

Slippery Connections: Understanding the shortfin eel (*Anguilla Australis*) for fisheries management in Australia & Aotearoa

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET for Interview

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether to take part.

Who are we?

The interviews are led by Alexis Farr from the University of Wollongong, as part of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research project in the School of Geography and Sustainable Communities. The primary research supervisor is Associate Professor Leah Gibbs from the University of Wollongong. This study is funded under the 'Fish Futures' research program (www.fishfutures.co.nz), which is being carried out by an interdisciplinary team of social scientists, Indigenous researchers, and freshwater ecologists. The research program has been developed in consultation with Te Arawa, Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku, Kāti Huirapa ki Arowhenua, the Department of Conservation, and Fish & Game New Zealand and is funded by MBIE Endeavour Grant – CAWX2101.

What is the aim of the project?

Fish Futures aims to support communities to articulate their aspirations for freshwater fish and identify pathways to achieving those aspirations. To achieve this, we will assemble a broad knowledge base on how diverse groups of people interact with and value fish species and how the management of freshwater fish has changed over time.

We are inviting community leaders, land managers / kaitiaki, knowledge holders, and interest group representatives from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to participate in interviews, to understand the values, histories and socio-ecological dynamics that have shaped fish meanings and management in specific places.

This research will gather diverse and place-based knowledges of the southern shortfin eel (*Anguilla australis*), with an aim to inform more socially and ecologically just pathways for eel fisheries management in Australia and Aotearoa.

What are we asking of you?

We are asking you to participate in a single 30–90-minute semi-structured interview that explores your connections to and knowledge of shortfin eels, and experiences of their management. The interview may involve short activities including drawing a sketch map and/or timeline of eel encounters and relationships in your location. With your permission, we will audio-record the interview so that it can then be transcribed word for word.

We may also seek your permission to photograph the interview to provide context on the location and methods through which you encounter eels.

If you agree to be interviewed, we will correspond with you to identify a suitable time and place (or online video conferencing software) for the interview. You can stop the interview or ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time without giving a reason.

Possible risks, inconveniences, and discomforts

The research requires 30-90 minutes of your time to complete. While we foresee no risk for you, should participation unintentionally cause anxiety you are encouraged to contact the Lifeline Australia (131 114) or Lifeline New Zealand (0800 543 354). Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the study will not affect your relationship with the researchers, University of Wollongong, or Fish Futures team in any way.

What will be done with the interview recording?

The audio recording will be transcribed by the student researcher. You can request a copy of your transcript and withdraw any data from the study without consequence up until the time of publication. If you withdraw, any unpublished data will be removed from the study and returned to you.

Interview recordings, transcripts, sketch maps, and any information that would identify you will be stored securely on the University of Wollongong's password-protected server. We will be responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of your data and that it is only accessed by the Fish Futures research team for the purposes described in this information sheet.

How will my interview be used?

Transcripts will be analysed by the Fish Futures research team to inform the writing of a PhD thesis. The data may also be used to produce academic journal articles, presentations, or reports. Published outputs could feature quotes, paraphrased responses, vignettes, and quantitative analysis of interview data. We will ask you to review any quotes we wish to use in published outputs; you will have two weeks to request amendments to or withdrawal of quotes.

Your name and affiliations will only be included in written outputs with your explicit permission. If you do not wish to be identified, your data will be attributed to a category agreed upon with you (e.g. scientist, kaitiaki). The research team will send participants copies of all published outputs when they are available.

Participants will have the option to provide *specific consent* for this research project only or *extended consent*, in which case interview data may be used in future research related to this study. This option will be given as part of the consent process, via a written form or audio-recorded verbal agreement.

How will First Nations knowledges / mātauranga Māori be treated?

We acknowledge that First Nations communities are the guardians of their knowledges and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge. Consequently, cultural knowledges will only be shared in this research with the express consent of the IP owners, and their ownership will be acknowledged in any published outputs. No knowledges shared by interviewees will be used for private or commercial gain.

At the end of the study, we will offer to assist you in archiving your interview recording and/or transcript if a suitable local archive (such as a local museum or iwi archive) can be found. Archiving enables you to share your knowledge and history with your community, other researchers, and future generations.

We acknowledge that First Nations communities are the guardians of their knowledge / mātauranga and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge. Consequently, cultural knowledges will only be shared in this research with the express consent of the IP owners, and their ownership will be acknowledged in any published outputs. No cultural knowledges shared by interviewees will be used for private or commercial gain.

If you accept this invitation...

If you do decide to participate, you are entitled to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- withdraw from the study up until the time of publication;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- request a transcript and/or the audio recording of your interview, and withdraw content if you wish;
- review any quotes from your interview and request amendments;
- receive a copy of all published outputs;
- be accompanied by a support person(s) during the interview process.

Benefits of the Research

The expected benefits of the study to the participants and the wider community are to present diverse perspectives and richer understandings of eels, across the case study regions. The project may reveal that relationships with eels vary significantly across geographies, with complex and interconnected consequences for management practices. Participation will provide participants with opportunities to engage with their own ideas and perspectives on freshwater fish, as well as learning from other contexts. After the interviews, participants will be offered copies of the audio recordings, interview transcripts, photographs, and a copy of the final thesis. Where desired, data will also be offered for community archives as a form of knowledge keeping. These data may be useful for future community projects or education purposes. Lessons from elsewhere can potentially revitalise long-held knowledges, and inform new thinking and practices connected to freshwater fish and their management.

Participation in the research is voluntary and will not be paid. If significant travel is required to participate in the research, participants may be compensated for their travel costs. Where it is deemed culturally appropriate, a cash gift / koha will be offered to First Nations participants.

Monitoring

This research will be monitored by a team including primary supervisor Leah Gibbs leah@uow.edu.au, co-supervisor Laura Hammersley lauraham@uow.edu.au, and associate supervisor Marc Tadaki, Marc.Tadaki@cawthron.org.nz.

Next steps

If you would like to participate in this study, please advise the research team of your decision to arrange a time and place for the interview. You can contact Alexis at af975@uowmail.edu.au ph: +61 04900 64529. You will be asked to sign a written consent form or provide verbal consent before proceeding to interview.

If you have any further questions, who can you contact?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact the student researcher Alexis Farr at af975@uowmail.edu.au ph: +61 04900 64529, or primary supervisor Leah Gibbs at leah@uow.edu.au ph: +61 2 4298 1547.

The study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Ref: 2023/245) and Cawthron Institute's Human Research Ethics Convenor (Approval ID: CAW-ETH-230630). If you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, please contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Office at uow-humanethics@uow.edu.au ph: +61 2 4239 2191 and/or James Butler (ethics convenor, Cawthron Institute) at James.Butler@cawthron.org.nz ph: 027 228 3559.