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2009 Oyster Industry Field Days

The Oyster Industry Field Days held at Batemans Bay and Wallis Lake in September 2009 were again well supported by industry with over 220 attending the days. While these days provide a great opportunity for farmers to meet together to discuss farming technology and industry issues, they also provide a unique opportunity to hear from invited speakers with experience and expertise of benefit to the industry and individual farmers.

The focus of the talks this year was the work being undertaken on behalf of the oyster industry by the Seafood CRC Oyster Consortium. While there was the usual background chatter by the same old suspects, it was pleasing to note the high level of interest being shown by a large number of farmers in talks with a dry economic focus on business analysis and profitability.

It was also great to have the opportunity to hear from the keynote speaker John Sussman (seafood specialist). His passion and enthusiasm is hard to miss when it comes to promoting and marketing seafood, especially shellfish. John gave a case study of marketing shellfish in Australia – how a South Australian producer turned a commodity shellfish product into a high valued product through processing, innovative packaging, advertising and promotion.

This year, the Most Beautiful Oyster Contest was sponsored by the Select Oyster Company (SOCo), providing cash prizes in all categories. The quality of the oysters entered in this year's contest was a credit to the industry. The awards at Batemans Bay went to: Stef Paschalidis (Sydney rock oyster), Gary Collison (Pacific oyster) and Greg Dawson (Flat oyster); at Wallis Lake; Jodi and Michael Wright won a very highly competitive Sydney rock oyster category with exceptional oysters and Bruce Redmayne won the Pacific oyster category.

All involved in the organisation of the field days would like to thank the sponsors; *NSW Farmers', Industry & Investment NSW, NSW Food Authority, Land and Property Management Authority, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation*, and the

industry suppliers making up the trade displays for their continued support and participation.

Contact: Steve McOrrie I&I NSW 4916 3921

Look forward to seeing you all at the next Field Days!



Jodi and Michael Wright accepting their award from Tony Troup (SOCo Board Member)

Southern Rivers CMA

Congratulations to the Southern Rivers CMA and their support of the oyster industry. See http://www.southern.cma.nsw.gov.au/news_publications-videos.php

What is I&I NSW?

In July 2009, the Department of Primary Industries became part of Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) which brought together a number of NSW Government departments and authorities. The partner agencies are: Department of Primary Industries, Department of State and Regional Development, Tourism NSW, Department of Water and Energy, NSW Film & Television Office, Rural Assistance Authority, Mine Subsidence Board, Coal Compensation Board, Game Council and the NSW Food Authority.

Fertilizer Field Day - August 2009

Following complaints about the use of organic fertilizer (chicken litter) in the headwaters of Tilligerry Creek, the department coordinated a field day to look at fertilizer use - maximising returns for farmers and application procedures to protect waterways. Local SQAP coordinator Don Burgoyne spoke to farmers, turf and soil suppliers and local residents about the oyster industry and the benefits in maintaining water quality for a healthy catchment. One of the key issues arising from discussion was the need for landholders to test soil prior to fertilizer application as in many cases 'traditional' or broad spectrum applications were wasted.

For new mandatory standards in Queensland for fertilizer and pesticide use see <http://www.reefwise farming.qld.gov.au/>

Joint aquaculture consultative group meeting

The department is planning to host NSW aquaculture consultative groups (ARAC, POAG, LBACG) to a joint meeting in May 2010. The aim of the meeting is to: confirm the roles of the groups, consider succession planning and training (eg Leadership programs) for industry representatives. The meeting will also be used to prioritise industry and government research and industry development initiatives. **Contact: Ian Lyall I&I NSW 4916 3856**

'Oysters in the House'

I&I NSW sponsored the NSW Farmers' Association "Oysters in the House" event held at Customs House in November. The event included a regional showcase of Sydney rock oysters for the "Peoples Choice" Award. It also matched oysters to award winning wines and beers from the Sydney Royal Fine Food and Wine Show. Pacific and Flat oysters were also promoted. The Sydney Royal Fine Food and Wine Show partnered in the promotion with Chair Lyndey Milan attending and judges Simon Marnie and John Susman MC'ing the event. This event is an opportunity for the NSW oyster industry to professionally promote their products to the food industry, media, bureaucrats as well as oyster lovers from the general public.

