



Primary Industries

OUT12/7278

Mr Doug Darlington
Secretary
The Entrance Peninsula Community Precinct Committee
63 Stella Street
LONG JETTY NSW 2261

Dear Mr Darlington

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2012 to the Minister for Primary Industries, regarding the Committee's concerns about commercial fishing within Tuggerah Lakes. The Minister has asked that I respond on her behalf.

Firstly, let me assure you that the NSW Government is committed to a viable and sustainable commercial fishing industry that supplies the community with fresh local seafood. We are also committed to providing enhanced recreational fishing opportunities.

The use of nets by commercial fishers in the waters of Tuggerah Lakes forms part of Region 4 of the Estuary General fishery. Region 4 includes waters from the Manning River in the north all the way to Tuggerah Lakes (inclusive) in the south.

Concerns about declining fish stocks in Tuggerah Lakes do not appear to be supported by the available data. The fisheries resources of NSW are closely monitored, including an annual assessment of all available scientific studies and catch and effort data for the primary species (see below for useful internet links to relevant information about the resource assessment process and species status reports). I'm pleased to report that the vast majority of the key species commercially harvested in Tuggerah Lakes, such as sea mullet, prawns, luderick, yellowfin bream, dusky flathead and sand whiting are scientifically assessed as being fully (i.e. sustainably) fished. Of the few species caught in Tuggerah Lakes by commercial and recreational fishers that are classified as 'overfished', species recovery programs are either in place or planned to rebuild those stocks.

A Framework for the Assessment of Harvested Fish Resources in NSW:

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/140307/part1-framework-for-the-assessment-of-harvested-fish-resources.pdf

Status of Fisheries Resources in NSW report:

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/areas/systems-research/wild-fisheries/outputs/2010/1797

As requested, I have attached a copy of the available commercial catch and effort data for Tuggerah Lakes. The data shows a long term trend of stable overall catches, despite the number of fishers operating in the estuary being almost half of what it was some 20 years ago. The individual species information shows no concerning trends, noting that the volatility of mud crab catches over the years is expected in an estuary located at the edge of the stock's distributional range.

While some bycatch is inevitable in the process of fishing (commercial and recreational), commercial fishing nets are largely selective in the species and size of fish caught, and are not indiscriminate in their operation. This has been demonstrated by many research projects completed over the years, and many of the current gear specific regulations have been imposed on the basis of the research findings.

NSW fisheries are managed using a broad range of controls such as limits on the numbers of fishers who can participate, fishing gear specifications, as well as spatial and temporal closures. NSW fisheries have undergone comprehensive environmental impact assessment, meeting the requirements of NSW and Commonwealth law, and these management arrangements help ensure that harvests are sustainable.

The resultant management plans and strategies outline the restrictions that assist the long-term sustainability of the State's fisheries resources. Further information is available on the NSW Primary Industries website at: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/commercial/ea

The fisheries strategies, plans, rules and regulations are monitored and enforced by Fisheries NSW Compliance Officers who spend a great deal of their time on active patrol. Fisheries Officers monitor commercial fishing activities, recreational fishing activities and potential breaches of the laws relating to the protection of important fish habitats. Tuggerah Lakes, like other estuaries and ocean waters are subject to targeted patrols on a routine basis.

I can also inform you about a major commercial fisheries review and reform process that has been underway and was recently announced by the Minister for Primary Industries. The program will fundamentally change the structure and way we manage commercial fisheries over the coming years, including the setting of Total Allowable Catch or Total Allowable Effort levels across every available share class. This program will address some community concerns relating to the number of commercial fishing licences issued in NSW. For further information, including a full copy of the review report, please see: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/commercial/reform/review

In May 2002, 30 areas along the NSW coast, including Lake Macquarie situated to the north of Tuggerah Lakes, became recreational fishing havens to improve recreational fishing opportunities. These havens were one of the first major initiatives to be funded by the NSW recreational fishing licence.

There are no immediate plans to create additional recreational fishing havens or change fishing arrangements in the existing havens. However, the Minister will consider any proposals regarding adjustments or the creation of additional fishing havens, such as Pittwater, on a case-by-case basis. Changes will only be made where there is strong consensus between local recreational and commercial fishers to do so.

I trust this response has answered your queries. Please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Goulstone, Director, Commercial Fisheries, on (02) 6648 3925 if you wish to discuss this matter further.

