

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Summary of meeting outcomes

The NSW Shellfish Committee (NSWSC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 19 February 2014. Specific issues considered by the NSWSC at its meeting are detailed below.

Triennial heavy metal survey of shellfish harvest areas

The triennial survey of heavy metals in shellfish from NSW harvest areas is due to be conducted throughout 2014. NSW Food Authority staff with assistance from local shellfish program members will collect samples during the annual shoreline survey of each harvest area in order to reduce costs. All samples are anticipated to be collected by December 2014 with analysis being conducted shortly after. Shellfish are analysed for a range of heavy metals, pesticides, PCBs and PAHs. Results to date tell a positive story for NSW shellfish harvest areas with levels consistently below the maximum levels set in the Food Standards Code.

Best practice guidelines for floating basket culture

NSW Department of Primary Industries have completed the best practice guidelines for floating basket culture and have made this information available on their website. This compliments the oyster raft construction guidelines already on the web.

OISAS 2013

The NSW Oyster Industry Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy (OISAS) has been finalised and approved by the Minister for Primary Industries. An amendment to SEPP62 is underway with the Department of Planning to recognise the latest edition. Once approval has been received the OISAS document will be available on the NSW Department of Primary Industries website.

Port Stephens Pacific Oyster mortality investigation

Reports of mortalities of Pacific Oysters up to 90% throughout the Port Stephens estuary have been received since January 2013. More than 1200 oysters have been tested since that time with all samples returning negative for Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS). No evidence exists of a known transmissible or infectious agent. A transmission trial will be undertaken to determine if a directly transmissible disease agent can be detected.

Industry communication

An issue was raised by industry members regarding the information pathways for disaster events, disease events and other emerging issues relevant to the wider industry. NSW Department of Primary Industries will look to implement a similar text message service that is employed by the NSW Food Authority for openings and closures of harvest areas. Basic information will be provided in a text message with further information being available on the NSW Department of Primary Industries website.

The next meeting is to be held on 21 May 2014