

Contact the 2008 - 2009 OYSTER COMMITTEE

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OCTOBER 2008 EDITION

Oyster Committee Meeting

The Oyster Committee met on Monday 22 September at Mooney Mooney. The following is a brief summary some of the major topics of discussion and outcomes from the meeting.

Committee Elections

Mark Bulley was re-elected as Oyster Committee Chair and Kevin McAsh was elected as Oyster Committee Vice Chair

Land Based Oyster Leases

The Committee discussed the Department of Lands proposal for determining rents on Land Based Oyster Leases and the impacts it would have on Oyster farmers across the state. The background to this issue is that current rents are highly variable and there is a need to bring in a fairer and more consistent method of determining rents. The Oyster Committee has been working with the Department of Lands for a number of years on this issue and the hope is that we are closing in on a satisfactory outcome. At the meeting the Committee passed the following motion:

That the Oyster Committee will accept the current Department of Lands Proposal provided that where rents increase by more than 200% on the current rent, the Department of Lands agrees to work with the affected farmers and where necessary the Oyster Committee to determine a fair outcome.

Water Quality

Water Quality issues are among the Oyster Committee's priority issues and the recent Kalang river closure has only served to highlight the vulnerability of the Oyster Industry water pollution events that are outside its control. At the meeting the Committee discussed a wide range of water quality related issues including:

- The events surrounding the Kalang River closure
- The range of Government and industry initiatives tasked with addressing water quality issues and how these can be better administered in the future
- The need for an industry restructure package aimed at supporting those farmers unable to carry on farming due to water quality issues outside of their control

At the meeting the Committee passed the following two motions at the meeting:

- That the Oyster Committee seeks legal advice to determine what is needed to progress a case against local government to make them accountable for not complying with septic safe programs resulting in the contamination of an Oyster Harvest Area*
- That the Oyster Committee calls for an Audit of all septic safe programs in coastal NSW*

Oyster Committee Strategic Planning Exercise

To end what was a very productive meeting the Oyster Committee conducted a strategic planning exercise to help determine the priority issues the Committee felt would potentially limit their ability to farm Oysters into the future.

Industry Aim: *To profitably and sustainably grow quality oysters along the NSW coast – to be updated*

Priority Issues:

- Natural resource management: Long term- Estuarine health (& oyster health related issues); Maintain & increase profile of industry as estuarine guardian.
- Market: Product safety and consumer confidence; Market/Promotion
- Production Issues: Genetics & supply of selective bred product; Sustainable & technological production; Benchmarking (costs of production); Regulatory environment; Oyster health (excl estuarine health related issues); Short term - Lands tenure; NSW Shellfish Program funding proportion.

Oyster Industry Field Day

The NSW Oyster Industry Field Day 2008 was held in Mooney Mooney on Tuesday 23 September. The theme for the day was 'Oyster Farming and the Environment' and the program for the day included a list of environmentally focussed speakers as well as an industry driven Environmental Champion award sponsored by Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).



Steve McOrrie, Simon Marnie and Mark Bulley at the NSW Oyster Industry Field Day 2008

Over 60 people attended the day which included a presentation by key note speaker, Doug McLeod who is an international expert on Oyster Farming and his extensive resume includes: former Chair of the Scottish Aquaculture Training Association, Past President of the 'European Mollusc Producers' Association', and an 'Invited Expert' on the Board of the European Aquaculture Society. Mr McLeod's presentation provided a great insight into the issues facing the Oyster industry on a global scale while highlighting the many strengths and opportunities for the Australian and particularly NSW industry.

Environmental Champion Awards

The Environmental Champion Group Category went to the **Clyde River EMS Cluster Group** for development and implementation of the Clyde River EMS. The Clyde River Cluster Group received \$1000 donated by FRDC

The reality that Oyster farmers are facing increasing pressure to take some responsibility for the health of the estuary COMBINED with the obvious risks from urban encroachment, land clearance, water quality degradation, dirt roads, stream bank erosion, river siltation and catchment development, motivated the Clyde river growers to get onto the front foot and take action.

