

THE VALUE OF COASTAL FISHERIES IN NSW

\$ A STRONG ECONOMY

The NSW professional fishing industry contributes more than \$436 million in revenue annually and accounts for approximately 3,290 full-time jobs. This includes the fishers, service industries, sales and marketing. Tourism and hospitality also benefit as local wild-caught fish, crabs, lobsters and prawns are menu favourites among tourists and locals.

B FRESH, LOCAL SEAFOOD

- > 94% of NSW coastal residents agree that it is important we produce our own seafood in NSW
- > 72% want to know where their seafood comes from
- > 96% believe buying local seafood is better for their local community.

K KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Learning to be a professional fisher in NSW is a complex and lifelong process. Fishers learn the skills of their profession by trial and error or through knowledge handed down through the generations. Environmental knowledge developed through extended experience is a valuable resource for researchers, government agencies and recreational fishers.

H CULTURAL HERITAGE

Many towns dotted along the NSW coast evolved from fishing communities and still identify with their professional fishing heritage. In many areas, working harbours remain important civic focal points. Three-quarters of coastal residents in NSW are concerned that a decline in the industry could lead to a loss of identity for NSW fishing towns.

C COMMUNITY LIFE

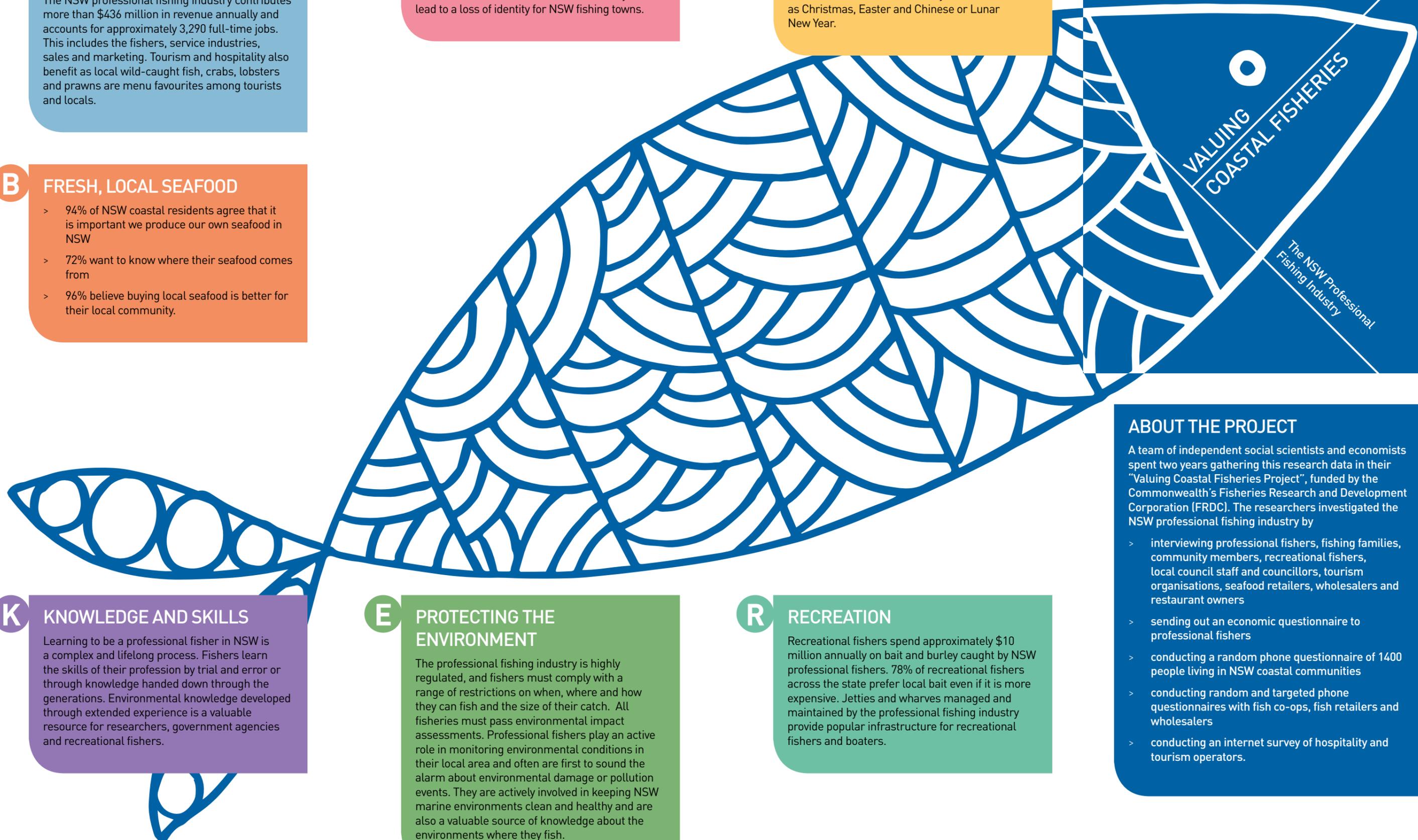
Professional fishers play an active role in community life in regional areas, supplying ice, seafood trays and other donations to community events and sporting groups. They frequently join in life saving search and rescue missions. Local seafood is central to community celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and Chinese or Lunar New Year.

E PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

The professional fishing industry is highly regulated, and fishers must comply with a range of restrictions on when, where and how they can fish and the size of their catch. All fisheries must pass environmental impact assessments. Professional fishers play an active role in monitoring environmental conditions in their local area and often are first to sound the alarm about environmental damage or pollution events. They are actively involved in keeping NSW marine environments clean and healthy and are also a valuable source of knowledge about the environments where they fish.

R RECREATION

Recreational fishers spend approximately \$10 million annually on bait and burley caught by NSW professional fishers. 78% of recreational fishers across the state prefer local bait even if it is more expensive. Jetties and wharves managed and maintained by the professional fishing industry provide popular infrastructure for recreational fishers and boaters.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

A team of independent social scientists and economists spent two years gathering this research data in their "Valuing Coastal Fisheries Project", funded by the Commonwealth's Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). The researchers investigated the NSW professional fishing industry by

- > interviewing professional fishers, fishing families, community members, recreational fishers, local council staff and councillors, tourism organisations, seafood retailers, wholesalers and restaurant owners
- > sending out an economic questionnaire to professional fishers
- > conducting a random phone questionnaire of 1400 people living in NSW coastal communities
- > conducting random and targeted phone questionnaires with fish co-ops, fish retailers and wholesalers
- > conducting an internet survey of hospitality and tourism operators.

HOW DO PROFESSIONAL FISHERS CATCH WILD FISH?

They use

- > estuary meshing of fish and prawns
- > line fishing (catch includes Snapper and Kingfish)
- > trapping of Mud crabs, Lobster and fish
- > trawling or purse-seining (catch includes Flathead and Sardines and prawns)
- > **ocean (including beach) hauling (catch includes Mullet and Salmon)**
- > diving for Abalone and Sea Urchins.
- > hand gathering of pipis and worms

For more information visit:
masterfishermen.oceanwatch.org.au

HEALTHY AND VERSATILE

Many people value Mullet as an affordable and tasty fish. It is especially prized by Indigenous people for its taste, nutritional value and abundance.

“I’ll tell you a couple of things about Mullet. It’s the second highest Omega 3 fatty acids out of any fish. You can grill, boil, roast, smoke, poach, curry the fish, do it anyway you like. It’s one of the most sustainably caught fish anywhere in the world.”

Chris Davis – Fish retailer (Nambucca).



MULTIPLE MARKETS

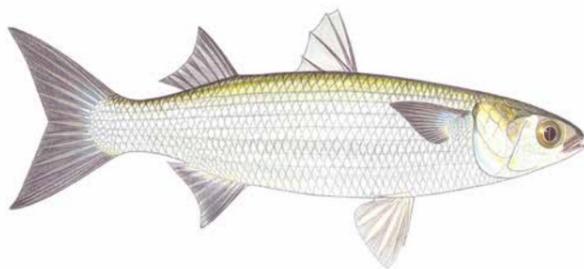
Value-adding is an important part of the beach-haul fishery.

“We process the Mullet roe for export...The male fish are packed for domestic and export sales. When we do process the roe and remove the roe, the head’s removed from the fish. That gets packaged for bait for crab fishermen – what we then have left is what we call a barrel which will be packed and sold both domestically and internationally, or we fillet those barrels and that, again, goes to domestic and export markets. So the beauty of this product is that it’s essentially fully utilised.”

Richard Brown – Manager Markwell Fisheries (Tweed Heads).

ABOUT NSW BEACH HAULING

Beach hauling occurs across NSW. It operates year round and targets a variety of species including Pilchards (*Sardinops sagax*), Australian Salmon (*Arripis trutta*), Yellowtail Scad (*Trachurus novaezelandiae*) and Mullet (*Mugil cephalus*).



Every autumn, Mullet begin their annual migration up the NSW coast to spawn.

“During the Mullet season, the fish travel out of the estuarine systems and on to the beaches, and that’s basically when the haul season starts.”

Richard Brown – Manager Markwell Fisheries (Tweed Heads)



HAULING IN THE CATCH

Beach hauling is one of the oldest forms of fishing in NSW, practised by generations of professional fishers since the early days of colonisation. Indigenous fishers historically played an important role as “spotters” or crew, sitting on the beach and watching out for the shoals of fish. Entire families got involved with the haul and sorting of catch.

Beach hauling is also one of the most sustainable forms of fishing practised in NSW. Species targeted are large, travelling schools of adult fish. There is little bycatch or habitat damage as fishers shoot the net over bare sandy beaches.



SIGNAL STATION, SOUTH WEST ROCKS

A COMMUNITY EVENT

Given it often takes place on popular beaches, the beach haul is an exciting and visible public spectacle.

“As a kid having the professional guys do the Mullet run and you’re on the beach and then they call all the kids to help pull in the nets and then you get to chuck fish in. It just creates memories for people.”

Steven (Port Stephens resident).

Today government regulation prevents public participation but the haul still draws crowds of spectators. In South West Rocks, commercial fishers hold an annual Good Friday Mullet BBQ. Known as the “loaves and fishes”, this event attracts both the local community and tourists and includes displays on the historical importance of mullet to South West Rocks’ history.