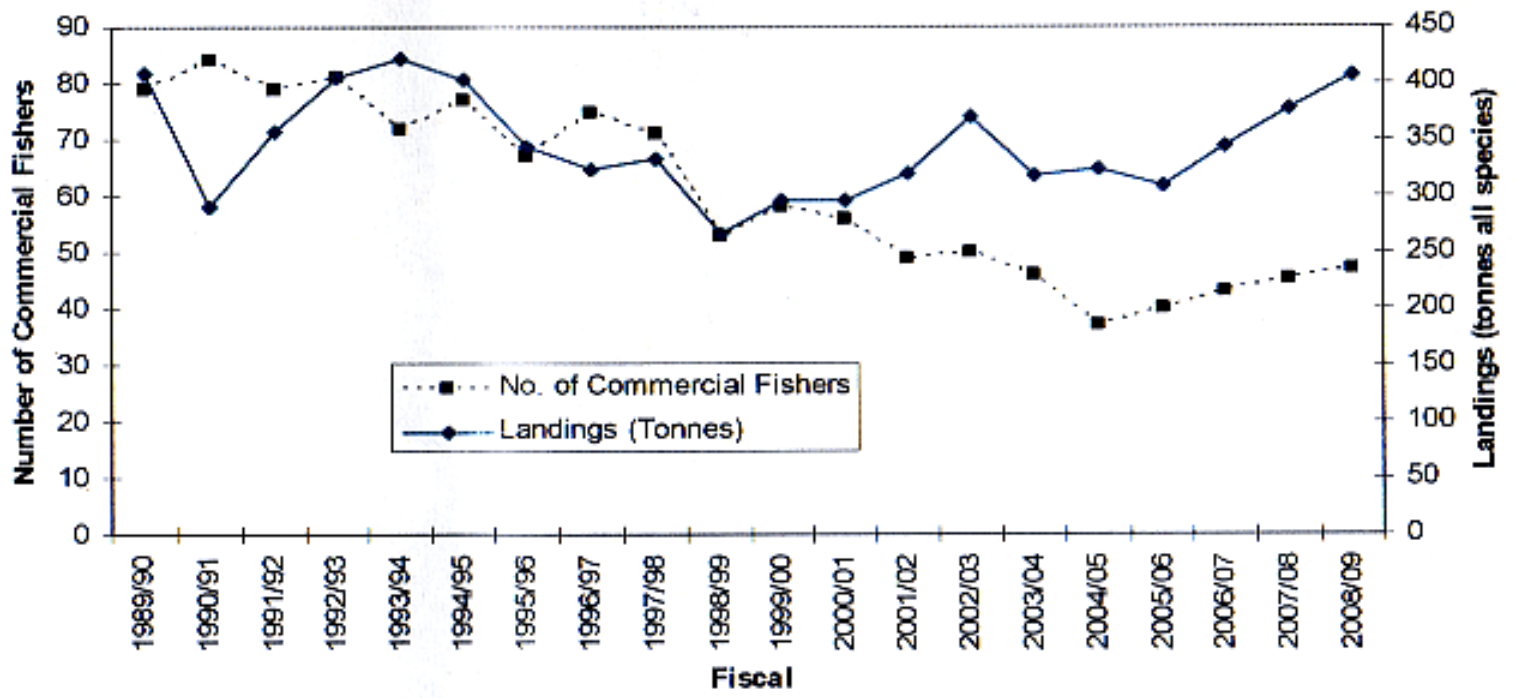
Yours sincerely


Dr Geoff Allan
Executive Director, Fisheries NSW
27 June 2012
Encl.

