

Draft Enhancing Recreational Fishing in NSW Action Plan 2026-31

Ref. 020-26 JM

Draft Plan submission form

No.	Question	Draft response
1	How best would you describe your interest(s) in the draft Recreational Fishing Action Plan? Required	(Select the option that most applies to you) <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational fisher <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing clubs and associations <input type="checkbox"/> Charter fishing business <input type="checkbox"/> Tackle retail and manufacturers <input type="checkbox"/> Seafood business (retail / wholesale) <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal fisher or cultural fishing <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial fisher <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
2	Which areas of the draft Plan are most important to you? (Select up to 5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving fishing access and facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Making fishing more inclusive for women and people with disabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhancing communication and education for CALD communities <input type="checkbox"/> Creating more areas where people can enjoy quality fishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strengthening the sustainability and resilience of fish stocks and their habitats <input type="checkbox"/> Boosting fish stocking programs <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing <input type="checkbox"/> Expanding community events and fishing participation programs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting stewardship and responsible fishing practices <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing fishing-related litter and waste <input type="checkbox"/> Improving access to accurate and up-to-date fishing information <input type="checkbox"/> Building capacity of clubs, councils and community groups to support recreational fishing <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

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3	What do you like most about the draft Plan?	<p>The Plan provides a strong framework to increase participation in recreational fishing, improve access, and promote stewardship of waterways. The commitment to making fishing more inclusive is commendable. For example, the targeted Try Fishing sessions, Fishing Workshops and ‘Fish for Life’ initiatives to increase participation in fishing, particularly for women and people with disabilities and improving infrastructure to make fishing more accessible.</p>
4	Is there anything missing from the draft Plan that you would like to see included?	<p>To fully achieve the long-term objectives of the NSW Recreational Fishing Action Plan, there is a great opportunity to strengthen the Plan’s focus on how fish stocks will be rebuilt and sustained as participation increases. While initiatives such as fish stocking and habitat improvements are valuable, the Plan does not clearly articulate the role of spatial protection such as sanctuary zones, in supporting natural stock recovery.</p> <p>International and Australian evidence shows that well-designed sanctuary zones can act as important breeding and replenishment areas, contributing to increased fish abundance and improved fishing outcomes in surrounding areas over time. Evidence presented in <i>Creating a World Class Marine Protected Area System (AMCS, 2023)</i> shows that these zones act as ecological “stepping stones,” facilitating larval dispersal and adult fish movement along the coast. This process leads to increased diversity and higher abundance of target species, such as snapper, with demonstrated spillover benefits to surrounding recreational fishing areas.</p> <p>The persistence of recognised conservation gaps in the Hawkesbury Shelf and Twofold Shelf bioregions, first identified in the 2012 Scientific Audit of Marine Parks, highlights ongoing questions around the long term sustainability of the Action Plan. While the Marine Estate Management Act and the Marine Estate Management Authority have provided an improved governance framework, they have yet to fully deliver the level of spatial protection required to address these gaps. Promoting increased recreational fishing activity without strategic complementary sanctuary protections will place additional pressure on marine biodiversity and key target species, making it more challenging to achieve and ultimately conflicts with the Plan’s long-term objectives.</p> <p>Incorporating a clearer strategy for the establishment and management of these areas would help ensure that increased fishing effort is matched with measures that maintain and enhance fish populations, supporting both ecological sustainability and the long-term quality of recreational fishing experiences.</p> <p>Comments on specific Initiatives and Opportunities and our recommendations are presented below.</p> <p>Create and promote recreational fishing locations. Encourage responsible fishing access.</p> <p>Recommendations: Include a strong focus on youth engagement to promote responsible use of fishing sites, supported by resourcing for environmental compliance.</p>

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		<p>Promote sustainable fishing by encouraging responsible practices through education, gear giveaways and partnerships.</p> <p>Existing measures to reduce fishing tackle litter, such as disposal bins, have shown limited effectiveness to date, particularly in Sydney metropolitan areas. Partnerships with councils need funding support.</p> <p>Recommendations: Include fishing tackle litter reduction initiatives and behaviour-focused education and awareness, with dedicated funding and support fishers transition to more sustainable fishing gear.</p> <p>Building better fisheries together</p> <p>In the Sydney region, there is currently only one Aquatic Reserve that prohibits line and spear fishing. The plan presents an opportunity to work towards a more consistent and robust approach to conservation across the reserves which is not currently addressed in the draft plan. There is also no mention of seagrasses in the plan and their importance to fish habitat and ecosystem health.</p> <p>Recommendations: Revise the plan to include the establishment of Sanctuary Zones within the Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion and re-instate existing Sanctuary Zones to ‘no-take.’ Develop Habitat Protection Plans for those areas outside marine protected areas.</p>
5	Do you have any additional feedback or suggestions to improve the draft Plan?	<p>The SCCG has issued various submissions and letters to NSW Government recently, stressing the urgent need to improve conservation objectives and outcomes in marine protected areas, based on available science. This includes justification for the Hawkesbury Shelf Bioregion Marine Park, advocacy for the review of rules for Aquatic Reserves, increasing the number of ‘no-take’ Sanctuary Zones and restoring existing Sanctuary Zones to ‘no-take’. The SCCG has also disputed the rationale for the creation of a new peak body for recreational fishing in NSW which duplicates the role of the existing Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council. These submissions are available on SCCG’s web-site.</p> <p>As the Plan is intended to guide actions over a five year period, it may benefit from clearer consideration of climate related factors that could influence recreational fishing outcomes during this timeframe. NSW DPIRD has acknowledged climate related risks to marine and aquatic systems in other policy and operational contexts, including through climate adaptation initiatives and marine heatwave response planning.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The SCCG considers that the timing for consultation and finalising the Draft Recreational Fishing Action Plan is at odds with the review of Aquatic Reserve rules and asks that finalisation of the draft Plan be informed by the outcomes of the aquatic reserves review. Explicit recognition of climate-related considerations in the final Action Plan could support more adaptive and risk aware planning.</p>

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6	Was it easy to give your feedback today?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
7	How can we improve your survey experience?	It would have been helpful to provide the option for uploading a submission which would enable a more comprehensive and reasoned submission. The online format and general questions limit the response,