

SUMMING UP

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My observations over the past two days have lead me to list several remarks and statements I heard. We have “wrung our hands” and “ground our teeth” over the impacts of habitat loss and there seems to be much we do not know or understand about aquatic ecosystems and how they interact. But, during our discussions these past two days, there were several points worthy of note.

In no special order, some of the things I noted are:

- Aquatic habitat is valuable; it is not plentiful, it is fragile and it is disappearing rapidly.
- There are too many people.
- Most people are ignorant about the value of aquatic habitat.
- Change happens and the rate of change often outstrips our ability to learn, understand and react.
- Development will continue to destroy aquatic habitat.
- Some habitats are beyond help and we should “tend to the crown jewels and the walking wounded”.
- Fish and the other “critters” need a place to live and our understanding about how ecosystem(s) function must be more complete.
- Covering aquatic habitat with dredge material spoils the habitat.
- Sewage isn’t good for sea life nor people.
- We know that the catchment, the rivers, the estuaries and the nearshore marine waters are important to fish.
- Man’s activities don’t “create” fisheries habitat-mostly man’s activities destroy or compromise habitat.
- Man’s activities don’t cause fish populations to increase-it is mostly the opposite.
- We know that the general trend of most fish populations is downward; we just don’t fully understand politically how to reverse the trend.
- We know that if you drag bottom trawls over the sea bed you will kill the plants and animals that live there.
- It is a mistaken concept that politicians lead.
- It is a mistaken assumption that “top decision makers” make good decisions and that it comes naturally.
- Top decision makers make good decisions with good information.
- Top decision makers need timely information.
- Politicians move with consensus.
- We should share our knowledge. our work is fun, its exciting, and we should educate our citizens.

- We are not good at sharing our knowledge outside our own circle.
- We could be better at sharing our knowledge; we must learn how.
- Others care about aquatic resources and habitat too.
- We can identify our allies.
- We can form partnerships—to teach and to learn; relationships are best when both parties are enhanced.
- Not everyone will share our values or our points of view.
- Sometimes the best solution isn't possible.
- Sometimes the best solution is the one that makes everyone equally unhappy.
- It is easier to "walk backwards into the future;" it is more difficult to affect the future and implement our visions.
- Ecologically sustainable might have been present before man intervened.
- Helping to manage human impacts on habitat is our most difficult task.
- The smarter we get the easier the job becomes.
- We need to learn to forgive ourselves for our uncertainties and our shortcomings.
- Multiple use is not synonymous with compatible uses.
- Value comes in dollars but it also is measured in the needs, wants, desires and aspirations of people.

I am sure I missed some points of what we talked about over these past two days but I believe I captured the essence of what transpired. The inescapable conclusion is that we know a lot about the problems with habitat and what to do about it! And we recognize there is much we do not know or understand. But our lack of understanding is mostly our secret! Australians

believe fisheries scientists and managers know what is wrong with the fisheries and how to correct it.

There seemed to be consensus that action is better than inaction and that scientists and managers are determined to play a role in helping to shape Australia's fishing future. I stated in my keynote address, that for a nation to maintain successful fisheries they need: national strategies, implementation schemes, adequate money, enforcement, adequate legislation, adequate assessment, and periodic audit to measure progress. You know Australia's fisheries are a valuable, renewable national asset. There is consensus that success is better guaranteed with your attention, your views, your energy, and your knowledge. There is no group more knowledgeable about the fishery resources of the nation than yours.

I think important conclusions have been reached during this workshop. I feel a determination by the participants. And I sense that the ASFB will elect to play an even more active role to have a positive influence on what the future holds for this continent's fisheries. If not you; who? There is no group more capable of leading. I sense you are determined to be Australia's principal champion for its fishing future and I applaud you.

I appreciate very much being invited to participate in this workshop. You live in a fun and wonderful land and these are important times for fish and fish habitat.