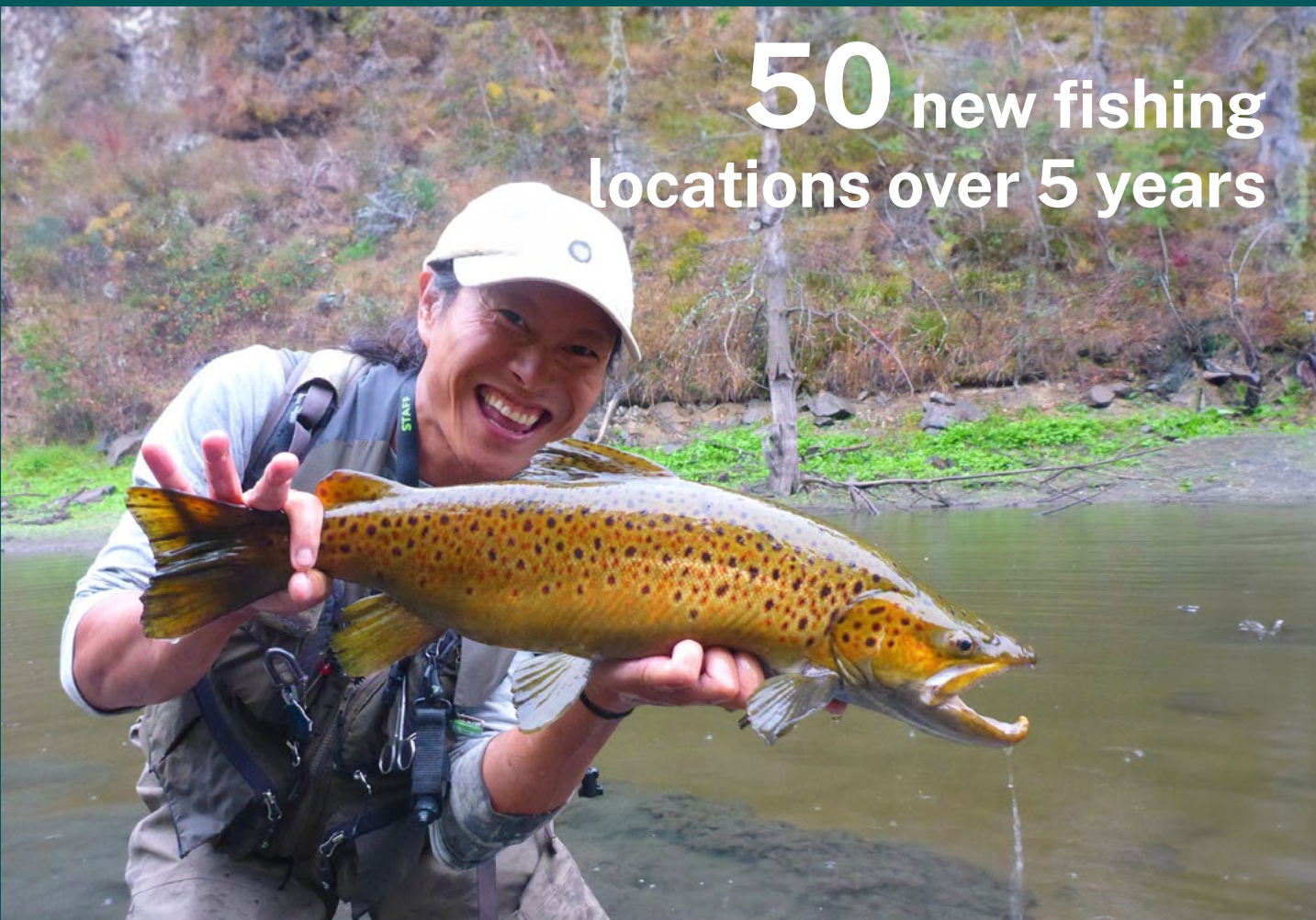
Fish For Everyone

Outcome:

Get more people fishing – especially women, kids and people with disabilities, promote the health benefits of the activity and being outdoors, and help build communities.



50 new fishing locations over 5 years



More places to fish

Outcome:

Creating more places to enjoy quality fishing will provide increased socio-economic benefits, throughout metropolitan and regional areas.



Shaping stewards of our waterways

Outcome:

More responsible fishing initiatives, including best-practice fish handling, reducing fishing litter and waste, and minimising wildlife interactions.