New Director

Mr Paul O'Connor is the new Principal Director, Fisheries and Compliance I&I NSW. Paul has a long association with the NSW aquaculture industry managing the sector during the 80-90's. His recent posting was with the Compliance Division across the former NSW DPI.

Compliance

It is pleasing to note that the compliance rate for oyster leases has improved about 15% over the last twelve months. Significant improvements were

shown in signage, posting (corner posts are most important) and clean up. I would like to take this opportunity to thank oyster farmers who made a special effort to comply with permit conditions.

Contact: John Timmins I&I NSW 5524 0604

Climate change

The edible oyster industry has been identified as potentially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Observed and projected changes in ocean temperatures, rainfall patterns and storm events, air temperature and pest species could all impact on oyster aquaculture. The University of Tasmania is working with the Australian oyster industry to investigate how oyster growers may prepare for changes and maintain viability through adaptation and innovation. Grower workshops are planned for NSW in 2010. **Contact: Peat Leith UTAS 03 6226 7675**

ARC funds oyster climate change research

Successful research on the potential impacts of climate change on the early developmental stages of both Sydney rock and Pacific oysters has been rewarded with further funding. The Australian Research Council has provided \$200,000 for a collaborative project involving researchers from the University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University and I&I NSW to continue to investigate impacts on oysters. The new study will identify how oysters respond to chronic multigenerational exposure to ocean acidification and temperature change, and identify physiological mechanisms and genes associated with climate change adaptation.

Contact: Wayne O'Connor I&I NSW 4916 3906

Aquaculture Research Advisory Committee

The Committee welcomed three new members: Ms Milada Safarik (land based), Mr Michael Wright and Mr Ewan McAsh (oysters) at the October meeting. Mr Justin Fromm (National Aquaculture Council) will also be attending future meetings as an observer. ARAC farewelled Mr Rob McCormack, Mr Dominic Boyton and Ms Audrey Thors as outgoing members – their efforts have been greatly appreciated.

Submissions to ARAC for Research Initiatives were discussed at this meeting to prioritise future projects. It was agreed a broader canvas of land based research priorities was needed. Thanks were extended to all permit holders who contributed to the research survey. For meeting outcomes see <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/aquaculture/committees/arac> **Contact: Jo Pickles I&I NSW 4916 3901**

Congratulations to Broken Bay Oysters

Finalist in the NAB Agribusiness Primary Producer of the Year Award 2009.

Second in the NSW LandCare Primary Producer Award 2009.

Primary Producer Award, Hawkesbury-Nepean LandCare Awards 2009.

Silver Award 2009 for Pacific oysters Sydney Royal

Contact: Chris Johnston Broken Bay Oysters

Clean up of derelict oyster leases Port Stephens

The Hunter – Central Rivers CMA has provided a grant to clean up a number of derelict leases within a Sanctuary Zone in the Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Park. A group of Port Stephens growers cleaned up 5 ha of oyster leases. The work will enhance marine habitat, improve estuarine amenity and navigation, and allow the return of the areas to public water land.

Contact: Katie Sachs I&I NSW 4916 3913

Contractor register

I&I NSW has called for expressions of interest from oyster farmers and other parties to be included on a Contractor Register to carry out work for the remediation and clean up of oyster lease areas, or other related work. Where works are identified, I&I NSW will notify all contractors on the Contractor Register who have expressed an interest in working in the particular estuary, describing the nature of the work and inviting a tender.

Contact: Steve McOrrie I&I NSW 4916 3921

Clove Oil banned for food fish production

In the last two years industry and the department have successfully worked together to have six commonly used aquaculture chemicals registered with the APVMA. However, one application for clove oil cannot be progressed without detailed and expensive investigations. This year the Aquaculture Research Advisory Committee wrote to the National Aquaculture Council (NAC) seeking assistance to progress an industry wide application. The NAC has advised that while it recognised that clove oil is an effective anaesthetic and more cost effective than other approved fish anaesthetics it does not support an application for registration given variation in batches and impurities that may have unknown risks on fish and operators. NSW Aquaculture permit holders are advised that the department has withdrawn a Minor Use Application with the APVMA for clove oil and it remains a non registered chemical and can not be used for food fish production.

