

# Northern Territory Recreational Fishing Development Plan 2023-2033: Consultation Draft



Photo credit: Girls Gone Fishin'

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| Acronym             | Full Form   |
|---------------------|---|
| AFANT               | Amateur Fisherman's Association of the Northern Territory |
| DITT                | Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade                 |
| NT or The Territory | Northern Territory  |
| NTGFIA              | NT Guided Fishing Industry Association                    |
| NT Government       | Northern Territory Government                             |
| NT Fisheries        | Fisheries Division within DITT                            |
| RFAC                | Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee                   |
| RFDP                | Recreational Fishing Development Plan                     |

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## The 10 year vision of the Northern Territory's recreational fishing sector

### Transport yourself to 2033.....

A vibrant, valuable and resilient recreational fishing industry is sustained by an abundance of important fish species and healthy and productive habitats and ecosystems across the Territory. Recreational fishing resources and environments are safeguarded by effective fisheries and environmental management frameworks, systems and practices. Recreational fishers are recognised as being important stewards of the Territory's fishing resources and habitats.

A huge variety of fishing opportunities, meeting the expectations of Territory locals and tourists alike, are enabled by diverse fishing retail services, tourism providers, infrastructure, and land and sea access arrangements. Overcrowding is managed by the wealth of fishing locations and opportunities across the Territory.

Responsible freedoms cherished by Territorians continue through appropriate fishing laws, an effective enforcement presence, high levels of voluntary compliance, highly accessible and effective safety services, and widespread social licence.

The social, cultural, economic, health and well-being benefits created by recreational fishing is ever-growing and well understood. Through strong leadership and representation, these benefits are recognised and celebrated by governments, decision makers and influencers. This has attracted investment, skills, research and capacity building to develop and maintain a capable, diverse, adaptable, productive and innovative recreational fishing sector.

Strong and inclusive relationships and partnerships have created high levels of cohesion, collaboration and mutual recognition across the recreational fishing sector. Shared values, knowledge, respect and cross-cultural skills and capability has paved the way for the shared use of recreational fishing resources and the achievement of joint outcomes and aspirations.

The recreational fishing sector is extremely well-prepared to meet the challenges of significant external forces, including climate change, population change, and evolving domestic and international political pressures.



## The purpose of this document

The Recreational Fishing Development Plan (RFDP) 2012-2022 has expired. A new RFDP framework will be released in 2023 to guide the development and enhancement of recreational fishing in the Territory over the next decade.

The purpose of the RFDP 2023-2033 Consultation Draft (the Consultation Draft) is to:

1. illustrate the draft vision, desired outcomes and implementation model that will guide the RFDP 2023-2033 framework
2. provide opportunity for the community and stakeholders to give feedback on the approach before being finalised; and
3. invite people and organisations to inform what kinds of actions are needed to achieve the vision and desired outcomes, and how they want to be involved.



Photo credit: Morgan Hartney

## A new planning approach

Recreational fishing is part of the fabric that makes up the Territory. It provides opportunities for challenge, adventure, knowledge-sharing, and the catching of fresh food. It is a means for escape and relaxation, and enables connection with self, family, friends and the natural environment. It fulfils the basic social, cultural, health and well-being needs of thousands of Territorians, sustains a unique and diverse industry, and for many, fishing provides a sense of identity and purpose.

Recreational fishing generates significant economic contributions through employment, direct expenditure and flow-on economic benefits. Recreational fishing in Australia in 2018-19 contributed an estimated \$11.5 billion to Australia's gross domestic product and supported over 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs in Australia<sup>1</sup>. This included economic contributions of around \$270 million in the Northern Territory.

Recreational fishing presents a wealth of opportunities for the future of the Territory. There is potential to grow the social, cultural, economic, health and well-being benefits provided by recreational fishing, and foster the opportunities it presents for regional and Aboriginal development and tourism. However the future of recreational fishing is also uncertain, complex, and subject to change. Factors such as evolving land and sea access arrangements, changing fishing pressures, climate change, and the impacts of development can affect the recreational fishing industry and drastically change our recreational fishing experiences.

The opportunities and uncertainties in the recreational fishing sector require a new style of strategic planning; one that sets a clear direction, engenders widespread involvement, ownership, stewardship and responsibility across the recreational fishing community, and allows the sector to quickly adapt to changing circumstances and new challenges.