Building better fisheries

Outcome:

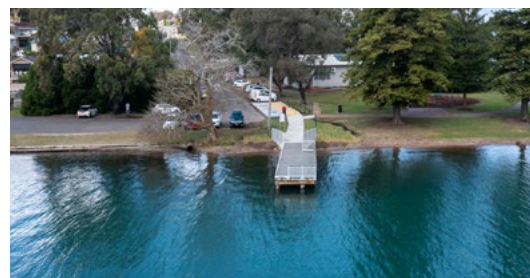
Better management to improve the performance of our fisheries and ensure long-term abundance of healthy fish stocks.

The following tables identify a wide range of new and additional activities proposed under this Plan to build on our many existing programs already underway to ensure quality recreational fishing into the future.

Fishing for everyone

Encouraging greater participation, particularly among women and people with disabilities.

Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Make fishing more inclusive by expanding targeted programs, improving accessibility and offering multi-language support for diverse communities	<p>More fishing workshops and education initiatives using partnerships and new technology to boost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation (especially with women, families, people with disabilities) Safe and responsible fishing practices 	Short	<p>Lead DPIRD Fisheries</p> <p>Partners RFNSW, Recreational Fishing groups, Multicultural NSW</p>	<p>Recreational fishing is recognised as a healthy, enjoyable activity for all.</p> <p>Fosters a supportive environment for female fishers.</p>
	Expand the 'NSW Women in Recreational Fishing' community group to provide a welcoming a space for new and existing female fishers to share tips, photos and advice, while building networks and encouraging more women to go fishing across the state.	Short	<p>Lead DPIRD Fisheries</p> <p>Partners fishing ambassadors</p>	<p>Welcoming entry pathway for new fishers.</p> <p>Improved fishing access and facilities at key locations to provide more fishing opportunities for everyone</p>
	Develop and promote more recreational fishing facilities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible fishing platforms Disabled/limited ability access facilities Fishing cleaning tables, shelters and lighting Recreational fishing inland boat and kayak ramp upgrades. 	Medium	<p>Lead DPIRD Fisheries local Councils</p> <p>Partners RFNSW, recreational fishing groups community organisations</p>	<p>Increases recreational fishing participation rates.</p> <p>Improved social licence of recreational fishing.</p>
	Increase communication and education for culturally diverse communities with multi-language support.	Medium	<p>Lead DPIRD Fisheries</p> <p>Partners RFNSW, Aboriginal community groups</p>	



Promoting benefits of recreational fishing

Highlighting the physical, mental, and social benefits of recreational fishing through targeted programs and outreach initiatives.

Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Promote the benefits of recreational fishing to the community through more try-fishing and open days.	Make 'Gone Fishing Day' a bigger annual celebration of fishing, including greater promotion and establishing more partnerships with external organisations.	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Local partners, support organisations, NDIS service providers	The recreational fishing sector is recognised as playing a key role in helping deliver health benefits to vulnerable members of our community. Improved social licence of recreational fishing. Improved recreational fishing participation rates. Greater awareness of recreational fishing health benefits through events and promotional campaigns.
	Host hatchery open days , showcasing fish stocking programs, raise awareness of sustainable fishing practices, and promote the benefits of recreational fishing while supporting conservation efforts.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Support organisations	
	Promote the benefits of recreational fishing through initiatives like 'Take a Mate Fishing', linking them with events such as RUOK? Day, World Fisheries Day, International Women in Fishing Day, and International Day of Persons with Disabilities.	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW	
Promote recreational fishing as a therapeutic activity and expand support programs for at-risk groups.	Run targeted campaigns promoting the health benefits and enjoyment of fishing, while highlighting its therapeutic value and opportunities for at-risk groups like veterans, first responders, and youth.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Local partners, Support organisations, NDIS service providers	
	Boost support programs using fishing as a therapeutic activity and expand opportunities for the Fishcare Volunteer Program to assist these organisations.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Support organisations, NDIS service providers	



More places to fish

Ensuring sustainable and responsible access to both inland and coastal waterways, while creating new fishing opportunities.

Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Create and promote recreational fishing locations. Encourage responsible fishing access.	Create and promote new urban (including in Greater Sydney) and regional fisheries in waterways with little existing fishing opportunity e.g. in waterbodies close to population centers.	Med	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Local councils and waterway managers, recreational fishing groups	Creation of more fishing locations providing enhanced recreational fishing access. DPIRD is recognised as an organisation which advocates for responsible recreational fishing access. Better promotion of fishing access. Increased regional economic benefits flowing from recreational fishing associated expenditure. Improved availability of up-to-date fishing information, enhancing fishing experiences.
	Explore opportunities to create new fishing locations including artificial reefs in estuaries and fish aggregating devices .	Long	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Crown Lands, local councils	
	Develop a network of ' Regional Fishing Trails ' that highlight key recreational fishing spots in NSW and include One day and multi-day trails, Coastal and inland options, All abilities options.	Med - long	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Tourism organisations, local council	
	Make it easier for fishers to know where they can fish by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the Angler Access website to improve usability and expand to include coastal locations. Expanding the FishSmart app to include features like local fishing closures and fishing platforms. Creating additional regional 'Go Fishing' guides. 	Med - long	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Local council	
	Undertake a campaign to promote the responsible use of all fishing sites by encouraging all fishers to abide by the DPIRD Fisheries Angling Access Code of Conduct .	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Fishing organisations and clubs, landowners/ land managers	

Boosting our fish stocks

Aquatic resources go beyond sustainability, thriving through investments that boost fish abundance and size while enhancing fishing experiences.

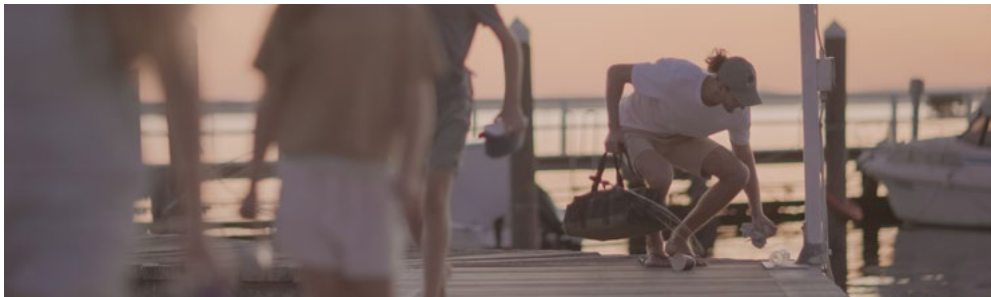
Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Drive new projects to boost fish stocks, and provide more fishing opportunities.	Stock 30 million fish over five years with improved hatchery infrastructure and production, focusing on marine sportfish (Mulloway, Dusky Flathead), iconic natives (Murray Cod), and enhanced trout fishing opportunities	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Private and public hatchery operators, recreational fishing groups	Improved fish stock health through enhanced stocking and hatchery techniques. Better fishing experiences with more fish and higher catch rates. Stronger ecosystem health through informed stocking practices. Increased participation and opportunities in recreational fishing. Higher satisfaction among recreational fishers.
	Ensuring ongoing scientific monitoring and use world's best practices in stocking to maximise effectiveness, support habitat needs, maintain high genetic diversity and enhance ecosystem benefits.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Conservation groups, recreational fishing groups, local Councils, others including landowners/land managers	
	Develop and implement action plans for iconic native species such as Murray Cod, Golden Perch and Australian Bass, while reviewing and updating the NSW Trout Strategy.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Conservation groups, recreational fishing groups, local Councils, others including landowners/land managers	



Shaping stewards of our waterways

Promote sustainable fishing through responsible practices, reducing wildlife impacts, and better waste management while empowering fishers as stewards for healthy fisheries and aquatic environments

Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Promote sustainable fishing by encouraging responsible practices through education, gear giveaways and partnerships.	Boost promotion of responsible fishing practices, including proper fish handling and reducing wildlife interactions . Support fishers in transitioning to more sustainable fishing gear , including tackle that increases released fish survival and more eco-friendly crab gear, through retailer partnerships, gear swaps, and giveaways.	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Individual fishers, recreational fishing groups	Increased adoption of responsible fishing practices, sustainable gear, and waste management efforts. Enhanced community engagement in fisheries management and funding priorities.
	Launch initiatives to tackle litter with fisher clean-ups and awareness campaigns . Partner with councils to provide advisory, install waste bins and infrastructure, reducing fishing-related litter and environmental impact.	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Individual fishers, recreational fishing groups	Stronger partnerships with grassroots fishers, leading to innovative ideas and new project initiatives. Empowered recreational fishers in co-management, fostering greater participation and management of projects.
Create more opportunities for grassroots fishers to engage in fisheries management, promoting co-management, stewardship, and stronger recreational fishing	Introduce new Rec Fisher Forums in the regions to provide opportunities for to engage directly with fishers to present science and program achievements, discuss local issues, and share feedback.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Individual fishers, recreational fishing groups	Greater satisfaction in recreational fishing experiences reported. Improved social licence of recreational fishing.
	Develop a ' Recreational Fishing Guardians ' program to strengthen fisher involvement in stewardship and support sustainable fishing through social media campaigns featuring fishing personalities, plus online and on-ground activities and incentives.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Individual fishers, recreational fishing groups Fishcare volunteers	