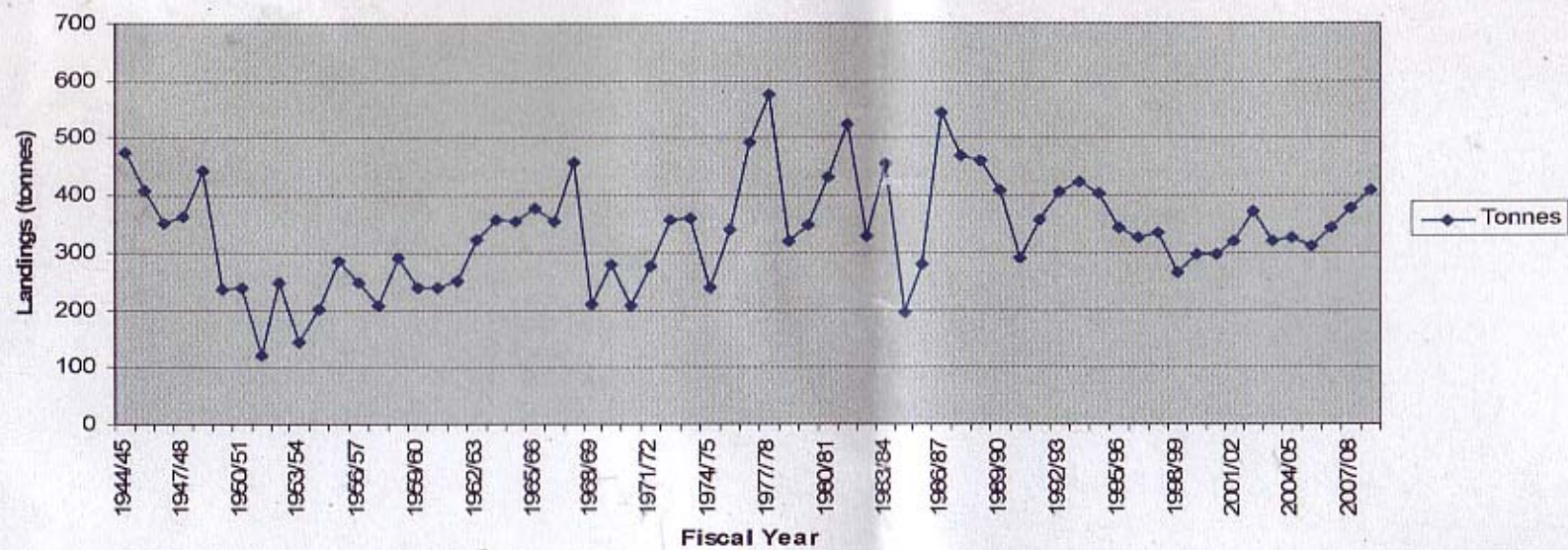
Commercial fishing data for Tuggerah Lakes (data subject to ongoing validation)

Species Group	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Avg
Mullet	183.2	116	204.8	145.4	179.9	169.3	179.4	99.9	104.4	102.2	89.2	92.2	149.5	169.2	107	135.7	135.1	104.5	102.5	112.3	134.09
Prawns	64.2	62.2	44.9	74.1	63.4	19.3	13.8	47.5	73.2	32.7	30.5	44.5	25.7	37.8	54.7	45.4	40.7	35.2	64.9	80.8	47.78
Ludnick	74.6	38.7	25.8	42.3	16.3	17.7	14.4	15.5	21.9	28.6	52.7	46.9	46.6	60.6	42.8	34.7	35.5	43.5	36.4	56	37.58
Breams	38.9	32.6	28.5	72.7	80.4	52.2	43.4	32.8	11.5	14.3	9.3	12.2	11.3	31.3	49.5	20.3	24.3	56.2	24.5	38	34.21
Flatheads	18.2	17.5	32.4	30.9	41.5	44.9	20.8	30.1	49.0	40.4	54.2	31.7	25.3	35.6	23.5	22.5	23.9	27.8	60.9	24.2	32.61
Whiting	3.1	3.4	3.1	11.2	15.9	27	20	20.1	6.8	16.8	26.3	33.8	22.6	7.9	16.3	32.5	14.4	19.5	29.5	22.4	17.63
Crab, Blue Swimmer	0.4	0.7	2.9	0.8	3.4	47.3	17.9	50.9	37.6	11	8.1	5.5	5.7	5.6	3.7	9.6	14.7	12.7	7.1	5	12.53
Silver biddy	0.2	0.7	0.6	8.8	6.3	7.5	6.2	10.3	5.2	0.3	1	5.3	6.7	1.2	0.6	7.9	6.3	16.5	23.8	38.3	7.79
Eels	1.9	2.1	4.7	6.1	3	4.2	7.1	0.6	6.8	3.4	2.1	4.2	9.4	9.2	6.5	4.2	1.3	6.1	11.8	7.4	5.12
Other (51 spp specified)	5.3	3.4	3.4	6.7	4.5	4.8	6.1	6	2.2	2.2	4.4	3.7	5.9	2.4	3.3	2.8	3.4	8	4	8.2	4.54
Garfish	11.1	4.7	1.1	1	2.5	3.1	4.5	3.6	6.6	11.8	10.9	7.8	4.4	0.6	3.3	2.6	1.9	1.1	1.7	2.6	4.35
Tailor	6.1	3.6	1	2.4	1.1	1.2	1.9	1.9	0.3	0.7	1.6	2.5	1.5	1.6	2.8	3.3	2.5	3.1	3.5	2.8	2.27
Crab, Mud	0.7	2.3	2.7	0.6	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.2	4.5	0.6	1.6	2.5	1.8	4.8	1.6	0.5	0.8	0.6	1	0.7	1.68
Leatherjackets	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.8	1.9	2.8	3.4	2.1	1.5	0.4	2.5	1.5	1.6	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.9	2.1	0.7	1.9	1.46
Callfish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.4	1.9	1.6	1.1	1.1	2.2	3.1	3.1	5	1.06
Mulloway	0.9	2.3	0.4	1	1.5	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.4	1	0.49
Trumpeter	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.38
Flounders & Soles	0.1	0	0	0.3	0.2	0.8	1.2	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.18
Trevally	0	0	0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.3	0.17
Old Maid	0	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.15
Longtom	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.08
Snapper	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.07
Pike	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.05
Grand Total	409.4	291	356.6	405.6	423.1	404.1	343.5	324.6	333.1	285.9	285.8	296.9	320.7	371.2	318.9	325.2	310.4	344.2	377.2	408.1	103.1

