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Implementation of the NEATFish environmental standard for recreational fishing tournaments

B. Diggles and L. Olyott



Australian Government

Fisheries Research and
Development Corporation

DIGSEFISH
SERVICES



neatfish

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Implementation of the NEATFish environmental standard for recreational fishing tournaments

Ben Diggles

DigsFish Services Pty Ltd, 32 Bowsprit Cres Banksia Beach, QLD 4507

Len Olyott

Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Industry Confederation Inc,
trading as Recfish Australia PO Box 187 Grange QLD 4051

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The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation plans, invests in and manages fisheries research and development throughout Australia. It is a statutory authority within the portfolio of the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, jointly funded by the Australian Government and the fishing industry.

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Non technical summary

2008/215: Implementation of the NEATFish environmental standard for recreational fishing tournaments

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ben Diggles
ADDRESS: DigsFish Services
32 Bowsprit Cres
Banksia Beach QLD 4507
Phone: 07 3408 8443
Fax: 07 34088443
e-mail: ben@digsfish.com

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.** To develop an interactive website with dynamic content to manage and promote the NEATFish standard and facilitate its uptake by industry
- 2.** To publicise the standard and website in the fishing media
- 3.** To publicise the standard and website at trade tackle shows and conferences
- 4.** To liaise with industry bodies, tournament organisers, government authorities and environmental groups

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE

Awareness of the Standard for National Environmental Assessment of Tournament fishing (NEATFish) was raised through development of a website, promotional materials, advertising and articles in the fishing media and contact with tournament organisers at various industry events.

The NEATFish standard was adapted to an online questionnaire that is accessible via www.neatfish.com. This made the process of obtaining accreditation easier and faster than the previous paper based system. Several tournaments have undertaken accreditation online since the website went live and as expected this has become the preferred way of undertaking the NEATFish accreditation process.

Awareness of the NEATFish standard and website was raised via extension activities at several tackle and boat shows, and through conference presentations, articles, editorial and advertising in a wide cross section of the recreational fishing media. Targeted consultation was undertaken with several interest groups to determine how the standard can be applied to meet the evolving needs of the industry and the environment.

Recfish Australia with assistance from the FRDC and DigsFish Services originally developed the conceptual outline of a national environmental standard for fishing tournaments through FRDC projects 2005/235 and 2006/057. Feedback from the recreational fishing industry during the development of the Standard for National Environmental Assessment of Tournament fishing (NEATFish) suggested that the major challenge for the concept was to create a better awareness of NEATFish and what it has to offer. The current project was designed to facilitate this process of raising awareness through development of a website, promotional materials, and a profile for NEATFish in the fishing media and at various industry events, including tackle shows and conferences.

Development of the www.neatfish.com website encompassed adaptation of the NEATFish standard into a web based questionnaire that was freely accessible online for tournament organisers and the general public. Making the process of obtaining accreditation as easy and painless as possible was the major focus of this undertaking, with the website achieving this upon its completion in May 2009. Several tournaments have undertaken accreditation online since the website went live and feedback from these organisers and the industry as a whole suggests this has already become the preferred way of undertaking the NEATFish accreditation process.

The NEATFish standard and website were promoted via extension activities at several boating and tackle shows, including the Brisbane Tinnie and Tackle Show, the Sydney International Boat Show, the Australian Fishing Trade Association Trade Tackle show on the Gold Coast, and the National Off-road, Fishing and Outdoors Expo, Melbourne. Articles, editorial and advertising featuring NEATFish have been published in a wide cross section of the media in recreational fishing publications such as Fishing World Magazine, Modern Fishing, Queensland Fishing Monthly, Bluewater Magazine, FISH Magazine as well as newspapers, talkback radio and other media produced for the tackle and boat shows attended. A presentation on NEATFish was also given to an international audience at the 5th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Florida in November 2008.

Targeted consultation has been undertaken with several interest groups including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, several member organisations within the Australian Fishing Trade Association, the Australian Conservation Foundation, and organisers of several high profile fishing tournaments. Successful commercialization of the NEATFish Standard in the future focuses around continuing consultation with the recreational fishing industry, conservation groups and government authorities with respect to how the standard can be applied to best meet the evolving needs of the industry and the environment.

KEYWORDS: Recreational fishing, fishing tournaments, fishing competitions, certification, assessment, environmental management

Acknowledgements

This project was jointly funded between FRDC, DigsFish Services and Recfish Australia. We thank Huxbery Quinn for their persistence during development of the various features of the website, and all of the fishing tournament organisers who offered their tournaments for assessment during the trialling of the NEATFish website.

Background

Recreational fishing competitions are high profile events which are very important to the recreational fishing industry nationwide. However in recent years they have come under increasing scrutiny by governments, environmental groups and the broader community, such that the recreational fishing industry identified an urgent need to be proactive in demonstrating sound environmental management of these events. This led to the development of a Standard for National Environmental Accreditation of Tournament Fishing (NEATFish). The NEATFish concept is based on a 1-5 star rating model which classifies fishing competitions on their environmental, social and economic impacts. This project was undertaken to raise awareness of NEATFish within both the recreational fishing industry and the wider community.

