

Workshop: Fish habitat management - a shared responsibility

Wednesday, 19th September
2.20pm – 2.50pm
Auditorium, Civic Centre

Facilitator: Rebecca Batton, Marine Fish Habitat Unit, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Background

Increasing pressures on fish habitats and dependent fish stocks:

- Climate change and associated impacts of 'poleward' migration with temperature increases (e.g. occurrence of Hervey Bay biting midge in Brisbane River catchment), 'landward' migration with sea level rise (e.g. saltmarsh under threat through displacement by mangroves), drought (e.g. dams, decreased flows and connectivity disruption estuarine and inshore ecosystems)
- Population increases - continuing demand for marine facilities and coastal development; extra pressures on fisheries resources

Fisheries legislation has provided for protection and management of fish habitats since 1914 - the *Fish and Oyster Act 1914*

Evolved to encompass current fish habitat management role of DPI&F:

- The protection and management of marine plants;
- The declaration and management of FHA network;
- The restoration of disturbed fish habitat;
- The management of waterway barriers and fish passage.

Discussion

How will future management of fish habitats be best delivered?

Support is needed from other groups to share the responsibility with DPI&F:

- Local Governments have involvement through planning schemes, strategic regional planning instruments
- Other government agencies have involvement - coastal management and Marine Parks (EPA), use of State resources (NRW), GBRMPA, State Planning Policies
- Commercial, recreational and indigenous fishery sectors support - 'no habitats = no fish'
- Community involvement
- Developers - ESD - meeting post-development demands of residents

How do we achieve better integration of fish habitat management into planning instruments and other initiatives?

What other opportunities exist to foster a shared approach to fish habitat management?

Workshop Title	Fish Habitat Management – a shared responsibility	
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What was discussed
(please list the main dot points such as identified issues or threats)

Questions

How will future management of fish habitats be best delivered?

What other opportunities exist to foster a shared approach to fish habitat?

Comments

Current management of fish habitats by DPI&F is good – creates problems for developers – this is a good thing
A lot of the problems are ‘inherited’ from poor decisions in the past – e.g. canelands in coastal areas impacting fish habitats.
DPI&F has been very good with stakeholder interacting, particularly with recreational fishing groups

DPI&F has ongoing working relationships with stakeholders and industry to address cane growing and fish and fish habitat impacts.

Fisheries Act is good at guiding fish habitat management, but potential for failure due to poor coordination of government policies. Could the Fisheries Act objectives be recognised in Planning Schemes (eg poor water quality management causing downstream impacts on fish and fish habitats).

Local governments may need to better incorporate the objectives of the Fisheries Act in planning schemes.

Better education of local government officers may help achieve better fish habitat outcomes

IPA assessment process sometimes results in ignoring DPI&F advice.

How many permits does DPI&F refuse? This may be an indicator of attrition rate.

The number of refusals may not indicate ‘success’ of legislation – rather success of pre-lodgement discussions and negotiations.

Once refused, most applicants won’t keep pushing applications, but occasionally you get a scenario akin to Oyster Point, Port Hinchinbrook.

DPI&F refusals may start at 10%, but may be negotiated to end up as an approval, normally resulting in only 2.5% refusal overall

Jurisdictional overlaps exist between governments – has this been solved?

EPA works closely with DPI&F on some issues and recognising each others legislation – this helps support each other’s decision (e.g. marine parks and FHAs are over the same areas). Cooperative partnerships are the way to go.

There was a historical issue with ponded pastures, where two levels of DPI&F disagreed on the issue and confused council (grazing needs versus fisheries needs). DPI&F seeking to learn from mistakes and break down the silos.

Recognise that overlap between jurisdictions will never be overcome and that different statutory requirements still need to be accommodated.

Water quality is used to improve fisheries in NSW. Does Qld use this in assessments. (No, this is outside DPI&F jurisdiction)

You never get beyond the overlaps of government due to the differing interests of each agency. Can we capitalise on this?

DPI&F is also concerned with the overlap with jurisdiction but this in many ways works in each department’s favour.

An example of having regard to each agency’s jurisdiction is that NRW’s QASSIT has an MOU with EPA and DPI&F, which streamlines the provision of feedback on acid sulfate soil issues.

Agree that there is good delivery of the Fisheries Act, but need to recognise that the Fisheries Act can not cover ‘ecological values’ as addressed by other legislation.

Does DPI&F work with other bodies and community groups outside of the standard statutory role, to help bolster the outcomes of dealing with this issue?

Yes, an example is the Urban Mangrove Management Strategies where DPI&F is working proactively with Local Governments.

In the Wide Bay Burnett, Oceanwatch actively engages community groups and government agencies – a suggestion for more active DPI&F involvement as a partner.

Is DPI&F addressing climate change and affects on saltmarsh etc? DPI&F currently working on a policy, and is on the ‘agenda’.

Suggested follow-up actions	Action	Who will undertake this action?
1.	<p>Recognise objectives of the Fisheries Act in planning.</p> <p>Uptake of DPI&F advice and concurrence conditions during assessment process.</p>	DPI&F - Better education of local government officers may help achieve better fish habitat outcomes.
2.	DPI&F to address climate change and affects on saltmarsh etc	DPI&F - is currently working on a policy, and climate change is on the 'agenda'.
3.	DPI&F to continue work with other bodies and community groups for fish habitats	DPI&F - to continue to forge partnerships for fish habitat management outcomes.