

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 9 November 2022

Summary of meeting outcomes

Use of Floating Markers

The use of floating markers to designate oyster lease boundaries was raised following infrastructure damage during recent floods. OISAS provides a consistent approach with best practice guidelines on a state-wide perspective where depth and substrate type limit traditional markers. Any new approach to floating boundary markers within OISAS requires industry input for consistency. Best practice must address seagrass protection and preventing fauna entanglement. A consolidated industry view on this issue is sought with comments invited from permit holders for proposed changes to current OISAS rules. Andy Myers (myersa@nswfarmers.org.au) has offered to take feedback for industry.

Shellfish Industry Workers Premiums & Shellfish Business Industry Fund

Workers insurance premiums are set by iCare which is calculated by taking the industry classification rate and multiplying it with how much a business pays in wages. The classification rate in NSW shellfish industry is 6.36% which is on par with fin fish trawling (7%), however the NSW rate is higher than other state shellfish industries ranging from 2.52% - 4.699%. NSW Farmers is pursuing this issue with iCare.

Options to establish a shellfish business industry fund were tabled following concern over limited insurance options for shellfish aquaculture businesses. NSW Shellfish Committee support NSW Farmers to engage a consultant to look into insurance options for a dedicated shellfish industry insurance fund.

Use of Stickers as Lease Signage

The use of stickers as an alternative to aluminium lease signs was raised by NSW Farmers Association. DPI Fisheries confirmed the option to use stickers as lease signage is consistent with OISAS. Specific requirements can be found within [OISAS](#) (pg 47)

Permissions of Use of Crown Land Bases

The Shellfish Committee received correspondence from a group of shellfish businesses seeking a change to the land use permissions of Crown Land oyster depot sites to increase agri-tourism and business diversification. NSW Farmers successfully lobbied Dept. Crown Lands for significantly reduced rates of Crown Land leases/licenses for oyster farming businesses many years ago. Any changes of business models and diversification to include cafes, restaurants and public access may be dependent upon land zoning and potentially result in a change to the rate structure. Crown Lands are to be contacted to attend the February 2023 Shellfish Committee meeting to advise on a state-wide approach to alternate depot uses under their licences/leases.

Shell Re-use and Waste Levy Exemption for Port Stephens Farmers

DPI Fisheries are seeking funding under the 2022 Early Needs Recovery Program to complete an application to permit the use of oyster & mussel shell in on-land application in the form of soil amendment and garden fertiliser. A decision on the funding approval is pending.

Due to the excess material accumulated as a result of the QX outbreak in Port Stephens, DPI Fisheries worked with Port Stephens oyster farmers to successfully obtain a waiver of the EPA waste levy for Port Stephens oyster farmers to dispose of the excess shell at the nearby waste management facility.

Water Quality Initiatives

Water quality to support a viable and productive shellfish industry has been raised as a high priority by the committee. The shellfish committee has recently engaged in meetings with ComFish (Commercial Fishing sector) and RecFish (Recreational Fishing sector) to highlight the need for improved water quality protection mechanisms, support projects in the Marine Estate Management Strategy, Supporting

an ARC Linkage grant with Southern Cross University on water quality monitoring and protection initiatives, updating Healthy Estuaries for Healthy Oysters guidelines to promote harvest area protection, have arranged a series of meetings with Councils/water bodies to promote harvest area protection under the 2022 Early Needs Recovery Program, are undertaking dye testing across eight local councils to assess accurate sewage spill impacts, a part of a real time water quality monitoring project across thirteen estuaries under the Food Agility CRC program and continuing to work collaboratively to advocate for initiatives to improve and protect water quality.

Dates for 2023 NSW Shellfish Committee Meetings

- 22 February 2023
- 24 May 2023 (in person meeting)
- 9 August 2023
- 8 November 2023

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](#). 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