From this a Clyde River EMS Cluster Group was formed to progress the implementation of an EMS for the estuary. An EMS is an Environmental Management System which is a tool to identify environmental impacts from production methods and other potential threats to the estuary. It outlines solutions to combat these threats and is accompanied by Actions, a Timeline and Audit of progress.

The Clyde project was achieved with assistance of several individuals and industry bodies including the National Aquaculture Council, Ocean Watch Australia and the Southern Rivers CMA.

The EMS has been a vehicle for pulling the estuary together and for attracting funding and assistance to fix up some obvious trouble spots such as:

- Budd Island Restoration Project- which involved bush regeneration and lease clean-up
- Lattas Point clean-up of land bases
- Lattas Point road repair and erosion control project.
- Water Based Clean up of abandoned Oyster leases
- The Pacific oyster control project

Uptake of Plastic cultivation materials and Accelerated uptake of 4 stroke Outboards by individual farmers.

In granting this award the judges noted the originality in using EMS to achieve significant environmental improvement for the oyster industry in NSW and the solid base this approach laid for on-going future improvements.



Conversion to plastic- 1/2ha trial of environmentally sustainable cultivation infrastructure

The Environmental Champion Individual Category went to **Lyn Desoto-Southwell** for Leadership in improving water quality in the Crookhaven/Shoalhaven estuaries. Lyn also received \$1000 donated by FRDC

Lyn has emerged in the Shoalhaven as the local environmental warrior for water quality issues. As a member of the Southern Rivers CMA Natural Resource Reference Group Lyn helped initiate the Dairy Oyster Partnership Project that has resulted a new partnership with the local dairy industry to protect water quality. Oyster and dairy

farmers worked side by side to install 15km of stock exclusion fencing adjacent to oyster leases.

Lyn rallied local growers and formed an incorporated association – Shoalhaven River Oysters Inc so that they could apply for funding and receive assistance.

Lyn organised the “Shoalhaven Clean Water, Healthy Community Forum” which brought the local industry together with Local and State Politicians, Council staff, CMA, other Government Agencies and University experts, community land care, Riverwatch, land council and commercial fisher representatives.

This led to the local Council contributing \$15,000 to the local shellfish program for two years and \$3,000 to SRO Inc for Marketing and Branding and the re-imbursment of \$8,000 that the QAP had spent on testing following sewerage spills.

Lyn forged a new working partnership between the local industry and Council. In February 2008, Council approved \$30,000 to commence implementation of the Clean Water Model in the Shoalhaven.

Shoalhaven is now enjoying the benefits of having Commerong Bay reclassified from Restricted to Approved.

Lyn is a winner of the Shoalhaven Bushcare Award for 2007 and was recently awarded a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Emerging Leader Governance Scholarship

In granting this award the judges noted the personal effort and time Lyn has devoted to improving water quality in the Shoalhaven, the large diversity of groups she has successfully brought together, the exceptional leadership demonstrated.

Lyn has emerged as one of a new breed of industry leader that develops co-operative partnerships with government and takes additional responsibility for seeking and implementing solutions to industry challenges.



Lyn Desoto & Barry Allen at the SRCMA Conference in Narooma - Oyster Dairy Farmers Partnerships

There were two Highly Commended Awards presented at the field day, the first went to **NSW Farmers Hastings River Branch and Port Macquarie Hastings Council** for Acid Sulphate Soil and acid drainage remediation.

In the Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area (LGA) there were 57 drainage systems and 160 km of engineered drains that contribute to acid discharge.

Up to 1000 tons of pure sulfuric acid discharged into the estuary each year from the Partridge Creek drain alone. These have significantly affected production in the Hastings River with estimated losses of 60% and there has been 5 major fish kills in the river, all attributed to acid discharge.

