

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 4 November 2020

Summary of meeting outcomes

Sydney Rock Oyster Breeding Program

Due to COVID-19 and a new focus on establishing a breeding program in South Australia, Australian Seafood Industries (ASI) has withdrawn from the commercialisation of the Sydney Rock breeding program at this time. NSW DPI will look to take carriage of the project in the short term. DPI will work with Shellfish Committee to confirm and develop this new approach and recommended establishing an industry reference group during this transition. The current industry situation regarding access to spat, increases in production and value of the industry over the past few years suggests this is an opportune time to seek an expression of interest from oyster farmers and businesses in purchasing selectively bred spat

Wild Harvest Industry during COVID-19

A report received by the NSW Shellfish Committee wild harvest representative stated the value of the wild harvest Pipi industry increased throughout the year despite impacts from COVID-19. Demand for the product remained high which increased value. Pipsis are almost exclusively sold through the Sydney Fish Market floor where prices peaked at \$41/kg. This is the first year the wild harvest industry operated under a total allowable catch quota system which has seen a shift in the harvest period and changes to management of their biotoxin management plans.

COVID Survey by Oysters Australia

Andy Myers, current Executive Officer of Oysters Australia provided preliminary findings of a survey regarding impacts to the industry as a result of COVID-19. Some encouraging figures for NSW oyster industry members include. A decrease of sales by 26% nationally, with NSW decrease only 15%. NSW retail sector showed an increase of 9% in oyster sales. Export pre-COVID was 4%, while interest in export post-COVID increased to 25%. Up to 36% increase in NSW stock on farm.

Salinity Sensor Network Extension

Following a successful grant application the salinity sensor project funded by the Food Agility CRC has been extended by a further two years. This provides an extension of the project with the current sensor network, and increase in the number of sensors and a data analysis component to help with predictive modelling. The data collected so far has been used to implement a salinity only management plan for two harvest areas with a further five being identified as suitable for implementing a salinity only management plan. Harvest areas operating under a salinity only management plan have seen an increase in harvest opportunities, a decrease in harvest area closures as well as real-time data availability to assist in farm management practices.

Online Training and Services

Due to travel restriction as a result of COVID-19, training courses (Depuration and Harvest & Hold) offered by NSW Food Authority have been successfully held via video-conferencing. Previously these training courses were held only when sufficient interest was received in an area or if officers had coinciding work in the local area. This extension of services virtually means easier access for industry members to complete NSW Food Authority training courses. Industry members interested in completing these courses can contact the NSW Shellfish Program.

Further extending electronic services, the harvest area status of all NSW shellfish growing areas is now updated every 15 minutes to the NSW Food Authority website. A link can be found here:

<https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/shellfish/status>

TAFE Training Courses

In an attempt to upskill workers in various professions, TAFE NSW is offering, for a limited time highly subsidised and in some cases free short courses which may be applicable to the shellfish industry. More information can be found on the TAFE NSW website <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/tafe-nsw>

OISAS Review

The NSW Oyster Industry Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy (OISAS) is the key management and policy document for the NSW oyster industry. OISAS needs to remain current and relevant to the needs of the NSW oyster industry and NSW DPI are undertaking a review of OISAS due to changes to farming techniques and recent stakeholder interactions. A call for industry submissions to amend OISAS was called on 10 September 2020 with a closing date of 30 October 2020. Four submissions were reviewed by the Shellfish Committee relating to lease relocation, carrying capacity and for amending OISAS to allow for blue basket clips. It was agreed that a moratorium be placed on the use of blue clips and that NSW oyster farmers must in future purchase only black clips. The updated version of OISAS will now be provided to relevant agencies before being placed on public exhibition for comment. Best practice guidelines for raft and floating baskets are also being assessed by Shellfish Committee before broader industry review.

Dates for 2021 NSW Shellfish Committee Meetings

- 10 February 2021
- 19 May 2021
- 18 August 2021
- 10 November 2021

Industry members with matters to raise are to be made aware that they should consult the Shellfish Committee industry representatives to raise the item on their behalf, contact details can be found here <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/shellfish/nsw-shellfish-committee>. If items are raised after the deadlines above, they will be held over until the following meeting. If industry members wish to attend the meeting as an observer, an expression of interest can be sent to food.nswsp@dpi.nsw.gov.au