Linkages and consultation

Recfish Australia, with assistance from the FRDC and DigsFish Services, originally developed the conceptual outline of a national environmental standard for fishing tournaments through FRDC projects 2005/235 and 2006/057. The NEATFish Standard was developed by Recfish Australia to apply the objectives of the National Code of Practice for Recreational and Sport Fishing and the outcomes of the National Strategy for Survival of Released Fish into the activities of planning and running fishing tournaments. NEATFish was developed in consultation with representatives of many of the peak recreational fishing bodies (Australian National Sport Fishing Association (ANSA), Sunfish, South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (SARFAC), Game Fishing Association of Australia (GFAA), research organizations (Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)), State fisheries departments (QDPI&F, PIRSA), the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Australian Fishing Trades Association (AFTA), the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), and the organizers of some of Australia's highest profile fishing tournaments.

Need

The need for an environmental standard for recreational fishing competitions was identified to promote the sustainability of recreational fishing and proactively address a number of community concerns which were being directed at recreational fishing competitions in Australia. The sport is under increasing pressure to promote sustainable and ethical fishing practices, and fishing competitions, by virtue of their high profile, should be used to promote such practices wherever possible, including best practice techniques for releasing fish.

To meet this challenge Recfish Australia with assistance from the FRDC and DigsFish Services developed NEATFish, a worlds first environmental standard for fishing tournaments through FRDC projects 2005/235 and 2006/057. Feedback from the recreational fishing industry during the development of NEATFish suggested that the major challenge for the concept was to create a better awareness of what it has to offer clubs and other bodies. The current project was designed to facilitate this process of raising awareness through development of a website, promotional materials, and a profile for NEATFish in the fishing media and at various industry events, including tackle shows and conferences.

Objectives

- 1.** To develop an interactive website with dynamic content to manage and promote the NEATFish standard and better facilitate its uptake by industry
- 2.** To publicise the standard and website in the fishing media
- 3.** To publicise the standard and website at trade tackle shows and conferences
- 4.** To liaise with industry bodies, tournament organisers, government authorities and environmental groups

Methods

Objective 1. To develop an interactive website with dynamic content to manage and promote the NEATFish standard and facilitate its uptake by industry

Method: The main undertaking of the project was development of the www.neatfish.com website and database in liaison with professional website developers. The website was designed to provide a simple, "foolproof" method for organisers to undertake accreditation under the NEATFish standard.

The design process for the website included an initial static design concept to provide an overview of the site look, feel and navigation. The website developers then developed the core interactive website template, followed by adding content to the navigational pages. Further to the website development a large component of the website content is driven by the database Content Management System (CMS). The CMS allows the administrator of the website to add and remove content, without having to return to the website designer. This hands on control has the potential to allow the admin user to develop the website into a marketing tool, with

continual updates, news and information, without further budget allocation. As part of the CMS the designers have a requirement to develop and integrate customised code to allow for the following: - Online questionnaire and points calculation - Feed back response and Admin Action list - Automated server based generation of statements of compliance and production of Compliance Certificates.

Nearing completion of the project, full site testing was completed along with Cross Browser Customisation, prior to being released live to the public. On site training was provided as part of an introduction to the CMS. CMS Software functionality improvements and updates along with Online help and instructional documents will also be available as part of the ongoing hosting service. The website will be linked to a database which will provide a uniform method of collecting information on accredited tournaments. The database is designed to automate the registration process, through the web portal via the self assessment questionnaire and provides an automated rating of the fishing tournament. The functionality allows for the following: Registration of a new fishing tournament as a member - automated compliance and rating of the fishing tournament (with administrators giving final approval)- Production of a compliance certificate - Automated addition to a publicly available calendar of events (listing accredited Fishing Tournaments, their locations and dates) - Management and control of content (News articles and imagery) and marketing and communication through a members eNewsletter (subscribe / Un subscribe) database.

Objective 2. To publicise the standard and website in the fishing media

Method: Magazine articles and advertisements were submitted for various magazines, including Fishing World, Bluewater and Modern Fishing, as well as QFM, SA Angler, WA Angler and NAFA magazines. The articles were submitted in a staggered fashion over several months so that they were not published at the same time. Articles on NEATFish were also generated in various publications and other media produced as part of the tackle and boating shows that were attended.

Objective 3. To publicise the standard and website at trade tackle shows and conferences

Method: The NEATFish standard and website were promoted via extension activities at several boating and tackle shows, including the Brisbane Tinnie and Tackle Show, the Sydney International Boat Show, the AFTA Trade Tackle show on the Gold Coast, and the National Off-road, Fishing and Outdoors Expo, Melbourne. A presentation on the development and implementation of NEATFish was also given at the 5th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Florida in November 2008.

