

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 22 May 2013

Summary of meeting outcomes

The NSW Shellfish Committee (NSWSC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 22 May 2013. Specific issues considered by the NSWSC at its meeting are detailed below.

Clyde River Sewage Pump-out Facility

Committee member and local Clyde River Oyster farmer Kevin McAsh has confirmed that the installation of a sewage pump-out facility for boats has been approved by Eurobodalla Council. This will assist in the safe and sanitary removal of sewage from vessels in the area, improving the amenity of the Clyde River and surrounding waterways.

Wild Harvest Shellfish Industry Update

The wild harvest industry are preparing for the season opening of pipis from NSW beaches. Committee member Mark Phelps reported that pipi farmers have observed a recent pipi population revival and are looking forward to a successful season for the wild harvest shellfish industry. NSW Food Authority has worked with all wild harvest biotoxin management plan coordinators to assist them in getting their plans up to date and ready for the coming season.

Compliance Update

The NSW Food Authority provided an update on its compliance, enforcement and inspection activities during the period 1 July 2012 to 30 April 2013. 247 audits have been completed with 13 licence holders failing at audit. No follow up audits failed.

International Conference on Molluscan Shellfish Safety (ICMSS)

ICMSS was a well attended conference and received high praise from attendees including international participants. NSWSC commended the NSW Food Authority and the ICMSS organising committee on a successful and well run conference. Industry members in attendance agreed that the conference gave them further insight into emerging trends from an industry, scientific and regulatory sense.

NSW Oyster Conference Announced by DPI (31 July – 1 August at Port Stephens)

The NSW Oyster Conference "Catch Up" and Tradeshow is to be held in Port Stephens on 31 July – 1 August 2013. Speakers from NSW interstate and NZ will talk on the status of the industry and over a dozen trade display tables have been booked. A social evening has also been planned with John Clarke talking on the history of the Port Stephens oyster industry. The Aquaculture research advisory Committee will meet 30 July 2013 and the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee annual general meeting will be held following the NSW Oyster Conference on 2 August 2013.

Industry Preparedness for Disaster Events

Economic and social support options for oyster farmers impacted by natural disaster and disease events were discussed. Both State and Commonwealth agencies are encouraging industry to identify and manage risks pre-event rather than offering financial support post event. Details of the assistance offered by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority can be found at www.raa.nsw.gov.au.

Prospect of a Virus Survey

The Chair, Mark Boulter, alerted the NSWSC to a study proposed by an Australian research group seeking to understand the background level of viruses in Australian shellfish growing waters that is under consideration by a funding body. Industry members commented that virus risk management and studies of this type were highlighted at the recent ICMSS conference. The NSWSC acknowledged that research of this type has the potential to assist with local issues risk management and even export market access. The NSWSC offered in principle support for the research.

NSW Food Authority State Program Fees and Local Program Subsidies.

State program fees have been set for the 2013/14 financial year and have been issued to all NSW Food Authority licence holders. An increase in fees has resulted due to the lower number of farmers in NSW and CPI increase on budgeted costs. NSWSC endorsed the fees and local shellfish program subsidies set by the NSW Food Authority for 2013/14.

NSW Food Regulation Remake

NSW Food Regulation 2010 will cease in September 2015 unless it is re-made. The NSW Food Authority has initiated a remake process. As a first step all license holders will have the opportunity to have their say via a user review questionnaire expected to be sent out in the coming weeks.

Lease Renewal

Fisheries NSW outlined the process of lease renewal. NSWSC noted that lessees renewing oyster leases have 30 days after expiry of the lease for a preferential right. Thereafter application to renew leases would proceed to tender.

The next meeting of the NSWSC will be held on Wednesday 21 August 2013.