NSW Farmers Hastings River Branch made strong representations to the Hastings Council and other government agencies over many years and in 2001 the Council commenced a program of remediation with funding from The Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and the Department of Natural Resources

As a result \$1.6M has been invested over 6 years

All 62 drainage network systems have been remediated, with 950 ha of wet pasture established

The other Highly Commended Award went to **Brett Peterkin** for development and implementation of the Cleanwater model in Wallis Lake

Brett Peterkin was called in at the height of the 1997 Wallis Lake crisis by Great Lakes Council to be their link with the community. Brett took on this daunting task and developed a no-nonsense approach to fixing catchment issues that affect estuarine water quality. The Clean water model is based on:

- Direct engagement with landholders, community & industry to find the key people who can get things done and build a shared vision for improved water quality.
- Get hold of Government money to implement on-ground works – no money into new plans or additional monitoring. Then, double and triple your money with landowner and other contributions.

- Facilitate and encourage the voluntary co-operation of landowners and government to avoid the use of legislation. Large scale riparian management programs were implemented, including riparian fencing, off stream watering and improved grazing practices, large scale wetland rehabilitation projects, including the purchase of significant wetlands which are now managed for environmental outcomes.

Wallis Lake now has the cleanest estuary on the east coast of Australia producing over one third of Sydney Rock Oysters, with oyster production increased as a result of cleaner water.

All Wallis Lake harvest zones are Approved for direct harvest, and the tourism industry, commercial and recreational fishers all benefit from the cleaner water.

Wallis Lake oyster harvest closure periods have reduced on average from 15 days ten years ago to just 4 days – giving better economic gains and highlighting how environmental outcomes are intrinsically linked to economic outcomes.

Brett has proven that high nutrient and faecal loads entering waterways can be reduced, and that aquaculture and agriculture can be productive in the same catchment.

Finally there were four Commended Awards presented at the field day; these awards went to:

Rob Moxham for Hawkesbury River Clean-up following the recent OX outbreak

A OX outbreak in the Hawkesbury in 2004 sounded the death knell for the State's third largest producer with a virtual 100% kill of all farmed oysters.

After the initial shock passed Rob Moxham stepped up and led the local industry on the rocky road to recovery.

While the government provided over \$3Million in assistance, all clean-up work was done at or below cost and at significantly less cost to the community than other clean-up options.

The clean-up required an optimistic leader that was willing to invest money in clean-up machinery and provide the infrastructure and landbase space to handle the waste.

In addition to the water based clean-up work, tar vats, tyres and other wastes were removed from crown land. Rob led the change to a tar free sustainable Hawkesbury River oyster industry.

The extra mile that Rob walked meant that a future legacy of old leases, tyres and depots was completely averted.

Rob proved to have the right combination of practical know-how, credibility and ability to engage the politicians and agency staff.

Rob went on to be involved in the Hawkesbury River tide to table project and provided his time and equipment to assist rehabilitate National Park land and remove asbestos waste in Porto Bay.

As a result of the clean-up the Hawkesbury River is now cleaner, sustainable and productive for both industry and the public to enjoy.

Farquhar Inlet Management Group for fundraising and lobbying to have Farquhar inlet opened in April 2008.

Early in November 2007 the Manning River valley experienced an exceptional period of freshwater inundation, this initially stressed farmed oysters on aquaculture leases in the North Arm of the Manning River and by late February resulted in catastrophic oyster mortality across the whole estuary.

The Manning River has a dual entrance and the southern entrance at Old Bar (Farquhar Inlet) had been closed since 2004. The 2007 event also badly affected the tourism industry, the dairy industry, recreational fishing and commercial fishing.

The Farquhar inlet management group rallied the local community to raise funds and pressure authorities to take action to open the estuary. Amazingly, over \$60,000 of community money has been raised with additional pledges

likely to take that figure to well over \$100,000. This money is currently being put into an Environmental trust to help gain extra leverage from State and Federal funds.