Contact: Ian Lyall I&I NSW 4916 3856

Kalang River update

The Kalang remains closed some 18 months after Norovirus illness was linked to oysters harvested from this river. Progress and achievements to date include: establishing Laboratory capacity in Australia to analyse oysters for the presence of Norovirus, upgrades to the Urunga STP UV disinfection system, improved management of on-site systems by Council and a large amount of data has been collected. The

inter-agency working group recently received a boost with additional funding from the Department of Premiers and Cabinet, I&I NSW and DECCW that will enable essential dye testing to commence in January 2010 and other works. These works aim to identify any problems that need fixing with the STP, on-site sewerage management systems and local caravan parks.

Continuing reports of winter mortality

I&I NSW continued to receive reports of mortality events in oyster stocks in 2009 that are suspected to be a result of winter mortality. However, these reports are often received at the end of the mortality event, by which time suitable samples are no longer available to allow diagnosis of the cause of the mortality. I&I NSW should be contacted as soon as there is a suspicion of a disease event, when mortality has just commenced. This applies to all diseases, not just winter mortality. Notifying I&I NSW promptly allows for coordination of appropriate samples to be sent to the laboratory and maximises the likelihood of an accurate diagnosis.

Contact: Aquatic Biosecurity I&I NSW 4982 1232

Review of the Pacific oyster control closure

I&I NSW is continuing to review the existing Pacific oyster control closure. Thanks to an overwhelming response from the oyster industry and the fisheries compliance officers, the department has a better understanding of the level of Pacific oyster infestation in each oyster growing estuary. The Pacific oyster control closure is due for renewal by May 2011.

Contact: Melissa Walker I&I NSW 4916 3911



The NAC in conjunction with the Asian-Pacific Chapter of the World Aquaculture Society will host Australasian Aquaculture 2010 in Hobart, Tasmania - May 23-36. **Contact: Sarah-Jane Day 0437 152 234**
See: www.australian-aquacultureportal.com

European shore crab research

I&I NSW will continue to monitor green shore crabs in south coast estuaries during the summer months working with the Southern Rivers CMA to survey oyster farmers about impacts of the crabs on their stock. The department is also a partner in a new Commonwealth funded ARC Linkage project (together with Macquarie University, Batemans Marine Park, Southern Rivers CMA and the Eden Discovery Centre) which will investigate the biology and potential ecological impacts of green shore crabs in south coast estuaries in early 2010.

Contact: Tim Glasby I&I NSW 4982 1232

New aquaculture lease application procedure.

The department intends to introduce a new procedure for aquaculture lease applications. The intent is to put all new aquaculture lease applications to competitive tender and to increase participation in the tender process by making it cheaper to participate and by improving the notice given to industry.

The new procedure addresses complaints from industry about notification processes and leases that may be granted at less than market value.

The new procedure will apply to all new lease applications whether they are over previously leased ground or new ground. There are some exceptions to the mandatory tender process, these are:

- leases allocated to phase-out lessees;
- leases that are being shifted so that a section that has become unsuitable for aquaculture can be removed from the lease and new suitable area can be added (rules apply); and

- the lease has a substantial quantity of derelict material on it and the applicant agrees to clean it up.

It is proposed to run two tenders each year for the oyster industry in February and August, but applications that are exempt from tender will be processed as they are received. All oyster aquaculture permit holders in the State would be notified of the areas that are being offered in each tender. Objections to the granting of any of the leases offered will be considered prior to the tender. The application fee for the tender will be waived, but the successful tenderer for each lease offered will have to pay this fee as well as a minimum tender premium and any additional premium offered. The minimum tender premium will be set to cover the costs associated with running the tender.

Contact: Tim Gippel on 4916 3823

Land Based Aquaculture Consultative Group

A meeting of the NSW Land Based Aquaculture Consultative Group was held on the 27 July 2009 in Sydney. For a summary of outcomes see <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/aquaculture/committees/land-based>

Additional items included:

- Concern was raised about the non-transferability of aquaculture permits. Industry noted and supported the department's current processes but requested a review of fees where an aquaculture permit was re-issued.
- Industry sought assistance from the department for broodstock collection permits to be issued for three to five years. The department is preparing a Species Impact Statement for broodstock collection to support this request.
- The department provided information on: policy amendments to the Hatchery Quality Assurance Scheme following a survey of accredited

hatcheries in 2009, Regulation amendments, the draft Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy, the upcoming review of land based aquaculture permit conditions, the administration transaction report, new rules managing the ornamental fish industry, a site selection project for marine aquaculture sites and research updates from the Grafton Aquaculture Centre and the Aquaculture Research Advisory Committee.