In 2022, the Fisheries Division (NT Fisheries), the Ministerial Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee<sup>2</sup> (RFAC) and the Amateur Fisherman's Association of the NT (AFANT) together ran a consultation and engagement program with the Territory's recreational fishing community using a new strategic planning approach designed to suit situations of high complexity and uncertainty. This innovative and comprehensive approach was the first of its kind undertaken for recreational fishing in the Territory.

The work to date has informed the draft vision, desired outcomes and implementation approach presented in this document, reflecting the variety of views and needs across the Territory's recreational fishing community. Further detail illustrating the comprehensive nature of the planning process and outcomes is provided in the Appendix.



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<sup>1</sup> Read more about the economic contributions of recreational fishing at <https://www.frdc.com.au/about-recreational-fishing/nrfs>

<sup>2</sup>The RFAC is made up of 10-12 leaders in the recreational fishing sector appointed by the Minister for Agribusiness and Fisheries, including representatives from AFANT and the NT Guided Fishing Industry Association.

## Vision Statement

This vision statement turns the 10 year vision of the recreational fishing sector, presented at the beginning of this document<sup>3</sup>, into clear direction to guide the RFDP framework in the present.

### Vision Statement

*“The Northern Territory will protect and grow its diverse, world class recreational fishing industry and high-quality fishing experiences underpinned by a variety of abundant fish stocks, healthy ecosystems and fish habitats, certainty of access, freedoms cherished by Territorians, and a confident, capable and well-resourced recreational fishing sector.*

*We will widely recognise and celebrate the value that recreational fishing brings to society in terms of economic activity, employment, social bonds, the continuation of cultural practices, and the health and wellbeing of people and communities.*

*We will find ways to navigate through and benefit from the uncertainties and the challenges facing our sector, including evolving access arrangements, climate change, fishing pressures, and the impacts of other industries and developments.*

*We will encourage and foster the creation of new fishing opportunities on Darwin’s doorstep and across regional and remote areas to support sustainable development in the Territory.”*



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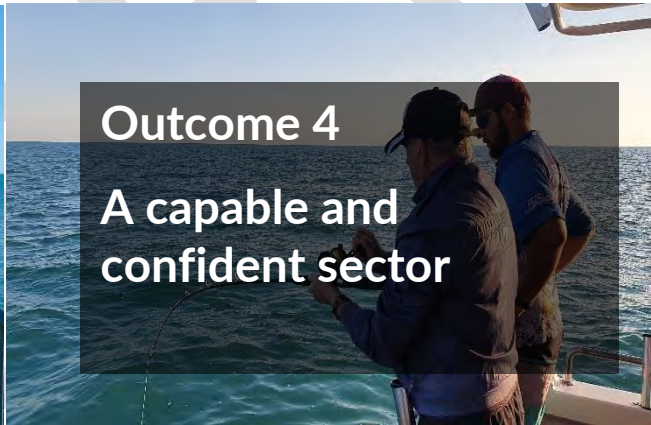
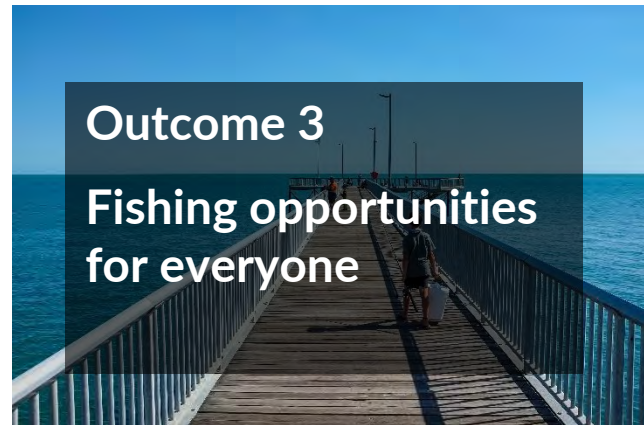
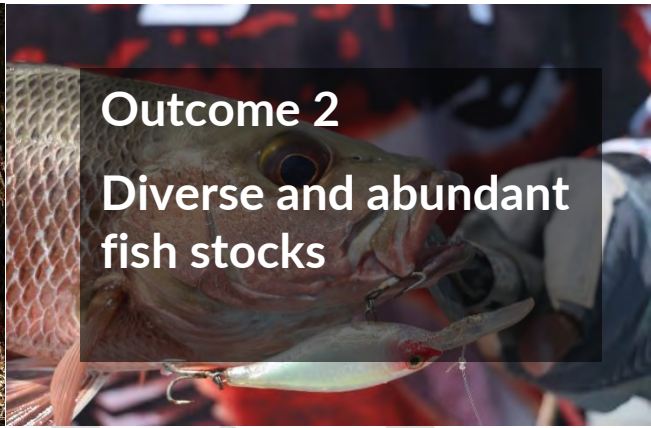
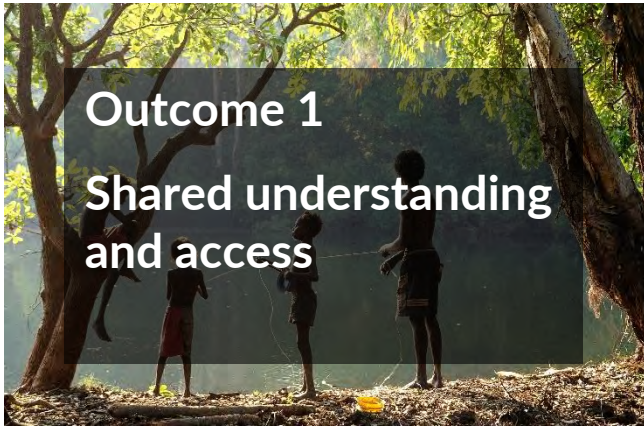
<sup>3</sup> The 10 year vision of the sector is a consolidated statement based on the input of hundreds of recreational fishers across the Territory (see the Appendix for further information). Importantly, the full 10 year vision will continue to guide the development and implementation of the final RFDP framework.