Additionally, on 7 March a commitment was won from the NSW Minister for Lands to provide \$30,000 towards opening and maintain the entrance. A flood on Anzac Day 2008 provided a perfect opportunity to open Farquhar inlet and since then the Farquhar inlet management group has continued to keep an eye on the situation to keep the entrance open. As a result conditions in the Manning estuary are returning to normal with healthy fish, healthy oysters and a thankful local community.

NSW Farmers Hastings River Branch for Clean-up Australia day activities.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Australians get stuck in and clean up their local environment by collecting and removing rubbish on Clean Up Australia Day.

The NSW Farmers Hastings River Branch participates annually in the Clean-up Australia Day project. The farmers donate a day of their time and the use of their punts; and in return they gain the respect and support of the local community and reduce the risk of conflict with neighbours.

Hastings River Branch acts as a good example to others and actively promotes responsible habitat management and estuarine stewardship through their involvement in Clean-up Australia Day.

Brian and Barry Allen of Shoalhaven Oyster Service for development of an environmentally friendly farming system.

Brian and Barry Allen were the first oyster growers in NSW to successfully access the NSW Envirofund to purchase environmentally friendly farming infrastructure such as plastic posts, slats and tumblers. They were also the first oyster growers to apply for the Federal Environmental Management Systems Implementation Grants, and the model EMS prepared for them was later used by approximately 100 other farmers to access this grant fund.

The Allens have completely re-vamped their farming practices eliminating the use of Tar, and eliminating the use of old growth forest products. The new system not only streamlines oyster handling, but also eliminated nearly three months of annual maintenance to timber post and rails. They have also developed an innovative farming system that significantly reduces shading and eliminates impacts to seagrass. Some of the healthiest seagrass beds in the state can now be found beneath the Allen brother's leases.

As the largest leaseholder in the Crookhaven/Shoalhaven estuary the Allen's have taken a leadership role by setting an example of what can be done and have also been key participants in the Shoalhaven Dairy - Oyster Partnership Project.

SOCo Update

There has been a slow start to the hatchery production this season, but we can confirm as of today that New Tech Aquaculture at Hervey Bay have a WM resistance run, larvae set successfully with distribution to Nurseries hopefully starting 4th week of October.

The other run is with Southern Cross Hatchery at Tomarree in Port Stephens and due to set 4th week October.

With the Southern Cross facility now online this will bring more flexibility into the production of spat, this will in turn give more reliability and options to Farmers.

The QX resistance run produced by DPI Fisheries has been distributed to the Nurseries in the third and fourth week of September and is progressing well.

Selected brood stocks are currently being conditioned up, with the intention of starting another run of QX resistance stock in November. If there is sufficient interest from Nurseries and Farmers a WM resistance is tentatively planned for early 2009.

We urge you to consider the option of taking stock from these runs to hold at lower densities over winter so they are in the water early to take advantage of spring blooms in the next season. This may prove to be a more satisfactory option for

farmers than relying on the early season hatchery runs which can be difficult to set.

Obviously it would assist Hatcheries planning greatly to have indications of farmers intent to order as early as is practicable.

The new Board of SoCo have decided to use the Select Oyster Company and not the acronym SoCo as the operating name, to this end we have also registered the Select Oyster Company as the web domain name. A new updated web site is planned for implementation before Christmas this year, with interactive features such as ordering of stock, protocols for use by nurseries in handling SoCo stock, an information base that accurately records the performance of SoCo stock and further down the wish list a secure oyster lease management tool protected by password, that allows each individual grower to record in a data base their lease management activities, and the results that come from them

Last but not least most of you will be aware that there has been a change in the makeup of the Select Oyster Company Board, Greg Comerford and Rob Moxham did not seek reelection to the Board, we thank both Greg and Rob for their significant contribution to the Select Oyster Company and wish them well in their future endeavours. The former Board decided to expand the number of directors to five and have appointed Graham Campbell, Jane Clout and John Dawson to fill the vacancies.

Please do not hesitate to call any member of the Board if you have any matters or concerns about any issue with the Select Oyster Company.