- The NSW Food Authority advised that they were remaking their regulation and to contact the Authority if further information was required.

The next meeting is scheduled for the July 2010.

Contact: Graeme Bowley I&I NSW 4916 3845

Seafood Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

Breeding Program: The Seafood CRC has recently approved a 3.5 year project to investigate reproductive condition, marketability and survival in Sydney rock and Pacific oyster breeding strategies. A major aim of the project will be to increase the period of time over which the NSW industry can market top quality oysters. Collaborators on the project include SOCo, Australian Seafood Industries, CSIRO and NSW I&I and work will commence 2010.

Contact: Wayne O'Connor I&I NSW 4916 3906

Benchmarking: The Seafood CRC project involved over 40 producers in its first year with many eager to participate in Round 2. The project aims to calculate and compare costs of production across businesses - between states, species and estuaries - so that an individual business could see how their business is performing against the average. For example:

- * Average gross profit per developed (farmed) hectare \$25,693/ha versus Average gross profit per leased hectare \$7,284/ha (where the average lease holding was 28.5ha versus 16.3ha of developed area).

- * Net profits ranged from approx \$2.30/dozen to a loss of over \$4.50/dozen.

- * Largest costs to oyster businesses are labour (>50%) and spat mortality.

A final report will be released soon.

Contact: Rachel King Exec. Officer 0425 237 566

National oyster industry plans: Thank you to those who responded to questions on the "top five things that impact on the success of your business" and "the top five projects you would invest in". The three objectives for the oyster industry for the next five years have been agreed to and are:

1. To sustainably increase industry production to 20 million dozen, net profit by 10% and industry GVP to \$120 million per annum.
2. To increase oyster consumption by 13% to 0.93 dozen per capita and achieve an 80% satisfaction

rating from our markets and customers through the supply of consistently high quality oysters.

3. Build capacity, leadership and confidence in the industry through the formation of a national industry organisation. Contact: Rachel King 0425 237 566

The oyster industry has invested in over 40 projects in the Seafood CRC to date.

Mollusc hatchery network

Under the Aquaculture Innovation Hub (Seafood CRC/FRDC) a network has been established for mollusc hatcheries.

Contact: Wayne O'Connor I&I NSW 4916 3906

Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy

The NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy (NSWLBSAS) is anticipated to be gazetted in January 2010 following a series of amendments put forward by DECCW and recent Ministerial reshuffling. Copies of the NSWLBSAS will be sent to key stakeholders such as local government authorities, catchment management authorities, State government agencies, and Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to assist in assessment of future aquaculture development.

Contact: Graeme Bowley I&I NSW 4916 3845

Ornamental fish regulation amendment

An amendment to the *Fisheries Management (Aquaculture) Regulation 2007* on the 1 July 2009, exempts ornamental fish breeders who hold less than 10,000 litres of water from requiring an aquaculture permit. This is in line with the recommendations of the national management strategy for ornamental fish. I&I NSW has provided a six month amnesty which is to end on the 1 January 2010 to enable ornamental fish breeders who have a facility greater than 10,000 litres and sell fish, to obtain an aquaculture permit.

Contact: Graeme Bowley I&I NSW 4916 3845

Triploid Pacific oyster approval for Wallis Lake

Wallis Lake was recently issued an approval for a five year trial of triploid Pacific oysters. The trial will involve culture of up to five million oysters in the final two years. The Wallis Lake experience will complement a trial in the Crookhaven/Shoalhaven and commercial production of triploid Pacifics in Port Stephens and the Hawkesbury and Georges Rivers to provide the industry with an understanding of the benefits and pitfalls of using this species as a risk management tool against QX or as a means of diversification.

Contact: Tim Gippel I&I NSW 4916 3823

NSW Aquaculture Directory 2010

I&I NSW is looking to update the NSW Aquaculture Directory. The current 2008-09 directory can be

viewed at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/aquaculture. If you wish to have your details publicly listed in the directory, or amendments made to an existing listing contact Graeme Bowley on 4916 3845 graeme.bowley@industry.nsw.gov.au by 3 February 2010.

