

Chairperson's Introduction

C.M. MacDonald

*Victorian Fisheries Research Institute
Marine Science Laboratories
PO Box 114
Queenscliff VIC 3225*

Good morning and welcome to the longest and possibly the most controversial session of this Workshop! In this Session I hope we will objectively explore the philosophy, rationale and operational requirements for applying resource allocation to the management of fish stocks and fisheries. However, the Session will be structured more as a public discussion forum than a scientific workshop in recognition of the primarily social and political nature of resource allocation issues.

Since the concept of 'Ecologically Sustainable Development' (ESD) gained national and international prominence in the 1980s it has become increasingly apparent that ESD-based management of fisheries and fish stocks—particularly those in estuarine and coastal marine waters—is as much about preventing or resolving conflicts between competing users as it is about conserving fish stocks and protecting the habitats/environments that support them. While stock conservation and habitat protection will almost always be the most important goal of fisheries management, achieving an appropriate allocation or sharing of available natural resources between competing user/interest groups will in many cases be the next most important goal.

The need to address resource allocation issues has been clearly identified in a number of recent fisheries policy development and strategic planning processes carried out in Australia. At a national level, the 1991 report of the national ESD Fisheries Working Group referred to resource allocation issues in sections dealing with intragenerational equity, returns to the community, and identification of the beneficiaries of resource management. The Draft National Policy for Recreational Fishing in Australia (1992) included a section on 'sharing the resource', and contained two Key Principles which recognise the right of recreational fishers and other exploitive and non-exploitive users to a fair and reasonable share of Australian fish resources.

At a State level, the five-year strategic plan developed by the former South Australian Department of Fisheries (1991) includes a specific goal to 'provide for an equitable allocation of the State's aquatic resources and maximisation of benefits to the community of South Australia'. The recent review of recreational fisheries management in Western Australia (1991) also recognised the fundamental importance of resource sharing, observing that 'fisheries management policies are as much about controlling the relative available catch

share between recreational and commercial fishers—and within groups of fishers—as they are about management for sustaining fish stocks'. A Victorian parliamentary committee recently (1991) conducted a public inquiry into the allocation of fish stocks in Victorian bays and inlets. The committee's terms of reference included a requirement to recommend optimum levels of commercial and recreational fishing with respect to resource conservation, equitable sharing of fish stocks, the economic welfare of the commercial and recreational fishing industries, and a regulated supply of fresh fish to Victorian consumers. No doubt similar processes have been occurring in other States/Territories.

In spite of these and other fisheries management processes involving extensive public participation, there still appears to be considerable confusion regarding the meaning of the term 'equitable resource allocation', the rationale and method(s) for deciding how fish stocks should be allocated, and the most appropriate management 'tools' for achieving specific resource allocation objectives. These areas of confusion need clarification if resource allocation goals are to be effectively incorporated into fisheries management regimes with broad public understanding and acceptance.

Resource allocation issues and decisions arise at a variety of levels in the overall hierarchy of aquatic resource planning and management processes (Table 1). At the highest level (designated Level I) the question arises as to whether particular fish stocks and/or the habitats that support them should be managed to achieve conservation and/or sustainable use objectives, or whether community interests are better served by allowing alternative uses

which have adverse biological or environmental consequences. It should be remembered that the latter option is a legitimate alternative, as some sections of the community may believe that in some areas the benefits of urban, industrial, agricultural or tourism development outweigh the environmental costs or the diminished production of renewable resources.

Level I resource allocation issues are most likely to be encountered during the development of strategic planning frameworks for large areas of water and large amounts of aquatic natural resources. Recent examples of such strategic planning processes involving full public participation are the national Coastal Zone Enquiry conducted by the Resources Assessment Commission, and the State-wide Marine and Coastal Study currently being conducted by the Victorian Land Conservation Council.

