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National Seafood Industry Leadership Program

The National Seafood Industry Leadership Program equips members of the seafood industry with new skills, networks and a whole of industry perspective, giving them the opportunity to represent their industry and make an effective contribution at an industry, state or national level. Designed in consultation with the seafood industry, the program focuses on developing the skills of its participants at three key levels – personal, business and national industry. The Program is funded by the FRDC and run through Rural Training Initiatives. In 2010, the Program will be run for the tenth time and will consist of three residential sessions in Hobart (30th March – 1st April), Sydney (29th June – 1st July) and Canberra (21st September – 23rd September). Participants will also be expected to undertake some out-of-session work to develop and implement projects that respond to some of the key challenges facing the Australian seafood industry. **Nominations for the 2010 program formally opened on 1 December 2009. The FRDC is now inviting industry organisations and businesses, government departments and research agencies to nominate applicants for the 2010 Program. Applications for the program will close on 8 February 2010.** Before applying, program applicants are required to gain support from an industry organisation, company or agency in the form of nomination. Further information on the program can be found at www.ruraltraininginitiatives.com.au, and any enquiries can be directed to Jill Briggs at Rural Training Initiatives: rti@dragnet.com.au.

80,000 trout cod fry to boost threatened fish stocks

Threatened fish stocks on the state's Central Tablelands will receive a welcome boost with the release of 80,000 trout cod fry into the upper Macquarie River. The Trout cod is one of the state's most endangered fish but has a good chance of making a comeback thanks to the NSW Government's trout cod recovery program. Over the last 10 years more than 500,000 trout cod have been released within the Murrumbidgee and Macquarie River catchment areas under the recovery program. I&I NSW researchers are monitoring the success of these stockings. The juvenile trout cod were released into the river on Wednesday 2 December. Trout cod are an endangered species that are protected from fishing all year round. They must be returned unharmed to the water if accidentally caught. The Trout cod can be identified by its overhanging upper jaw, a stripe through the eye and spotted marking. This release of Trout cod will be the first stocking for the season by the Narrandera Fisheries Centre staff with Murray cod releases to follow in the near future.

Murray Cod season open

The annual Murray cod season opened for anglers in NSW waters on Tuesday 1 December following a three-month closure for breeding. Murray cod are a prized catch of freshwater anglers, and they are one of Australia's largest freshwater fish. Every year a three-month ban on fishing from September to November protects this native species during its breeding season. Since the closure was first introduced more than a decade ago there have been numerous reports of significant increases in Murray cod numbers, which are found mainly in the Murray Darling River system. Murray cod are also stocked into inland rivers and dams as part of the NSW Government's fish stocking program. Last year 103,000 Murray cod, bred at I&I NSW hatchery at Narrandera, were released under the program. A further 244,000 Murray cod were stocked through the dollar-for-dollar scheme funded by the NSW recreational fishing licence and community groups. All fishers should be aware that the minimum legal length of Murray cod is 60 centimetres with a daily bag limit of two, and a possession limit of four with only one over 100 centimetres in length. Anglers should also not confuse the Murray cod with the trout cod, which is fully protected in NSW. Anglers must release any trout cod they catch.

Avoid rockfishing tragedy this summer

The State Government has announced a series of workshops designed to prevent rockfishing tragedies, especially among non-English speaking fishermen. According to Surf Life Saving Australia, nine people lost their life in NSW rockfishing accidents between January and mid October this year. The series of workshops will be funded by \$33,000 from the NSW Saltwater Recreational Fishing Trust to arm people with the knowledge and information to help keep themselves safe at ocean fishing spots along the NSW coast. The key messages for rockfishing safety are; never

fish alone, inform others of your plans, wear light clothing and appropriate footwear, carry safety gear, observe first and fish later, stay alert, and plan an escape route. The roll out of angel rings will also continue at popular rock fishing spots along the coast. There are already 96 locations across the State with Angel Rings. The NSW Rockfishing Workshops will be coordinated by the NSW Recreational Fishing Alliance, in conjunction with the Australian National Sportfishing Association NSW and supported by fisheries staff of I&I NSW.

Get Hooked...It's fun to fish, wraps up for 2009!

In its first year, 56 schools participated in the Get Hooked... It's Fun to Fish program, which is funded by the Recreational Fishing Trust. In term four, over 800 students from 22 schools got to 'wet a line' putting theory into practice, when they participated in fishing workshop weeks held across NSW at; Dubbo, Carcoar Dam, Evans Head, Cronulla, Lake Illawarra and the Central Coast. Students went home with lots of smiles and great practical experience relating to sustainable fishing. To meet the needs of schools enrolling in 2010, the Get Hooked Volunteer recruitment drive starts February and goes through to March, in most regional areas of NSW. If you are interested, please contact the team at gethooked.fisheries@industry.nsw.gov.au. Alternatively call us on 02 9527 8515 or 02 9527 8473.

Fisheries Management Amendment Bill introduced

The protection of the State's valuable fisheries resources will be further strengthened following the passing of the *Fisheries Management Amendment Bill 2009*. The Fisheries Management Act 1994 has also been amended in order to formally recognise the importance of Aboriginal cultural fishing in NSW and strengthen penalties for illegal fishing activity. Fishing is an historically important part of indigenous culture and custom and the changes to the Fisheries Management Act will more adequately reflect that significance. The new object is also consistent with the National Indigenous Fishing Principles which seeks to integrate and protect Aboriginal cultural fishing within traditional management frameworks. The Bill also includes provisions to allow for tougher penalties for illegal fishing. These provisions include; increasing the powers the courts have in sentencing convicted fisheries criminals, increasing the powers Fisheries Officers have to act on suspected illegal fishing activity, and tougher penalties for a range of offences. These amendments also send a strong message to illegal fishers – do the wrong thing and you will get caught and there will be severe consequences.

Abalone gut ban continued to protect NSW abalone stocks

A closure has been in place since 2007 banning the recreational or commercial use of abalone gut as bait or burley for the taking of any fish in all waters of NSW. This closure has now been renewed for a further 5 years in an attempt to continue to protect NSW's abalone stocks from abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG), which can be transferred in abalone gut. Although this disease has no known effects on human health, AVG has caused massive losses of abalone in Victoria, with up to 95% mortality in certain areas since this disease was first identified in 2005. AVG has been confirmed as far east as White Cliffs near Johanna, south-west Victoria, approximately 610 km from the NSW/VIC border. AVG has also been detected in two abalone processing facilities in Tasmania in the past two years and it is believed the source of infections is wild harvested abalone. Several alternative baits are available to pursue the species previously targeted with abalone gut. These include cunjevoi, pippies, prawns, and bread. By respecting the ban on taking fish with abalone gut, fishers will be helping protect abalone stocks for future generations. For further information please contact the Aquatic Biosecurity Unit on (02) 4982 1232.