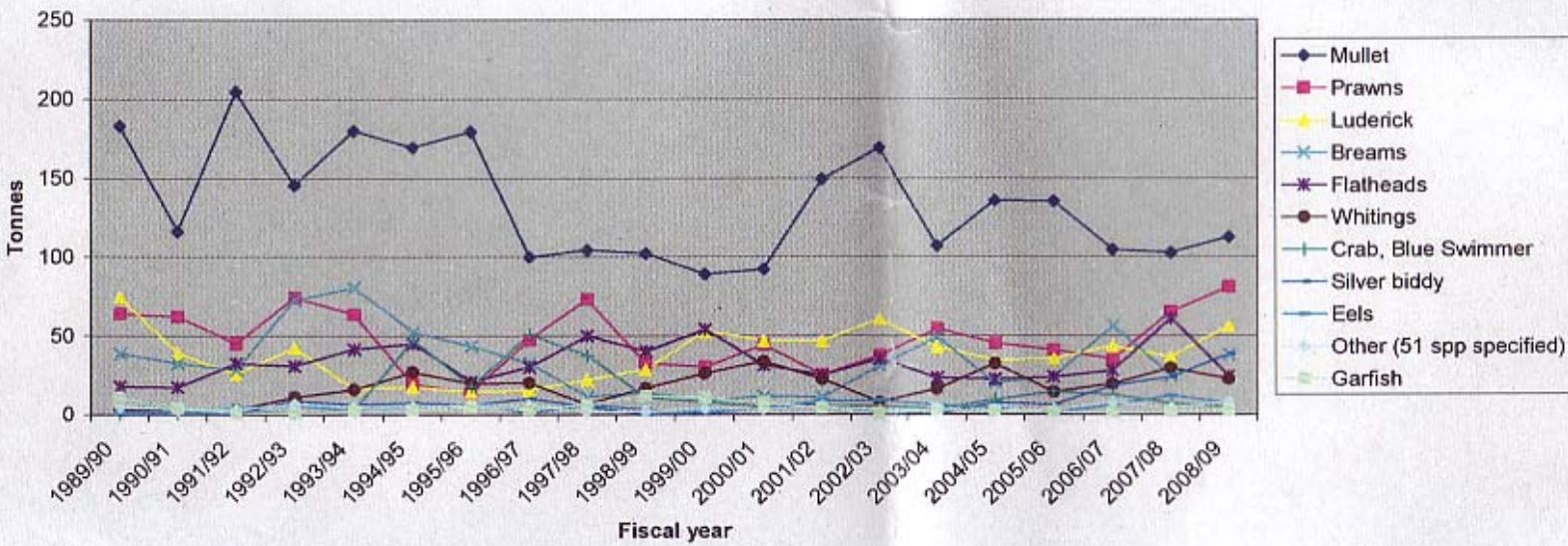
NSW Commercial Landings from Tuggerah Lakes



NSW commercial landings from the Tuggerah lakes system 1944/45 to 2008/09



Tuggerah Lakes - commercial fishing data (top 11 species)



Source: NSW DPI CornCatch data. **Notes:**

1. No reliable information is available on recreational take from Tuggerah Lakes. Estimates for state-wide recreational catch of many estuarine finfish exceed the commercial catch.
2. Commercial wild harvest landings and activity is not a direct indicator of abundance, as it is subject to numerous environmental, economic, social and legislative factors.
3. Commercial catch and effort data beyond 2008/09 is not available to be released yet as this data is undergoing validation.