Regards

The Directors

“OYSTERS IN THE HOUSE” WILL BE HELD THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2008

Thursday 13 November 2008 will again see NSW Farmers' Association's Oyster Committee host the rescheduled "Oysters in the House 2008" event at Customs House in Sydney.

This will be the third time "Oysters in the House" has been held and the event is growing in popularity and reputation.

This year there will be a focus on inviting the restaurant trade. As Chefs have a strong influence on whether oysters are present on their restaurant menu. The Oyster Committee encourages you to invite any restaurateurs you have a relationship with, to attend "Oyster in the House 2008".

Most importantly, as always, are the OYSTERS!

If you think you grow the best Oysters in NSW, you can enter the Peoples Choice Award competition. To enter you will need 45 dozen oysters which will be presented *al la natural* to "Oysters in the House" participants and they will vote for their favorite Oyster.

Additionally all members who are harvesting oysters in November are asked to donate oysters for the Regional Show Case at "Oysters in the House". "Oysters in the House" relies on your donation of quality oysters to raise the profile of our produce to Sydney consumers.

As in previous years all oysters will be displayed in their respective regions along with some informative promotional material and complimentary regional wines.

Please contact the Association, or return the following FAXBACK FORM to indicate the number of oysters you are aiming to donate. We would appreciate your notification as it helps ensure we have adequate oysters for this important event.

If you have any questions, comments or would like to discuss "Oysters in the House" further, please contact any member of the Oyster Committee.

We trust you will help make Oyster in the House 2008 a fabulous event that encourages everyone to eat more oysters.

member service centre 1300 794 000 www.nswfarmers.org.au

FAX BACK – PARTICIPATION IN “OYSTERS IN THE HOUSE” 2008

Member Name _____

Member Number _____

Business Name _____

Estuary / Region _____

Best phone to be contacted on _____ or _____

Contact Email Address: _____

I would like to participate in Oyster in the House 2008 which is held Thursday 13 November 2008

YES / NO I would like to enter 45 Dozen Oysters into the People’s Choice Award.

A plate of natural Oysters, one from each entrant, will be presented to each participant at Oyster in the House who will vote on which Sydney Rock Oyster they believe tastes the best! There is a maximum of 6 entries for this award and we will be looking for an even split of entrants from both the North and South Coast. You will be advised by mid January 2008 if your Oysters will be included in the People’s Choice Award.

YES / NO I would like to supply _____ Dozen Oysters into the Regional Showcase.

Remember, your oysters will have your business name along side of them to promote your business. 45 Dozen Oysters is required for each regional showcase station – you can choose to supply all 45 dozen, or if you would like to supply less, your oysters will be combined with another grower from the region. Any level of support is greatly appreciated.

Benefits to your support include:

- Listing as an entrant in the People’s Choice Award, or as a Grower in the Regional Showcase
- Opportunity to supply promotional material in attendee post event mail out
- Exposure to media who will be in attendance

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FAX BACK TO 02 8251 1750

“Together we’re a force to be reckoned with”

Aquaculture Extension Program

The Aquaculture Extension position was established by NSW DPI in 2007 for two years to assist the transfer of available and emerging technology to the NSW aquaculture industry.

The position focuses primarily on the needs of the NSW oyster industry, while providing point of contact assistance to the land based aquaculture industry.

The position also provides assistance to new entrants to the NSW aquaculture industry, including assistance with the completion of Commercial Farm Development Plans, which are a requirement of the aquaculture permit application process. Since September 2007 Aquaculture extension has dealt with over 240 aquaculture related inquiries.

Of the 351 existing oyster farming business in NSW, approximately 48% have entered then industry in the last 10 years. A key objective of the extension program is meet with as many of these farmers as possible on farm to discuss farming issues and provide technical assistance where required, particularly the 28% who have entered the industry in the last 5 years.

In this regard, Steve McOrrie will be working on the south coast (Bermagui, Narooma and Tuross) from the 27th till the 31st of October conducting on farm visits with oyster farmers.

Should you wish to meet with Steve to discuss farming technology issues or other farming issues, Steve can be contacted at any time on (02) 4916 3921 or 04 2977 9752.