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## Desired outcomes

The people and organisations making up the recreational fishing sector have agreed that four key outcomes are required to achieve the Territory's desired recreational fishing future.





## Outcome 1 – Shared understanding and access

Some of the best recreational fishing locations and experiences in the Territory are found in waters that overlay or are accessed through privately owned or managed areas, such as Aboriginal land, pastoral leases or government land where access is restricted, such as Defence land. In many of these areas, fishing also provides development, tourism and recreational opportunities for local communities.

Access to these kinds of areas is evolving and is subject to significant change and challenges.

**There is a need for mutual recognition of values and strong relationships between the recreational fishing sector and land owners and managers to provide certainty of access, and ensure recreational fishing and fishing related tourism is able to support the aspirations of regional and remote communities. This includes maintaining access to existing areas as well as creating new access opportunities wherever possible.**



## Outcome 2 – Diverse and abundant fish stocks

The Territory's world class recreational fishing opportunities and experiences are sustained by diverse and abundant fish stocks. While the Territory's fish stocks and habitats are in a healthy state in comparison to many places around the world, they are still vulnerable to change.

Fish stocks can be affected by fishing pressures, a changing climate and impacts to habitats and ecological processes associated with industry and development, such as water extraction or vegetation clearing. Many of the Territory's popular fish species are susceptible to overfishing and stock decline, particularly in areas subject to high recreational and/or commercial fishing pressure.

**There is a need to better understand, protect and maintain the levels of fish diversity and natural abundance associated with high quality fishing experiences in key recreational fishing locations, and the environmental settings required to sustain it.**





## Outcome 3 – Fishing opportunities for everyone

While fish diversity and abundance sustain the Territory's world class fishing experiences, a range of other factors influence the opportunities people have to access these experiences<sup>4</sup>, including infrastructure, fishing laws, knowledge, safety, the costs of fishing, availability of time for fishing, and community acceptance (social licence). Artificial fish habitats and stock enhancement can also play an important role in creating opportunities and can enrich existing ones.

Many of these factors can be impacted in different ways by policy settings, changing population, climate change, development, and geopolitical forces.

**There is a need to prioritise, strategically invest in, and facilitate improved and new opportunities for people of all backgrounds, cultures, skills and abilities to enjoy fishing in the Territory, in ways that balance fishing pressures across regions and locations.**



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<sup>4</sup> Although land and sea access arrangements relate to this, it is addressed separately under outcome 1 to reflect the significant role land and sea access arrangements play in the Territory's recreational fishing landscape.