Level II (Table 1) resource allocation issues arise in deciding how fish stocks and habitats which have been designated for conservation and sustainable use should be shared between competing user/interest groups in the community. The main categories of competing uses for fish stocks or aquatic habitats are recreational harvesting, commercial harvesting and consumption, commercial aquaculture, traditional uses (including harvesting), and non-extractive (conservation-oriented) uses. To date Level II resource allocation issues have usually been the ones which are most readily recognised and which generate the most animated public debate.

Assuming for a moment that Level II resource allocation decisions have been made and that available fish stocks and aquatic habitats have been appropriately divided or shared *between* competing users,

a third level of resource allocation issue (Level III) can arise in that there may be a desire to more equitably distribute resources—in this case fish stocks—*within* user groups. Examples of Level III allocation issues within the recreational sector include the introduction of bag limits to equalise individual catches within a specific fishery, or the designation of particular waters or fish stocks for specialist recreational fisheries. Examples from the commercial sector include the desirability of using commercial catches of some species for human consumption versus other uses (e.g. pet food, fertilizer, fishing bait), and the availability of popular commercial fish species for consumption on local markets versus the export of such species for premium prices. In each of these examples I am not attempting to make any value judgement on particular options, but merely pointing out that a resource allocation issue does exist.

To date resource allocation issues within user groups have generally not had a high public profile, either because they have not been recognised as significant issues, or because they have been avoided as being too difficult to tackle. However, with increasing competition between individual users for limited available fish stocks and habitats, Level III (within-group) allocation issues could become as urgent and demanding as any other type of problem which fishery and aquatic resource managers will be required to deal with.

Before introducing the guest speakers and panellists for this Forum session, I would like to present a list of topics or questions which I believe need to be addressed if we are to have a productive discussion of the concept of resource allocation in fisheries management. They are:

1. What does the term 'resource allocation' mean when applied to fish stocks and their habitats? (This topic should include discussion of the concepts of 'common property resources' and 'equitable sharing' of access to or benefits from these resources).
2. Where and how does resource allocation fit into the broader spectrum of biological, social and economic goals for the use and management of fish stocks and aquatic habitats?
3. Under what circumstances does it become desirable or necessary to make decisions regarding the allocation of fish stocks?
4. Who are the 'stakeholders' (i.e. user/interest groups or beneficiaries) when resource allocation decisions are being considered?
5. What information should be collected and what criteria (biological, social, economic, political) should be used to determine how fish stocks are allocated?
6. How can resource allocation decisions be translated into specific fisheries and aquatic habitat management arrangements. In particular, what kinds of management 'tools' are available to fisheries and aquatic habitat managers to implement resource allocation decisions?
7. What kinds of monitoring can be undertaken to determine whether or not specific resource allocation targets are being met, and whether or not resource allocation objectives need to be modified in response to changing community attitudes?

I have no doubt that additional such topics will be raised and I look forward to some lively discussion during this Session. But

first, however, our guest speakers will provide us with some views on fisheries resource allocation from the perspective of particular user/interest groups. The commercial sector will be represented by Ted Loveday (Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation) and Brian Jeffries (National Fishing Industry Council); the

recreational sector by Mal Ramsay (Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Confederation) and John Millyard (Australian Fishing Tackle Association); and fishery managers by Peter Rogers (Executive Director, Western Australian Department of Fisheries).

Table 1. Types of resource allocation issues and options or examples within each type.

Level I	Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Conservation and/or sustainable uses of fish stocks and aquatic habitats. ii) Non-renewable use of aquatic natural resources. iii) Permitting 'development' which has adverse environmental consequences.
Level II	Between user groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Sustainable recreational harvesting of wild/cultured fish stocks. ii) Sustainable commercial harvesting and consumption of wild fish stocks. iii) Commercial aquaculture. iv) Traditional uses of fish stocks and aquatic habitats. v) Non-extractive use/appreciation of fish stocks and aquatic habitats.
Level III	Within user groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. Bag limits to equalise individual recreational catches. e.g. Designation of particular waters or fish stocks for specialist recreational fisheries. e.g. Use of commercial fish catches for human consumption versus 'other' uses (pet food, fertiliser, bait). e.g. Local consumption or export of popular commercial fish species.