Objective 4. To liaise with industry bodies, tournament organisers, government authorities and environmental groups

Method: Consultation was undertaken with several interest groups including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Australian Fishing Trade Association, the Australian Conservation Foundation and several tournament organisers. Sponsorship deals were also developed with fishing tackle distributors who will supply prize packs and other promotional materials for distribution to tournaments which undertake official NEATFish accreditation.

Results

Objective 1. To develop an interactive website with dynamic content to manage and promote the NEATFish standard and facilitate its uptake by industry.

Result:

Website developers were contracted and development of website was underway on 2 October 2008. A delay in the commencement of website development, resulted in further delays being experienced downstream, namely with web design, content and optimisation. Programming required a larger amount of time than was originally anticipated, such that some of the subsequent interim milestones had to be rearranged to later in the year than we originally hoped. However, to their credit the website designers persisted and managed to successfully program all of the relevant aspects of the NEATFish standard and the associated databases into a user friendly online website format by mid May 2009 (Appendix 3). Since the project timeline was structured to provide ample time for promotion of the standard via stands at tackle shows, this minor delay in getting the website online did not have any significant detrimental effect on the outcomes of any of the other project objectives.

Objective 2. To publicise the NEATFish standard and website in the fishing media

Result: Magazine articles and editorial have been published in Fishing World, Bluewater and Modern Fishing, as well as FISH Magazine, Queensland Fishing Monthly, SA Angler, WA Angler, Bream, barra and bass and NAFA magazines (Appendix 3). The articles were submitted in a staggered fashion over several months so that they were not published at the same time. This ensured that the magazine publicity associated with NEATFish will span over many months in the fishing media, including after completion of the project.

Objective 3. To publicise the NEATFish standard and website at trade tackle shows and conferences

Result: Extension activities were undertaken at several tackle shows, including the Brisbane Tinnie and Tackle Show, the Sydney International Boat Show, the AFTA Trade tackle show on the Gold Coast, and the National Off-road, Fishing and Outdoors Expo, Melbourne. Promotional materials in the form of several professionally designed stickers and an A4 brochure (Appendix 3) were distributed at the various fishing tackle shows that were attended. At the Tinnie and Tackle Show in Brisbane we negotiated with 4BC radio for airtime and also distribution of promotional

materials into several thousand of their sample bags. NEATFish promotional materials were also placed into the information packs given to every one of the hundreds of children who participated in the fishing clinic that ran throughout the Brisbane Tinny and Tackle Show. In Sydney we liaised with Fishing World Magazine, the Recreational Fishing Alliance and the Fishcare volunteers to distribute NEATFish and Recfish stickers and pamphlets to several thousand of the patrons who attended the 5 day show. In Melbourne similar extension strategies were undertaken in conjunction with VRFish, Victorias Recreational Peak Body. Followup media from the tackle shows has included grabs on talkback radio (3AW Victoria, Aaron Woods environment show) and mentions in several newspapers.

Objective 4. To liaise with industry bodies, tournament organisers, government authorities and environmental groups

Meetings that were held in relation to NEATFish included:

5th World Recreational Fishing Conference, Florida Nov 2008: Oral Presentation, submitted paper. Presentation of information on development of NEATFish, the worlds first environmental standard for fishing tournaments.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA): Phone, e-mails and face to face meeting, the latter which included delivery of a presentation of information on NEATFish and its potential utility for use in the marine park.

Fishing World Magazine, Bluewater boating and Sportfishing magazine, Modern Fishing, FISH Magazine, Queensland Fishing Monthly, NAFA, Bream, Barra and Bass: Phone, e-mail, face to face meetings discussing submission of magazine articles, editorial, and advertising.

Fishing tournament insurers: Phone, e-mail. Invitations to become NEATFish sponsors as part of establishment of incentive schemes.

Fishing tournament organisers: Phone, e-mails and face to face meetings to discuss benefits of joining the scheme.

Communication with 30+ potential industry sponsors: Verbal, E-mail and phone invitations to become NEATFish sponsors as part of establishment of incentive schemes. Face to face meetings with several sponsor candidates at the AFTA Trade Tackle Show on the Gold Coast.

Recreational fishers: Publication of advertisements in Fishing World magazine, and in the Sydney and Melbourne boat show catalogues. Publicity of Neatfish.com website with sign ups for future news items online. Distribution of extension materials to recreational fishers at several tackle shows.

Conservation Groups: E-mail correspondence and inclusion of several groups in the website newsletter mailing list.

Special Conditions

Take all reasonable steps in order to mitigate against a regulatory standard being implemented that is higher in requirements than NEATFish.

