

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Shellfish Committee

Date 22nd May 2024

The NSW Shellfish Committee met via video conference on 22nd May 2024. Issues considered by the Committee are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Shellfish Committee members:

Chair – Prof. Shauna Murray
Industry representative - Mrs. Pippa Boyton
Industry representative - Mr. Brandon Armstrong
Industry representative - Mr. Sam Gordon
Industry representative - Mr. Shane Buckley
CEO NSW Food Authority - Dr. Lisa Szabo

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:

NSW Shellfish Program Manager - Mr. Anthony Zammit
NSW Aquatic Biosecurity Manager – Mr. Ben Rampano

Invited attendees:

NSW Shellfish Program Senior Shellfish Officer – Mr. Phil Baker (Secretary)
NSW DPI Program Leader Aquaculture – Mr. Ian Lyall
NSW DPI Senior Policy Officer Aquaculture – Dr. Emma Wilkie
NSW Oyster Extension Officer – Dr. Laura Stoltenberg
NSW DPI Senior Fisheries Manager – Mrs. Raelene Trenaman
NSW Farmers Oyster Project Manager – Mr. Andy Myers

Apologies:

Nil

1) Industry updates

Members provided updates on the following key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors:

- Nil

2) Matters raised relating to the Seafood Food Safety Scheme

Harvest area management report – A new harvest area and local shellfish program has been formally classified with Berringer Lake harvest area achieving Conditionally Approved classification which permits direct harvest of shellfish under certain environmental conditions. Annual reviews of harvest areas continue to be completed to schedule, with 9 harvest area sanitary survey reviews completed since the February 2024 meeting. Compliance with sampling requirements was consistently above the 90% target with all local shellfish programs reviewed since the February meeting maintaining harvest and hold status. There were 485 harvest area closures over the 12 months to May 2024.

CRC Sensor Network Update – The remote sensing project is nearing completion with two reports in the process of being submitted. Once the reports are submitted the project will wrap up. The remote sensing equipment will be handed over to local shellfish programs that

extended an interest into covering the ongoing cost and maintenance of the equipment. Discussion centred around advice on external funding options for the ongoing data collation and analysis which has benefits to the wider industry to provide information on known data gaps, challenging presumed processes and pollution inputs as well as data for future studies.

***Vibrio parahaemolyticus* outbreak review** – In February 2024 the NSW Food Authority were made aware of three interstate cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illnesses associated with NSW oysters. Further investigation by NSW Health and the NSW Food Authority identified 35 cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illness during January – March 2024, with 30 cases associated with the consumption of NSW oysters. The marine heat wave experienced along the Australian east coast during the summer of 2023/24 created environmental conditions that significantly increased Vibriosis risk factors. Enhanced [Vibrio risk management guidance material](#) was developed to assist industry to manage this risk, the Food Authority will continue to work with the NSW shellfish industry to develop and implement best practice requirements.

Creation of shellfish wet storage best practice guidelines – The committee discussed the increasing need for guidelines on the best practice for shellfish wet storage. It was identified that as the practice of shellfish wet storage is a relatively new practice adopted by certain sectors of the industry there are many errors made by trial. The committee advised that a best practice guideline will be beneficial and useful for businesses undertaking shellfish wet storage. The Food Authority agreed to develop such a guide.

State levy and local shellfish program subsidies – The 2024/25 state shellfish levy and local shellfish program subsidies have been calculated and will be issued in due course. The total 2024/25 operating cost of the NSW Shellfish Program is \$2,072,721 and increase of 5.10% on last year. This increase is primarily due to increases in laboratory analysis and increased operating costs. In line with the NSW Government funding review of the NSW Shellfish Program cost sharing arrangements, the NSW Government is providing 53% of this cost which equates to \$1,154,573 with industry contributing the remaining 47% equating to \$1,023,866.

The NSW state shellfish levy for the 2024/25 year has been calculated and set at \$1,500.89.

3) Other matters raised

Biosecurity update – QX strain typing is currently being undertaken to improve current understanding and knowledge of QX across different estuaries. Window of infectivity studies have shown positive results for QX via cytology and PCR testing in the Karuah River. Analysis of Sydney Rock Oysters for molecular typing in Wallis Lake, Tuross River and Wagonga Inlet did not detect QX.

Steinhausia (Mussel egg disease) testing of wild mussels in Jervis Bay showed 1 of 59 samples collected positive for *Steinhausia*.

Aquaculture Vision Statement – A final draft of the 2024 Aquaculture Vision Statement was considered by industry representatives and the Aquaculture Research Advisory Committee. It is an industry/government forecast to build the NSW industry to \$300m by 2030 by targeting management, research and industry priorities. The Vision Statement is to be progressed and promoted by DPI Fisheries.

New aquaculture lease allocation policy - NSW DPI Fisheries has updated the aquaculture lease allocation policy. The updated policy is available [here](#) on the department's

website and details additional processes including: consultation with various agencies; publishing a notice inviting objections to a new lease; and undertaking a review of environmental factors on the activities being proposed by the permit holder (species to be grown and cultivation methods to be used), as part of the competitive tender process.

Shellfish industry financial support project – Fisheries Research Development Corporation have committed to finance the development of a NSW shellfish industry financial support project as a result of disease outbreaks, which have highlighted the vulnerability of the industry and a general lack of preparedness. NSW Farmers publicised a competitive tender process in April 2024 with five applications received. A contract is currently being written up between the preferred applicant and NSW Farmers with the project anticipated to be completed by the end of 2024.

Aquaculture regulation remake – The NSW Fisheries (Aquaculture) Regulation 2017 will go on public exhibition 3 June 2024 for 28 days. To meet a 1 September 2024 enactment deadline, any issues of concern should be raised with DPI as soon as possible.

Posidonia seagrass with aquaculture lease area –Discussions between Marine Parks and DPI Fisheries continue with the aim of achieving a suitable outcome for Posidonia protection through research and policy development. 45 leaseholders have conditions concerning Posidonia protection on leases now placed on their aquaculture permits.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Shellfish Consultative Committee is 7 August 2024.