	<p>Invest in building co-management capacity within the recreational fishing community to drive greater project participation and management by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying common-interest partners, including commercial fishing, aquaculture and Aboriginal cultural fishing. • Promoting partnership opportunities and trialing collaborative projects. • Encouraging involvement by all fishers. 	Short	<p>Lead RFNSW, DPIRD Fisheries</p> <p>Partners Individual fishers, Recreational fishing groups, common interest partners</p>	
	<p>Engage the recreational fishing community to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather feedback on Recreational Fishing Trust Funding areas • Identify innovative ideas and priorities for fishing opportunities • connect with potential partners for large-scale initiatives <p>Through targeted outreach, online surveys, community feedback sessions, and existing programs (e.g. Fishcare).</p>	Short	<p>Lead DPIRD Fisheries</p> <p>Partners Local partners, community</p>	



Building better fisheries together

Resource sharing and fisheries management decisions recognise the economic and social values of recreational fishing, driven by the best available science.

Opportunity	Action	Time-frame	Who	Outcomes
Support initiatives that enhance fisheries management and outcomes for fish species and recreational fisheries, while engaging fishers in the process	Expand citizen science programs like the Research Angler Program and Game Fish Tagging Program to fill data gaps on the biology and movement of key recreational fish species and use this data to support resource management and involve fishers in decision-making.	Short	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners External organisation/ contractor	Greater recognition of economic benefits of recreational fishing. Increased awareness of social benefits of recreational fishing. Enhanced social licence of recreational fishing activities. Active engagement by the recreational fishing community in data collection and environmental planning and resource sharing. Even better incorporation of recreational fishing values in decision making.
	Support and actively engage in innovative resource management and decision-making strategies, like harvest strategies, ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of all values and benefits of recreational fishing. • Maximise social, economic and environmental benefits for the community. • Opportunities for fishers to participate. 	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners External organisation/ contractor	
Ensure an accessible information base on recreational fishing to support government and the community needs, aiding informed decision making.	Regularly quantify, report on, and promote recreational fishing participation , catch, and effort information. Explore new data collection methods, like digital reporting, to enhance catch data precision and inform decision-making.	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries, RFNSW Partners Recreational fishing groups	
	Report on and promote the economic impact of expenditure on recreational and charter fishing, along with the social values and health benefits .	Medium	Lead DPIRD Fisheries Partners Recreational fishers	



Core programs which continue to benefit recreational fishing

In addition to the recreational fishing programs underway, the existing programs delivered by DPIRD and stakeholders below will continue to benefit all fisheries resources and aquatic user groups, including recreational fishers.

Habitat management

Protecting and rehabilitating aquatic habitats, implementing fishways, managing cold water pollution, fish screening implementation and fish passage remediation supports healthy, diverse fish populations.

Fisheries compliance

Ensuring compliance with regulations and reducing illegal fishing and black marketing.

Fisheries Management

Harvest strategies and other plans which include monitoring needs, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making frameworks for management of fish stocks and habitat; Maintain up to date bag and possession limits for key species.

Marine protected areas

Managed to conserve biodiversity and support science, recreation and education.

Aquatic biosecurity

Protecting the community and the environment from aquatic pests and diseases.

Threatened species

Conserving populations and ecological communities of fish and marine vegetation.

Fisheries research

Research on catch and effort, and aquatic animals, plants, habitats and ecosystems to ensure informed decision-making.

Our partners for this Plan

Many industry and community groups are essential delivery partners to this Plan



Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council
Committee of expert regional fishers providing advice to the Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW and Western NSW.

Fishing tackle industry
The Australian Fishing Trade Association includes tackle companies and hundreds of local stores that provide fishing information, including fishing rules.

Fishing clubs
Hundreds of clubs provide networks for social fishing activities.

Recreational fishing organisations
Enable partnership opportunities on community projects and stewardship for the recreational fishing sector.



Charter boat operators & guides
Provide professional and expert fishing charter and guiding services.





Next Steps

How will we know if we are delivering the Plan.

The action plan will be supported by regular progress reports and ongoing consultation with the advisory council and key stakeholders.

How can I stay up to date?



@NSW Fisheries



@NSW_Fisheries



NSW Recreational Fishing e-newsletter - 'Newscast'



@NSW Women in Recreational Fishing' community group



www.dpird.nsw.gov.au/fishing





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