Response to special condition: We had a meeting in Townsville with representatives of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to present information on NEATFish and they have confirmed by return correspondence that they intend to utilise NEATFish to set minimum standards for recreational fishing tournaments in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at some stage in the future. A revised version (version 6) of the NEATFish standard has been developed, accepted by the Recfish board and placed available for public download on the www.neatfish.com and www.recfish.com.au websites. This version incorporates some of the feedback obtained from industry and environmental groups on the previous version of the standard, with the net outcome being the revisions raise the difficulty of the standard slightly above previous versions. This is the same version which converted into the web based format for the www.neatfish.com website. Hence the NEATFish Standard represents a high, but not unachievable, benchmark that has already resulted in the Queensland Primary Industries & Fisheries (QPI&F) deciding not to progress a code of practice for fishing tournaments in Queensland but rather they have supported NEATFish (see <http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb/14766.html>). We will continue to work with fisheries departments in other States for similar outcomes.

Discussion

Further development of NEATFish via establishment of the website www.neatfish.com was proposed by Sawynok et al. (2008) to address several issues related to the ongoing development of the original NEATFish concept conceived by Sawynok et al. (2006). The original version of the NEATFish standard was entirely paper based, which made engagement with large numbers of fishers difficult due to the need to post out bulky and expensive documents to each interested party. Another drawback which became apparent with the paper based system was that the process of obtaining accreditation was seen by some as complicated. Even moving to an electronic standard and excel based scoring sheet in the interim did not improve this situation very much, as it was still possible for tournament organisers to make inadvertent mistakes with scoring, and the need to have two files open on one computer screen made the process of undertaking accreditation difficult. There were also issues with the need to

manually record details of accredited tournaments on a database together with the need for public reporting of the rating of events that became accredited under the standard.

All of these issues have been addressed with the new website. The online interface is user friendly and intuitive, scoring is automatically done by the website software, and the process of obtaining a NEATFish rating has become relatively quick and easy. Obtaining a NEATFish rating can be done free of charge, and the administration fees are incurred only if the tournament organiser seeks official recognition of their score. All relevant details about each tournament are retained in the website database, while the list of accredited tournaments is published on one page of the website and is automatically updated whenever a new tournament is officially accredited.

Brochures that outline the 5 easy steps to obtaining NEATFish accreditation and stickers that display the website address have been widely distributed at several tackle and boat shows and throughout Recfish networks. Sponsors have been approached and engaged as part of this process and we continue to maintain a profile in the recreational fishing media through editorial support, articles and advertisements. Targeted consultation was also undertaken with AFTA and other recreational fishing interest groups to determine how the standard can be applied to meet the evolving needs of the industry and the environment.

Benefits and adoption

One of the key benefits of NEATFish is that it has been initiated and developed by the recreational fishing industry rather than being imposed by government or other parties. There has always been a risk that governments could move to regulate fishing competitions if no action was taken, leading to compulsory systems being introduced that may impact significantly on tournaments.

One other benefit is its simplicity and that an assessment under NEATFish is freely available and easily understood by everyone. An understanding of the NEATFish rating has been easily attained based on the wide use of star ratings in many other industries, with it being commonly understood that the more stars the better the product, in this case a fishing tournament.

However the real test remains the level of adoption of NEATFish by competition organisers. Over a dozen events have undergone the questionnaire process and sought official accreditation under the standard via the NEATFish website in the 3 months since it has gone online, and more people are hitting the site now and rating their tournaments since it has begun to become publicised. The number of tournaments seeking

official recognition under the standard will continue to climb, but the rate of increase will depend on both the publicity that can be directed towards NEATFish as well as the perceived value and benefits obtained from undertaking accreditation. Discussions with sponsors and other interested groups are ongoing in order to continue to encourage participation in NEATFish by increasing the benefits of undertaking accreditation into the future.

Further development

Further development of NEATFish in the future during its commercial phase will centre around:

- Continuing to publicise the concept through information sheets, the recreational fishing media, fishing tackle shows and at key scientific and management conferences
- continuing to liaise with insurance providers, government authorities, sponsors, industry and environmental groups on issues relating to fishing tournaments,
- performing spotchecks and auditing of participating tournaments when required,
- Updating the Standard based on contemporary best practice and ISO methodology, and
- Reviewing the certification fees on a regular basis

Planned outcomes

The planned outcomes from this project have included:

1. More effective implementation of the NEATFish standard by raising awareness within the recreational fishing industry through development of a website (www.neatfish.com) through which the standard can be completed online.

Outcome Achieved: Yes

2. Maintaining a profile for NEATFish in the fishing media and at various industry events, including tackle shows and conferences.

Outcome Achieved: Yes

3. Raise publicity for the NEATFish standard through articles in recreational fishing magazines, features on fishing TV, manning of booths at boat shows and trade tackle shows, and presentations at conferences.

Outcome Achieved: Yes

Conclusion

All objectives of this project were completed successfully. The development of the NEATFish website was well received and this has signalled the initiatives movement into the commercial operational phase. The profile of the NEATFish standard has been raised through publicity gained through increased presence in the recreational fishing media, at tackle shows and conferences, and on the internet. NEATFish has become more accessible and recognised by the recreational fishing industry and continues to provide a viable alternative for governments that are scrutinising fishing events. Indeed, it is hoped that its existence and continued development will limit or even eliminate the need for government regulation of fishing tournaments, especially if it is taken up by fishing tournament organisers on a wide scale.