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## Outcome 4 – A capable and confident sector

The Territory's recreational fishing sector includes:

- recreational fishers, leaders and champions
- fishing tour, tackle, apparel and marine service businesses
- fishing clubs and representative organisations such as AFANT and the NT Guided Fishing Industry Association (NTGFIA), and
- a range of NT Government agencies managing fisheries, tourism, safety, compliance and infrastructure.

The capability and confidence of the sector will play a key role in the future of recreational fishing in the Territory. It will drive the level of positive influence the sector has on the behaviours of recreational fishers and leaders, its involvement in fisheries management decision making and actions, and support competent engagement in external decision making processes (e.g. broader industry and development planning, assessment and approval processes). This will require a focus on skills, leadership, behaviours, communication, engagement, relationships, partnerships, transparency, innovation and the capacity for adaptive change.

**There is a need to focus on maintaining and growing the capability and confidence of the recreational fishing sector in order to support the delivery of all other components of this plan and to achieve the future desired by recreational fishers.**



## Framework implementation model

The implementation model for the RFDP will be an online framework of tools and resources to guide behaviours, actions, roles and responsibilities of government and its partners in the recreational fishing sector to achieve desired outcomes. This online framework will enable constant assessment and adjustment of actions where required to progressively achieve the RFDP vision.

## Essential behaviours

During the 2022 consultation and engagement program, recreational fishers and leaders in the sector identified a number of behaviours essential to successfully implementing the RFDP and achieving the sector's desired future. These behaviours are intended as a benchmark for all people and organisations in the sector:

- Understanding, empathy and respect towards people, cultures, perspectives, situations and context
- Stewardship for our fish, habitats, and ecosystems
- Compliance with fishing, marine and safety rules and laws
- Adoption of best practices
- Sharing, learning and teaching
- Forward thinking to plan for and consider implications for future generations
- Consultation, communication, collaboration and transparency
- A culture of agility, adaptability and innovation
- Leading by example to positively influence others.



Photo credit: Girls Gone Fishin'

## Actions

As part of final RFDP release and implementation in 2023, the NT Government will include a set of actions outlining the initial steps required to start progress towards the desired RFDP outcomes.

Actions will be reviewed by the NT Government and the RFAC annually, to assess the level of completion, uptake of essential behaviours, and progress towards RFDP outcomes.

### Types of actions

RFDP actions will likely fall into three different categories: 'Quick hook-ups', 'Game changers', and 'Long casts'.

Table 1 below provides examples of some possible initial RFDP actions across these categories (note, these do not represent commitments at this stage).

**Table 1: Examples of RFDP actions**

| Quick-hook up examples  | Game changing examples   | Long cast examples  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promotion of the RFDP and the social, cultural, health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing in the Territory</li> <li>improved security measures at priority ramps</li> <li>enhanced recreational fishing education and engagement</li> <li>promotion of recreational fishing events</li> <li>use of the new Fishing and Boating Mate App in fisheries communications</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mobility impaired access platforms at priority ramps</li> <li>new land-based fishing platforms</li> <li>new and improved priority ramps, roads and facilities</li> <li>potential expansion of artificial reef networks in Darwin region</li> <li>identification of new innovative stocking opportunities</li> <li>research into the fish diversity, abundance and access required to support high quality recreational fishing experiences</li> </ul> | <p>The initial steps to progress towards things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darwin region recreational fishing strategy</li> <li>Regional recreational fishing development and tourism strategy</li> <li>Recreational fishing research forward plan</li> <li>Recreational fishing infrastructure forward plan</li> <li>Reinvigorated NT Stocking Program</li> <li>Fishing Tour Operator plan</li> <li>A recreational fishing program to engage with schools, clubs and community groups</li> </ul> |

### Development of the initial RFDP actions – Have Your Say!

The first set of actions towards the RFDP outcomes are being developed in collaboration with leaders in the Territory's recreational fishing sector. As part of the current public comment period, the input of the Territory's broader recreational fishing community is being sought to:

1. provide ideas about the kinds of actions that could help to progress towards the RFDP outcomes, and
2. explore how members of the Territory's recreational fishing community would like to be involved in those actions.