NSW Aquaculture Industry Directory

The 2008-2009 addition of the NSW Aquaculture Industry Directory is available now on the NSW DPI website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au). The directory enables buyers to contact growers and suppliers of farmed seafood. It also helps existing and prospective aquaculture operators to network with other industry stakeholders and identify sources of products and services that are relevant to their operations.

Annual Production Returns Overdue

All oyster farmers have been sent reminder notices to lodge their 2007/08 production returns with NSW DPI. Failure to lodge the returns by 31 October will result in a \$200 infringement notice.

Minister Macdonald Visits the Hawkesbury

In September 2008, Hawkesbury River oyster farmers invited the Minister Ian Macdonald to celebrate the completion of the clean-up project that followed the QX outbreak in 2004/05.



Rob Moxham and other members of Broken Bay Oysters are pictured here with acting Director-General Doug Hocking, Kevin Cooper and Steve McOrrie.

Part of the farmers' response to the outbreak was to restructure the industry to adopt new technology and farm disease-resistant oysters.

Fuel Tax Credits Expanded

On 1 July 2006 Fuel Tax Credits became available to a number of industries, including the Oyster Industry, for diesel fuel used in outboard motors. On 1 July 2008 the Fuel Tax Credit scheme was expanded to include petrol fuels.

Oyster Farmers can now claim 38.143c/L on petrol used in outboard motors for Oyster farming, back dated to 1 July 2008.

For more information on how to register to claim fuel tax credits for your business contact the Australian tax Office on 13 72 26. Make sure you have your Australian Business Number (ABN) and Tax File Number handy when you call.

Operation Trident

The Oyster Committee would like to encourage all NSW Farmers Association Oyster Branches to invite the local stock squad member to their next Branch meeting. Oyster theft is a big problem in NSW with an estimated 55,000 Sydney Rock Oysters being stolen from up and down the coast last year alone.

The Oyster Committee would also like to remind growers that you can keep your identity secret when reporting oyster theft. It is up to us to stamp out this bane of the NSW Oyster Industry.

Anyone with information on oyster theft should contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000

STOCK SQUAD OFFICERS

Coffs/Clarence: DSC Michael Lister	Ph: 02 66 520245
Far South Coast: SC Stephen Heffernan	Ph: 02 64 929999
Hawkesbury: DSC Kurt Thompson	Ph: 02 45 774111
Lower Hunter: DSC John Schultz	Ph: 02 49 340273
Manning/Great Lakes:	Ph: 02 65 520345
Mid North Coast: DSC David Kennedy	Ph: 02 65 626444

NSW POLICE CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER

Brisbane Water: Corina Hassett	Ph: 02 4323 5534
Coffs / Clarence: Any Chinner	Ph: 02 6652 0294
Hunter Valley: Sheree Gray	Ph: 02 6542 6924
Lower Hunter: Brian Coffey	Ph: 02 4930200
Mid North: Coast Steven Cherry	Ph: 02 6583 0199
Manning / Great Lakes: Jack Mundy	Ph: 02 6652 0399
Newcastle: Geoff Milton	Ph: 02 4929 0999
Tuggerah Lakes: Rachel Garland / Christian Nelisen	Ph: 02 4333 2928
Tweed / Byron: Grant Seddon	Ph: 02 5536 0953
Waratah: Terrie Bennett	Ph: 02 4926 6524
Far South Coast: Scott White	Ph: 02 4478 9925
Shoalhaven: John Wright	Ph: 02 4429 1609

Classifieds

- **Wanted-** Aluminium Oyster Punt- 20ft x 7ft
Contact W. Palmer on- 95239183 AH
- **For Sale-** Aluminium Oyster Punt- 6m in length.
Contact Steve on- 0410 094 448
- **For Sale-** Oyster Grader
Shaker style with three screens and four grade output. Several screen sizes available. Asking \$8500.
Please call 0418 793 440 for more details.