References

Sawynok W., Diggles B., Harrison J. (2006). A national environmental management and accreditation system for recreational fishing tournaments: Concept Development. Report published by Recfish Australia, February 2006, for FRDC project no. 2005/235.

Sawynok W., Diggles B., Harrison J. (2008). Development of a national environmental management and accreditation system for business/public recreational fishing competitions. Report published by Recfish Australia, March 2008, for FRDC project no. 2006/057.

Appendix 1 Intellectual Property

It is considered that there is intellectual property (IP) associated with the development of the NEATFish system as it is a worlds first, however protection may be difficult to achieve using normal IP protection instruments.

Appendix 2 Staff

Principal Investigator: Dr Ben Diggles, DigsFish Services Pty Ltd

Co-Investigator: Len Olyott, CEO Recfish Australia

Administrator: Lisa Diggles, DigsFish Services Pty Ltd

Appendix 3 Outputs and extension activities



Daniel Tillack
EDITORIAL

Modern Fishing's National Advertising Manager, Dan Tillack, with possibly the smallest snapper caught at the Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic.

Who cares, wins

FISHING COMPETITIONS in Australia have a dark history. Once they were an excuse for the mass slaughter of fish. Modern comps and tournaments are more sophisticated in management, entry requirements and outcomes. Most are now catch-and-release only, to reduce impacts.

From an ecological point of view, the concentration of fishing effort in a confined location that occurs during fishing comps will always be bad news; no matter how well they are managed. Catch-and-release comps have less impact than the catch-and-kill butchery bonanzas that are weigh-in comps. However, they still have an impact—either by incidental death, or by entrants actually keeping their catch despite the rules. But it's better than the 100 percent death rate of releasing fish into an icebox and the format should be encouraged. As for weigh-in comps, they'll forever be archaic and irresponsible—it's a shame those who swear by them don't shift their focus towards noxious species such as carp and tilapia.

The camaraderie, joys of interacting with the like-minded and the family bonding that some comps facilitate is a strong case for overlooking the minor impact of an annual catch-and-release event. But it's still important for recreational fishers and the industries that profit from them to take responsibility for the impact of fishing competitions.

Comp sponsors should allocate their financial support prudently. Entrants should avoid comps run purely for profit with no consideration for the resource. Organisers should be mindful that fishing comps will not avoid legislative scrutiny forever, so longevity will depend on the ability to adopt and maintain best practice. Ultimately, sponsors and entrants determine which comps survive.

As my soap box creaks and groans under the weight of another rant about fishing comps, I admit I find the thought of fishing a crowded area, under restrictions of where and when I may cast, contravening to my idea of fishing. All the above comments are therefore biased. However, I enjoy the social aspect of a comp organised in the spirit of good times, I appreciate that the money raised often goes to a good cause and I enjoy the challenge of testing my angling skills in conditions I would often avoid. So it's not all lost on me, and I'm sure other anglers feel the same way.

Some of my opinions are backed up by the good folks at Recfish Australia, who recognise the need for making fishing comps more palatable to the wider community. They have developed an accreditation process that every fishing comp in Australia should strive to achieve. Visit www.recfish.com.au/best_practice/accreditation.html for more information.

I recently attended the Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic, held in Coffs Harbour. Despite the weather threatening 3m swells and strong winds, about 150 anglers turned up to brave the conditions. The spirit of the comp was fantastic and some impressive snapper were caught, measured, photographed and released. It was a fitting celebration of Dave Irvine's contribution and legacy to recreational fishing in Australia.

Using digital cameras and Brag Mats instead of live wells to prove capture details is much healthier for fish. Release weight devices were also supplied to assist with returning fish to the depth from whence they came, avoiding swim bladder difficulties. The organisers treated the issue of fish handling with the thought it deserves. They, along with major sponsors Berkley, Fishing Tackle Australia and Shimano, and the many other sponsors, all get a pat on the back.

Fishing comps still have a few screws to tighten, but with the initiatives shown in this comp and by Recfish Australia, we are moving on. All we need is everyone to head in the same direction.

As an aside, the Dave Irvine Memorial Snapper Classic showed how vulnerable snapper are to the effective use of soft plastic lure techniques. To be honest, I feel a bit hypocritical when I look at the snapper on soft plastics feature we have lined up for next issue. The poor fish won't stand a chance against anyone who reads that article. However, I trust *Modern Fishing* readers to only take enough for their immediate needs, be mindful that breeding size fish are of more use back in the briny, and to handle fish to be released with due care. ♣

Fig 1. Editorial support in Modern Fishing Magazine

Is your Fishing Tournament **neatfish** Accredited?