Please provide feedback and input through the NT Government Have Your Say website at <https://haveyoursay.nt.gov.au>



## Roles and responsibilities for implementation

Progress towards the RFDP actions is dependent on a three way partnership between recreational fishers and fishing guides, leaders in the recreational fishing sector, and the NT Government.

To ensure success, these groups also need to work with a range of other people and organisations that are not direct components of the recreational fishing sector, but are affected by or can influence the success of the recreational fishing sector<sup>5</sup>. The roles and responsibilities of each group are explored in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: The roles and responsibilities required for RFDP implementation**

| Who   | RFDP roles and responsibilities   |
|---|---|
| <b>Primary NT Government roles</b>  |   |
| The NT Minister for Agribusiness and Fisheries  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for RFDP approval, implementation, amendment and success</li> <li>Spread awareness, information and positive messaging about the RFDP</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul>   |
| NT Fisheries  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administer the RFDP framework</li> <li>Lead/facilitate/undertake/support/monitor delivery of actions</li> <li>Support capability development in the sector</li> <li>Review RFDP actions and progress on annual basis</li> <li>Spread awareness, information and positive messaging about the RFDP</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul> |
| RFAC*   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review RFDP actions and progress on annual basis</li> <li>Advise NT Fisheries and the Minister on RFDP priorities, progress and results</li> <li>Participate in RFDP actions where required and possible</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Leaders in the recreational fishing sector</b>   |   |
| AFANT and NTGFIA**  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread awareness, information and positive messaging about the RFDP</li> <li>Lead/facilitate/undertake/support/monitor delivery of RFDP actions</li> <li>Lead capability development in the sector</li> <li>Engage in and provide input to RFDP review processes</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul>                                  |
| Other leaders/champions***  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread awareness, information and positive messaging about the RFDP</li> <li>Engage in and provide input to RFDP review processes where possible or requested</li> <li>Participate in RFDP actions where possible</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Recreational fishers and fishing guides</b>  |   |
| Recreational fishers and fishing guides   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in and provide input to RFDP review processes where affected or possible</li> <li>Participate in RFDP actions where possible</li> <li>Model and practice the RFDP essential behaviours</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Other people and organisations the recreational fishing sector need to work with effectively</b> |   |
| Others  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the RFDP in decision-making</li> <li>Participate in RFDP actions where possible or requested</li> <li>Engage in and provide input to RFDP review processes where affected or requested</li> </ul>   |

Notes:

\* The RFAC includes representatives from AFANT, NTGFIA and other recreational fishing leaders.

\*\* This is separate to the role of AFANT and NTGFIA representatives on the RFAC.

\*\*\* This includes RFAC members in their private capacity.

<sup>5</sup> Such as land and sea owners, managers and representatives, research organisations, the commercial and aquaculture industry, other NT Government agencies such as NT Parks.

## Framework approval

While the RFDP is a non-statutory document, it requires Ministerial approval due to its significance in guiding the future of recreational fishing in the Territory.

## Framework review

The RFDP framework will be subject to routine review each year as part of RFAC review of action delivery and progress. Ministerial approval will be required for any required amendments to the RFDP framework.

A holistic framework review will also be conducted with recreational fishers and the sector after five years of RFDP implementation.

## Framework architecture

The final RFDP framework will be presented digitally and made available online. This format allows for information to be easily updated when needed, and will illustrate the actions and progress towards RFDP outcomes.

## Next steps

The next steps in RFDP development include public comment on this Consultation Draft, update of the draft RFDP to address feedback, development of the first set of RFDP actions, and release of the final RFDP framework in 2023.



## Appendix

### Recreational Fishing Development Plan consultation, engagement and development processes

During 2020 and 2021 the RFAC explored a new approach to strategic planning to:

- build the involvement and ownership of the Territory's recreational fishing sector to improve collaboration, responsibility, stewardship and the identification of shared values
- suit dynamic, highly complex and uncertain operating environments.

The 2022 RFDP consultation and engagement program was designed as a first step in achieving these goals. The program was coordinated by NT Fisheries in collaboration with AFANT and the RFAC. The program was facilitated by a consultancy called Strategic Journeys, who specialise in strategic thinking and leadership in complex adaptive systems and dynamic organisational challenges.

