

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Shellfish Committee

14 May 2025

The NSW Shellfish Committee met via video conference 14 May 2025. Issues considered by the Committee are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Shellfish Committee members:

Chair – Prof. Shauna Murray

Industry representative - Mr. Shane Buckley

Industry representative - Mr. Brandon Armstrong

Industry representative - Mr. Steve Coxon

Industry Representative – Mr. Andrew Prowse

NSW Farmers Oyster Project Manager – Mr. Andy Myers

NSW DPIRD – NSW Food Authority:

A/CEO NSW Food Authority – Mr. Andrew Davies

NSW Shellfish Program Manager - Mr. Anthony Zammit

Invited attendees:

NSW Shellfish Program Senior Shellfish Officer – Mr. Phil Baker (Secretary)

NSW DPIRD Senior Policy Officer Aquaculture – Dr. Emma Wilkie

NSW Oyster Extension Officer – Dr. Laura Stoltenberg

NSW Aquatic Biosecurity – Mrs. Melissa Walker

Apologies:

Nil

Declaration conflict of interest:

No members declared a conflict of interest on the matters raised in the agenda.

1. Matters raised relating to the Seafood Food Safety Scheme

New Shellfish Committee representatives – New membership of the NSW Shellfish Committee has been endorsed by the NSW Food Authority CEO. The current NSW Shellfish Committee consists of the following members:

Subject matter expert: Prof. Shauna Murray

Industry representatives: Mr. Shane Buckley (Wapengo Lake), Mr. Brandon Armstrong (Camden Haven River), Mr. Steve Coxon (Wagonga Inlet) and Mr. Andrew Prowse (Tweed River).

Industry Association: Mr. Andy Myers (NSW Farmers Association), Dr. Laura Stoltenberg (OceanWatch)

DPIRD: Mr. Andrew Davies (A/Food Authority CEO), Mr. Anthony Zammit (NSW Shellfish Program Manager), Dr. Emma Wilkie (A/ Program Leader Aquaculture), Mrs. Melissa Walker (Manager Aquatic Biosecurity)

The position of Chairperson was called for with Prof. Shauna Murray nominated and elected unopposed.

Harvest area management report – Annual reviews for 10 shellfish harvest areas were conducted since the February 2025 meeting. 127 harvest area closures occurred since the previous meeting, with a total of 269 harvest area closures for the 2025 calendar year to date.

State shellfish levies and local shellfish program grants 2025-2026 – The NSW Shellfish Program fees (referred to by industry as the state shellfish levy) and the local shellfish program grant (referred to industry as the local shellfish program subsidy) has been set for 2025-2026 financial year. In 2023 a cost sharing agreement approved by the Food Authority CEO was endorsed by the NSW Shellfish Committee with an agreement to review in 2026. The agreed funding ratio of 53% government contribution and 47% industry contribution was used when calculating the 2025-2026 fees.

The projected cost of the NSW Shellfish Program for 2025-2026 financial year is \$2,266,769 representing a 3.92% increase on the previous year. This increase is attributable to increases in laboratory analysis cost and increased operating costs. In line with cost sharing agreement the NSW Government is providing \$1,199,797.35 while industry contribution will be \$1,063,971.24. The industry contribution is legislatively bound within the NSW Food Regulation 2015 and is set at \$1,570.57 per licence holder.

Alternative compliance for processing water – Alternative sources of water use in oyster processing other than potable water requires approval through the NSW Food Authority alternative compliance application process. To use treated water from classified harvest areas in the open status for oyster opening it would need to be demonstrated that salt water would be a suitable alternative to potable water. To evaluate such requests and supporting material from individual businesses the NSW Food Authority has an [Alternative Compliance application process](#). The NSW Food Authority is in the process of creating an online pro forma to assist the application process.

2. Non-food safety matters relating to shellfish

NSW Oyster industry carbon footprint – NSW Farmers Association were successful in receiving a grant from Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC) who, together with Blueshift Consultants have undertaken carbon audits across 31 NSW oyster businesses. Businesses audited represented a diverse cross-section of the entire NSW oyster industry to capture variances in geographic location, growing techniques, estuary type, technology used, automation, production scale, business size and adoption of renewable energy practices. The estimated carbon footprint of the NSW oyster industry is approximately 2,640,123kg CO₂e per year. Carbon dioxide emissions per 100g of protein was estimated at 3.9kg CO₂e for NSW oysters which is comparative to the New Zealand mussel industry. For reference the beef industry was estimated at 50kg CO₂e in a separate study.

The study also developed a new method to assess and value nutrient removal capacity of farmed oysters. Total nitrogen removal was estimated at 15,444kg and phosphorus removal was estimated at 1,909kg which based on \$100 per tonne is \$1,735,300 of nutrient removal by NSW farmed oysters.

A full report is currently in production and will be released in due course by NSW Farmers Association.

Aquaculture lease tender – Vacant and available priority oyster aquaculture area (POAA) are released by DPIRD via a public tender every six months with the next tender due in September 2025. An expression of interest for vacant and new POAA can be found [here](#)

with application submitted by 1 June 2025. The [DPIRD Fisheries Spatial Data Portal](#) can be used to identify vacant POAA available for tender.

NSW oyster protection listing – Sydney Rock Oyster reefs are no longer listed as a threatened ecological community under the Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act; however, Angasi Oyster reefs are listed as a threatened ecological community. Currently there is no provision or defence for Angasi Oyster reefs within POAA. DPIRD intend to make a response requesting oyster reef within POAA are not subject to listing.

Aquatic Biosecurity update – Since the previous Shellfish Committee meeting DPIRD Aquatic Biosecurity investigated a total of eight (8) suspected disease occurrences. Five were negative or not of concern, one was confirmation of an established disease, and one new confirmation of a known disease in two locations.

DPIRD Aquatic Biosecurity and Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) have been collaborating on a three-year QX research project which is due to finish at the end of the 2025 financial year. Window of infectivity studies for QX have identified widespread presence of *Martelia sydneyi*, via PCR testing with cytology results still pending. Aquatic Biosecurity will publish results on the DPIRD website when they are available.

Oyster Gear Finder App – Oyster Gear Finder is a new, simple app helping oyster growers recover lost gear after storms and floods by connecting farmers with finders. Oyster Gear Finder will launch in June with an easy-to-use interface tailored to the needs of both oyster farmers and the community. [Click here](#) to find out more about the app.

The next meeting of the NSW Shellfish Committee is scheduled for 27 August 2025.