National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing

- Easy online Accreditation for Fishing Tournaments
Test your Tournament FREE-of-CHARGE online at www.neatfish.com
- National Register of Neatfish Accredited Tournaments
- FREE eNewsletter with important Fishing Environmental News and Tournament Information
- Photo Gallery, Merchandise and Sponsor Discounts for Competitors

An initiative of  Supported by 

48 FISHING WORLD MARCH 2009

NEATFish – a world first

FISHING tournaments aren't everyone's cup of tea, but there's no doubt the number of tournaments have increased in recent years, and this has a lot to do with the fact that they can be a lot of fun. A far cry from competitions of the distant past where cricket score catches held in damp hessian sacks were required to win the prize.

A trend worth noting is the increasing attention focused on fishing tournaments from governments, green groups, animal welfare activists and the media. Like

it or not, attitudes towards fishing have changed and tournaments can no longer fly under the radar of public scrutiny. It's important for recreational fishos and the industry to be more proactive in addressing several of the more contentious aspects of fishing tournaments. These include the potential impacts of weigh in tournaments on fish stocks, welfare of fish in catch & release tournaments, and the need to measure and improve the social and economic impacts of tournaments in the local communities in which they are held.

The NEATFish standard is based around a questionnaire which uses a 1-5 star scoring system designed to provide tournament organisers with an objective assessment of how well their tournament meets certain environmental, social and economic criteria. The standard was developed after a comprehensive consultation process with key stakeholders in the recreational fishing industry, including state and national peak fishing bodies, organisers of several of Australia's top fishing tournaments,



it or not, attitudes towards fishing have changed and tournaments can no longer fly under the radar of public scrutiny. It's important for recreational fishos and the industry to be more proactive in addressing several of the more contentious aspects of fishing tournaments. These include the potential impacts of weigh in tournaments on fish stocks, welfare of fish in catch & release tournaments, and the need to measure and improve the social and economic impacts of tournaments in the local communities in which they are held.

The NEATFish standard is based around a questionnaire which uses a 1-5 star scoring system designed to provide tournament organisers with an objective assessment of how well their tournament meets certain environmental, social and economic criteria. The standard was developed after a comprehensive consultation process with key stakeholders in the recreational fishing industry, including state and national peak fishing bodies, organisers of several of Australia's top fishing tournaments,



News

ratings, and you can bet that sponsors and local government authorities are paying attention too. Marine parks authorities have recently shown interest in NEATFish for its potential to set minimum environmental standards for tournaments held in marine parks. It's probably wishful thinking to suggest that fishing tournaments operating in marine parks can go unregulated forever, but the good thing about NEATFish is that it was developed by the recreational fishing industry, not government, and it is completely voluntary.

For more details on NEATFish, contact info@neatfish.com, or phone 0403773592.

By Ben Diggles

Fig 2. Article in Fishing World magazine, February 2009, and advertisements in Fishing World Magazine, March 2009

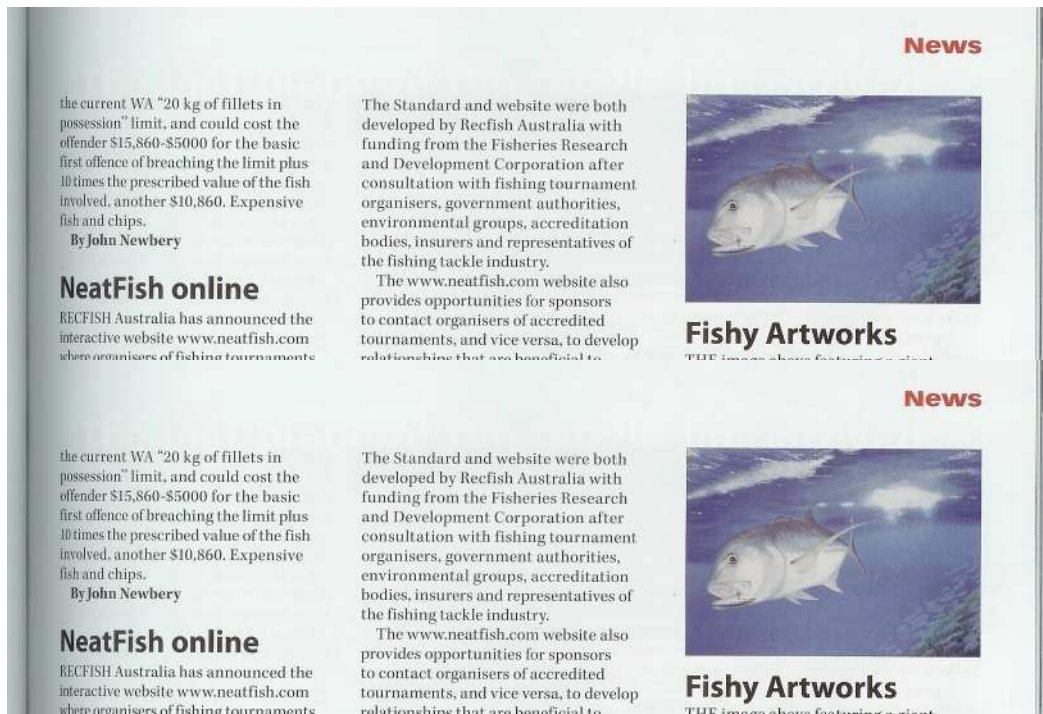


Fig 3. News item, Fishing World magazine, August 2009-08-13



Fig 4. Advertisement in the Sydney Boat show programme, July 2009

2009 Sydney International Boat Show



Coupe, adding a very impressive Euro Flybridge. Similarly to the 430 Sports Coupe, the 480 will feature the same hull and engine options, with the hydraulic swim platform as standard.