Selling a land based aquaculture business

In the last 12 months, seven land based aquaculture farms have changed hands. To assist in the sale and purchase process I&I NSW has developed a system that facilitates the prompt issuance of aquaculture permits once the property purchase process has been completed.

The process involves:-

-The purchaser inserting clauses into the Contract of Sale relating to issuance of an aquaculture permit.

-The purchaser submitting aquaculture permit application/s with prescribed fees and required supporting information. I&I NSW assesses the permit application/s and provides the purchaser in writing that "the department has *approved in principle* the permit/s subject to receipt of the following information" which may include additional permit application information and/or written confirmation that the Contract for Sale has been completed.

-Submission of documentation confirming that the Contract for Sale has been completed along with a letter from the current permit holder requesting cancellation of permit upon issuance of a permit to the new owner.

It is important that both the purchaser and seller contact I&I NSW to clarify the above process and its requirements. One property in the last 12 months did not progress to a sale due to issues relating to development application consent requirements which had not been met.

Contact: Graeme Bowley I&I NSW 4916 3845

Export exemption for aquaculture operations

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) in November 2009 undertook a review of the List of Exempt Native Species (LENS) which are accredited for export under Part 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). I&I NSW provided information on a range of native fish species and issues relating to the take of broodstock for consideration. The species which are finally approved under the EPBC Act will allow the export of product from aquaculture facilities without the need for individuals to seek approval under the EPBC Act.

National Seafood Industry Leadership Program

Nominations are now open. The Program is a key platform to develop future leaders within the Australian seafood industry.

Contact: Jill Briggs 6035 7284

Draft Oyster Raft Construction Guidelines

Following the loss of oyster rafts during the north coast floods earlier this year, sections of industry raised concerns regarding the design and construction of some rafts and mooring systems. Since then the Peak Oyster Advisory Group (POAG) and I&I NSW have worked together to develop draft Best Practice Guidelines for Oyster Raft Construction. POAG agreed to circulate the draft Guidelines for comment to industry. To assist the finalisation of the draft Guidelines copies of the document will be circulated to local estuary committees for comment early in the New Year. It is proposed that once finalised an abridged version of the Guidelines be considered for inclusion in OISAS at its next review scheduled for 2011.

Contact: Steve McOrrie I&I NSW 4916 3921

World Wide Fund (WWF) Aquaculture Dialogues

The Aquaculture Dialogues are platforms for the development of performance-based standards that aim to minimise the key environmental and social impacts associated with aquaculture production. The dialogues are a process for developing a consensus between WWF, industry and other stakeholders. The aim of the standards is to develop an auditable certification program run by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council. Eight industries have Dialogues up and running, these are: Salmon, Shrimp, Tilapia, Panagasius, Bivalve (Mussels, clams, scallops and oysters), Seriola/Cobia, Abalone and Freshwater Trout. The Steering Committee that manages the Dialogue process met with POAG members in Australia on 8 December 2009. See www.panda.org

Disposal costs of tar continue to rise

Landfill disposal remains as the only available disposal option for tar treated timber and the cost of disposal is increasing. In Port Stephens the cost of disposal of mixed oyster industry waste is now \$220 per tonne. There has been a substantial number of growers and entire estuaries that have completely phased-out tar and those that still use tar are reminded to look into the alternatives to reduce their exposure to the expense of disposal of this material. For information on alternative materials that can be used instead of tar treated timber contact **Steve McOrrie on 4916 3921**

Peak Oyster Advisory Group (POAG) Update

POAG met 8 December 2009 and key items on the agenda included:

Updating POAG on the implementation of the Diffuse Source Water Pollution Strategy by DECCW.

Protection of oyster growing areas during the development application process.

Assessing levels of financial assistance to oyster industry members affected by the North Coast floods. Developing an oyster industry risk management workshop in 2009.

Increasing oyster hatchery and nursery capacity.

Discussing the status of ballast water and biofouling management controls for Australian shipping.

Providing an overview from Lands on the progress of the new land based leases.

Providing details of the annual reviews of classified areas in NSW, an update on the recent algal blooms along the NSW coast, the review of the Shellfish Manual, preparation of an Oyster Product Safety Brochure and the management of sewage from ships in Twofold Bay.

For more details see

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/aquaculture/committees>

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year



Aquaculture News is a newsletter for the aquaculture industry in NSW. Editor: Joyce Paterson

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