This program was the first of its kind undertaken by the Territory's recreational fishing sector and laid the foundations for RFDP success over the next decade, based on the input of the recreational fishing community.

#### 2022 consultation and engagement program statistics

- Around 250 recreational fisher interviews and surveys at boat ramps, fishing platforms, tackle shops and online, producing thousands of individual recreational fishing stories, experiences and desires.
- 6 full-day workshops:
  - held at Darwin Parliament House, the Northern Australia Development Office, NT Fisheries Office and AFANT Office
  - involving approximately 60 leaders and champions across organisations in the Territory's recreational fishing sector and other related areas
  - contributing around 750 workshop/people hours of collective effort\*
- 3 smaller RFDP working group sessions
- 2 RFAC committee meetings.

\*Each workshop involved different combinations of people meaning every person did not attend every workshop.

#### Development stages

**Stage 1** of the program involved exploring and developing our understanding of the sector and the context it operates within.

**Stage 2** of the program involved investigating and gathering the values, motivations and needs of recreational fishers in the Territory.

**Stage 3** of the program involved the people and organisations that make up the Territory's recreational fishing sector developing the RFDP vision, outcomes and implementation approach, based on the values, motivations and needs of recreational fishers.



## Stage one – understanding the recreational fishing sector

Over three days in June 2022 around 30 representatives of the Territory’s broader fisheries and aquaculture sector explored and mapped out the dynamics and drivers that sustain and influence recreational fishing in the NT.

Participants produced an extensive ‘systems map’ for the sector illustrating the values, drivers, links, and systems that influence the many different components of the recreational fishing sector (see Figure 1 below for a snapshot of the NT recreational fishing systems map).

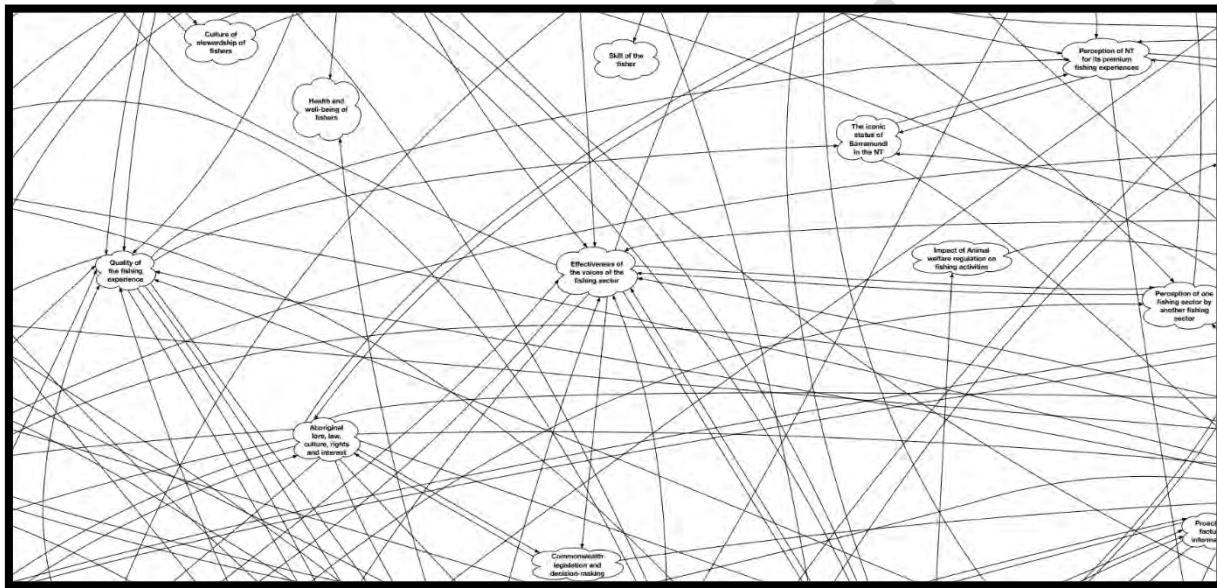
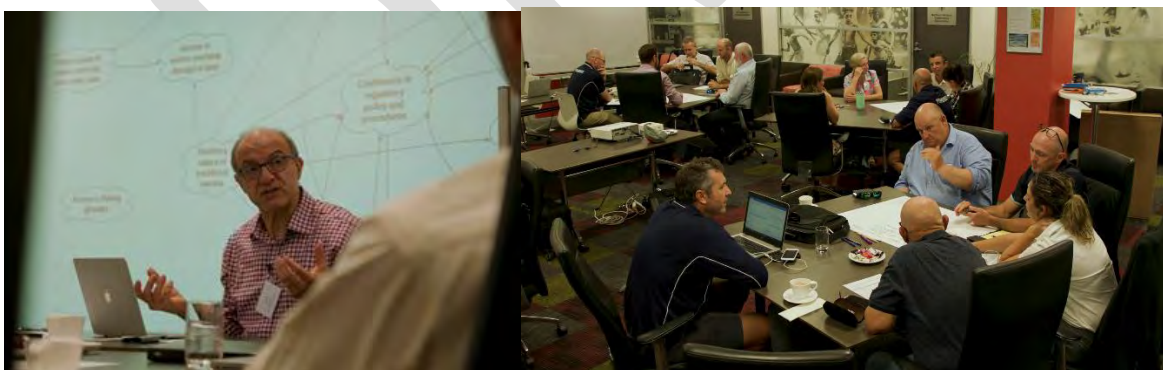