The 480 Sports Euro will include the latest technology similar to that of the 430, with a new inclusion being the Finscan fingerprint engine start system. Without a doubt the 480 Sports Euro is set to steal the show!

And last but by no means least, the huge on-water display will feature the latest 37, 41, and 43 Sports Flybridge boats, all reflecting the quality, innovation and value for money that the Mustang brand represents.

For more: www.mustangmarine.com.au

NEATFish on the web

NEATFish (National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing) is the world's first environmental standard designed specifically for fishing tournaments and is a voluntary industry standard developed by the recreational fishing industry for the industry. The NEATFish Standard uses a questionnaire, which measures a tournament's environmental, social and economic performance and rates them using a one to five star rating system. The Standard and website were both developed by Reefish Australia with funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation after consultation with fishing tournament organisers, government authorities, environmental groups, accreditation bodies, insurers and representatives of the fishing tackle industry.

Len Olyott, CEO of Reefish Australia, says



the long awaited release of the website will improve the accessibility of the standard and make the process of certification of fishing tournaments under the NEATFish standard simple and user friendly.

"The best thing about the www.neatfish.com website is that online membership is free of charge and provides all tournament organisers with the necessary tools to undertake a NEATFish assessment. Full accreditation under the standard can be achieved in five easy steps."

See www.neatfish.com for more details.

NRMA Boat Insurance (IAG)

With the Sydney Boat Show inspiring skippers to head out on the water, NRMA Insurance is warning boat owners to be vigilant about security, with new claims data revealing valuable items left on boats are becoming an increasing target for thieves. NRMA Insurance spokesperson Theresa O'Halloran said theft from boats had increased since last year – indicating thieves were preying on unwary boat owners. "Our claims data indicates that theft from boats now accounts for one in 10 boat claims – this is an increase of 15 percent on last year," she said.

"It's understandable that when people hit the water, they want to be able to enjoy the great



Pacific Boating takes away all the hassles of getting on the water.

sense of community that exists in most spots on the coast and river towns. In this relaxed environment it is easy to forget to double check the security of their boat and onboard items."

Ms O'Halloran said any unsecured items on board were fair game to thieves – from radio equipment and GPS, to PFDS and ice boxes. She said engraving a driver's licence number or placing other distinctive identification on items was a deterrent for thieves and could help in their recovery. For more visit www.nrma.com.au

Pacific makes boating easy

With the changing economic environment, high purchase prices, increasing annual costs, the hassles associated with ownership and a depreciating asset that remains unused for much of the year, owning a luxury sports cruiser is becoming far from a practical proposition. That's where a Pacific Boating membership program comes into its own, eliminating all the costs and hassles associated with boat ownership, whilst giving their members the benefit to use its fleet of luxury sports cruisers as if they were their own.

As a member of Pacific Boating you have unlimited access to the fleet of luxury sports cruisers. All you pay for on the day is your fuel.

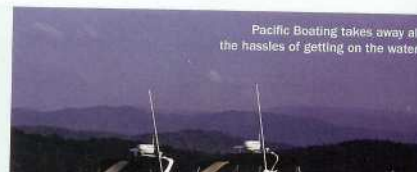
2009 Sydney International Boat Show



Coupe, adding a very impressive Euro Flybridge. Similarly to the 430 Sports Coupe, the 480 will feature the same hull and engine options, with the hydraulic swim platform as standard.

The 480 Sports Euro will include the latest technology similar to that of the 430, with a new inclusion being the Finscan fingerprint engine start system. Without a doubt the 480 Sports

the long awaited release of the website will improve the accessibility of the standard and make the process of certification of fishing tournaments under the NEATFish standard simple and user friendly.



Pacific Boating takes away all the hassles of getting on the water.

Fig 5. Editorial in the Sydney Boat show programme, July 2009

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The entire NEATFish assessment process can be done free of charge through the on-line questionnaire. Once you're registered, the assessment process can be done in one session, or you can save your tournament at any stage and come back to complete the process at a later date.



The environmental impact of your fishing tournament is rated on a point system specific to the NEATFish standard. Calculation of your NEATFish score is based on your question/answer responses and is automatically updated so you can track your progress on-line.



Once you complete the questionnaire you will obtain your NEATFish rating. With this understanding tournament organisers can develop and implement measures to reduce environmental, social and economic impact and improve their NEATFish rating.



Recreational fishing is a favourite pastime for many Australians, with more than 3.5 million Australians fishing annually.

