

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 8 May 2019

Summary of meeting outcomes

New Committees First Meeting

The May 2019 meeting of the NSW Shellfish Committee was the first meeting with the new representatives. The successful applicants were incumbent representatives Stephen Verdich (Wallis Lake), Sally Ritchie (Wagonga Inlet) and Mario Puglisi (Wild Harvest) who reprised their roles. Previous industry representative Caroline Henry (Wonboyn Lake) was endorsed as the NSW Farmer's Association representative, while new industry representatives Ian Crisp (Manning River) and Shane Buckley (Wapengo Lake) were welcomed to the committee. External committee members include Professor Shauna Murray of University of Technology Sydney (Independent Shellfish Expert) as the newly endorsed Chair and Andy Myers (NSW Oyster Extension Officer).

NSW Oyster Lease Sub-let Agreements

Subletting of an aquaculture lease is required when the current lessee allows another party to be responsible for the farming activities on their lease. The subletting process formalises the change of authorised farming activity on the lease but does not change ownership of a lease. DPI has recently been advised that where a director of a company has been used as the common link between a lease and a permit, a sub-let agreement is required. This advice will affect 156 current leases held by 41 lease holders. Lease holders impacted by this advice will be contacted and offered to take up a sub-let agreement with the fees being waived due to the amended requirements. Other options (transfer) to restructure the business can also be discussed with Aquaculture Administration.

NSW Department of Industry and Planning (Crown Lands)

Crown Lands advised of a project underway to streamline and make consistent processes for dealing with the oyster industry regarding Crown land based tenures (leases and licences) for oyster farming activities. All holders are being contacted to check currency of their details and whether they are interested in a quarterly billing option. Information fact sheets are in preparation and will be disseminated to Crown tenure holders to provide an overview of the differences between leases and licences, native title considerations and other relevant information. Crown Lands will also be attending the upcoming NSW Oyster Conference in August.

NSW Shellfish Program State Levies Endorsed

The annual NSW Shellfish Program fees and subsidies have been endorsed by the committee. Subsidies provided to local shellfish programs to assist with the sampling costs vary between estuaries with some more than the previous year, however the overall total dropped by 1%, primarily due to increased voluntary seasonal closures across the industry and a reduction in average biotoxin testing costs.

Aquaculture Trust Expenditure Endorsed

In accordance with the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* NSW DPI sought endorsement by the NSW Shellfish Committee for the 2019/20 aquaculture trust expenditure. Expenses requested were for aquaculture administration services (consistent with previous years) and an additional request to assist finalise Stage 1 of the online e-business portal for aquaculture transactions.

FRNA Phage Report

The final copy of the FRNA bacteriophage (FRNA phage) survey funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) has been published and can be located here <http://frdc.com.au/project?id=319>. The survey highlighted that some harvest areas can return elevated FRNA phage results in the absence of reported sewage spills. Further complicating the study from a regulatory use, several samples in the study returned positive norovirus results at low FRNA phage levels. Due to these factors it was concluded that FRNA phage is not a suitable as a stand-alone proxy for harvest area management.