Figure 1: Snapshot of the NT Fisheries systems map



## Systems map outputs

This work highlighted a number of key drivers and systems that can positively or negatively influence our fishing experience, and was critical in developing the vision, focal areas, required outcomes and behaviours to build the RFDP framework. It is also being used to guide the development of our first tranche of actions under the RFDP framework.

Figure 2 below illustrates how the NT recreational fishing systems map can be used to explore particular factors driving recreational fishing experiences in the Territory and what it means for our sector. Figure 2 shows a central driving system, or ‘feedback loop’, which can be interpreted to help create positive change in the long term across the recreational fishing sector. It shows the significance and importance of better understanding, recognising, promoting, and celebrating the social, cultural, health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing in the Territory.

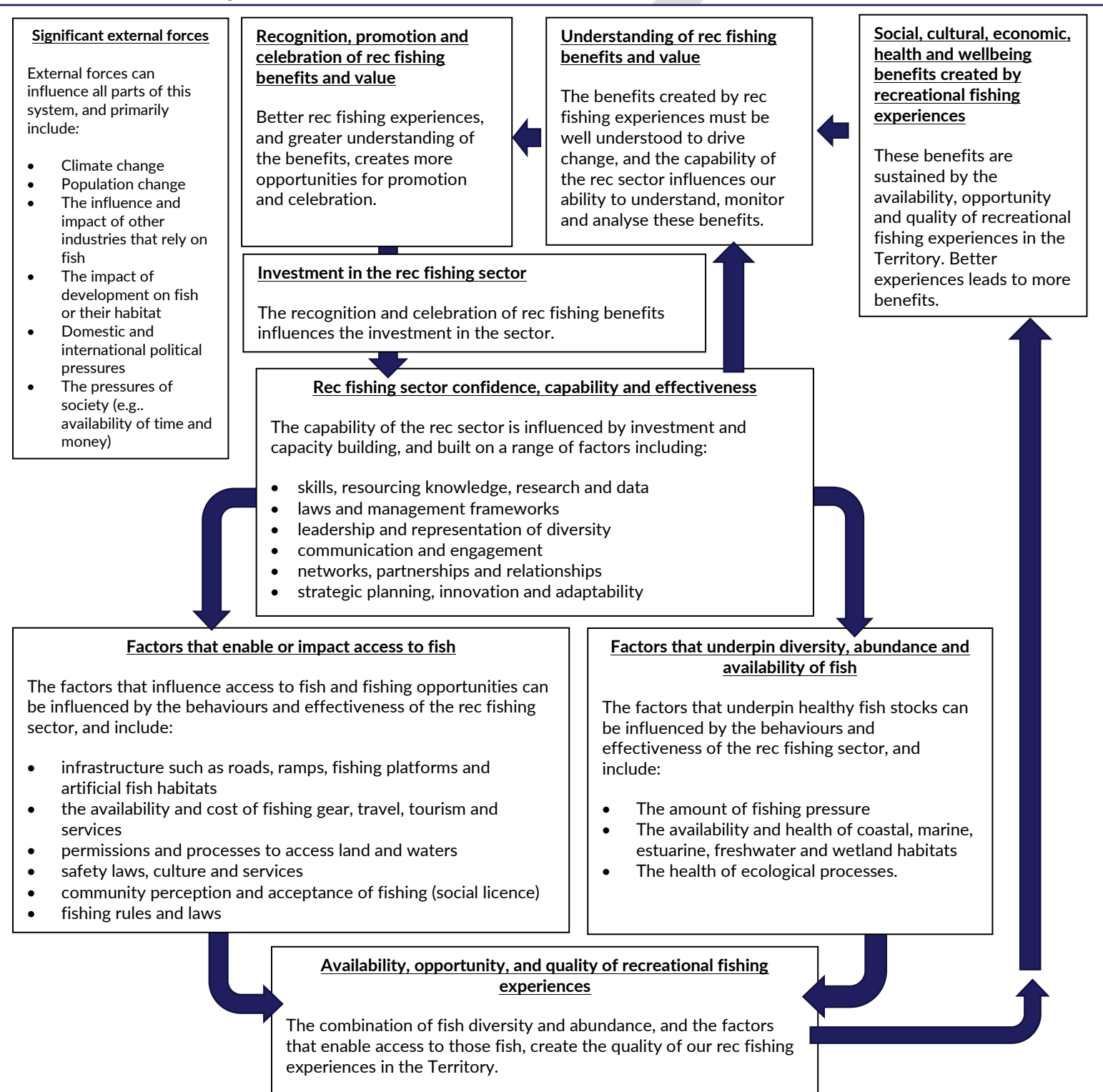


Figure 2: Example feedback loop

## Stage two – engagement with recreational fishers

In June and July 2022, NT Fisheries and AFANT sought the input of recreational fishers.

Hundreds of fishers were interviewed at boat ramps, jetties, tackle shops and online to explore what motivates people to go fishing, what makes for a good or bad day's fishing, and what they want in the future.

This work produced thousands of individual stories that were used to inform the next stage of RFDP development, and will continue to be used to inform final RFDP development and implementation.





**Recreational fishers said....**

We want to go fishing with our friends, family or alone whenever we need to, and catch lots of good fish.

We want to take our loved ones fishing, especially those without the ability to take themselves.

We want to teach our children life lessons through fishing, in the places where we were taught.

We want to catch good fish around the corner from home, or pack up and hit the wilderness without a crowd.

We don't want lots of boats sitting on our spot!

We want to share the fresh food we've caught with our friends and family, and practice long standing cultural traditions from around the world that revolve around fish.