However, we all have a part to play in ensuring current and future generations are able to enjoy the pleasures of recreational fishing and abundant seafood that are hallmarks of the Australian lifestyle.

Recfish Australia supports fishing responsibly, sustainably and in a way that respects the environment and the rights of others. This is why they developed a national code of practice for recreational fishers.

The code addresses four main areas:

- treating fish humanely
- looking after our fisheries
- protecting the environment
- respecting the rights of others.

For more information, visit www.recfish.com.au

In line with this code of practice a Standard for National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing called NEATFish has also been developed.

ACCREDITATION ★★★★★

To have your fishing tournament officially certified, submit your questionnaire for review. If there is any inconsistency with your application a NEATFish representative will contact you to discuss your answers and supporting documentation.

Once approved you can proceed with the declaration of conformity, on-line payment and electronic delivery of your official NEATFish Certified Certificate.

The cost of certification represents exceptional value at only \$95 (+ GST). As a certified event your tournament will appear on the website list of approved tournaments, and will be eligible to claim benefits from sponsors and insurers.

Tournaments approved with a FIVE star rating may wish to further their environmental rating by following the Pathway to ISO14001 (ISO14001 is an Environmental Management Standard.) More information is available on our website www.neatfish.com



KEEPING UP-TO-DATE

For the latest information and news from NEATFish and the tournament fishing scene, please feel free to encourage your fishing mates to subscribe to our FREE on-line eNewsletter.

www.neatfish.com



The Australian Recreational and Sports Fishing Industry Confederation Inc.
PO Box 187 Grange Qld 4061 Phone / Fax: 07 3356 1111 Email: admin@recfish.com.au

A Standard for National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing

www.neatfish.com

Awarded by and supported by

WHAT IS NEATFISH?

NEATFish is a standard for the National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing.

The NEATFish standard was developed by Recfish Australia to encourage organisers of fishing tournaments to develop tournaments which:

- ★ minimise detrimental impacts on fish stocks,
- ★ are environmentally sustainable,
- ★ encourage support from local communities,
- ★ provide safe fishing experiences for competitors and spectators, and
- ★ provide significant positive social and economic benefits to those communities in which they are held.

The NEATFish scoring system is based on a 1 to 5 star model which classifies fishing tournaments on their environmental, social and economic impacts. High ranking tournaments can expect increased recognition from government and environmental groups and significant benefits from sponsors and insurers.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR NEATFISH CERTIFICATION ?

NEATFish was designed to be used by organisers of large commercial fishing tournaments, but it can be used by organisers of all forms of competitive recreational fishing events.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Participation in NEATFish is voluntary, however the Standard and its requirements for supporting documentation must be adhered to by organisers of any tournament which claims official certification under NEATFish. For more details on the on requirements for supporting documentation check out section 7 and appendix 1 of the NEATFish standard available on the website www.neatfish.com

GETTING STARTED

This NEATFish standard has been designed to be completed through the www.neatfish.com website to make certification of your tournament as simple as possible.

On-line membership is FREE and provides tournament organisers with all the necessary tools to undertake a NEATFish Assessment.

To register a new fishing event, start by visit our website www.neatfish.com and follow these 5 easy steps:

- STEP 1** Register as a Member and Login
- STEP 2** Register a new event, complete the assessment questionnaire and submit your results for approval
- STEP 3** After receiving email notification of your approval, follow the links to complete the declaration of conformity
- STEP 4** Complete your Annual Registration Payment
- STEP 5** Download your official NEATFish Certificate

Figure 6. NEATFish Brochure, as distributed at several major tackle shows.



Figure 7. NEATFish stickers, as distributed at several major tackle shows.



Assessment

This NEATFish standard has been designed to be completed online through this website to make certification of your tournament as simple as possible. On-line membership is FREE and provides tournament organisers with all the necessary tools to undertake a NEATFish Assessment. To register a new fishing event, start by following these 5 easy steps:

Click here to begin your

▶ [REGISTRATION](#)



MEMBERS LOGIN



Step 1

Register as a Member and Login



Step 2

Register a new event, complete the assessment questionnaire and submit your results for approval



Step 3

After receiving email notification of your approval, follow the links to complete the declaration of conformity



Step 4

Complete your Annual Registration Payment



Step 5

Download your official NEATFish Certificate

Supporting Documents

 [NEATFish Standard](#)

 [Complaints and Appeals](#)

 [Pathway to ISO14001](#)

 [Requirements for Supporting Documentation](#)

The entire NEATFish assessment process can be done free of charge through the questionnaire on this page after you [register here](#). Once you're registered the assessment process can be done in one session, or you can save your tournament at any stage and come back to complete the process at a later date.

Once you complete the questionnaire you will obtain your NEATFish score. You then can decide whether you wish to get the score officially recognized so you can join the list of [approved tournaments](#) and receive benefits from [sponsors](#) and [insurers](#). The cost of certification

Figure 8. Screenshot from www.neatfish.com website