We want the option to catch a feed of reef fish, chase pelagics and game fish, or catch a PB metre plus Barra. We want to fish from our boats, from the land, and with a variety of different gear and techniques, including fly fishing and spear fishing.

We don't want to lose all our fish to sharks!

We want to respectfully access our favourite fishing locations across the Territory.

We want to see each other respecting and caring for our fish and their habitats, and sacred cultural areas and ways.

We want to be recognised as stewards of our fish and habitats.

We're proud of the Territory's Aboriginal heritage and want recreational fishing to create opportunities for Aboriginal people and communities.

We respect the need to share our fish and habitats between recreational fishers, commercial fishing and traditional fishing.

We want safe, secure and useable ramps and roads, but we want to keep some rough tracks in to special places!

We want to stop the minority of people doing the wrong thing from impacting the majority of people who do the right thing.

We want to see fisheries officers out there addressing bad fishing behaviours.

We want our recreational fishing peak bodies to represent our needs and diversity in the rec fishing community.

We want to see our leaders fighting for our shared fishing future.

### Stage three – developing draft RFDP vision, outcomes, and implementation approach

Between July and November 2022 the inputs of recreational fishers and the participation of the recreational fishing sector informed the development of the draft RFDP vision, outcomes and implementation approach.

This commenced with a three day series of workshops starting at Darwin Parliament House with approximately 40 recreational fishing representatives. This was followed by three subsequent working group meetings.

Through this process, participants distilled the motivations and desires of fishers to help the sector describe a 10 year vision of recreational fishing in the Territory, which then informed our RFDP outcomes and behaviours (see the 2033 vision at the beginning of the document). This 10 year vision will continue to inform final RFDP development and implementation over time.

