

Media Release

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For Immediate Release



Clarence River Eel Fishermen Developing Specialised Eel Trap

OceanWatch Australia is working with NSW professional fishermen who catch freshwater eels for the international market. This activity is part of a project supported by the North Coast Local Land Services, the Australian Government and Catchment Action NSW.

OceanWatch Australia is a national Marine Natural Resource Management organisation that conducts projects that enhance fish habitats, improves water quality in coastal environments and assists fishermen with the development of sustainable fishing practices.

The aim of the project is to assist NSW fisherman to develop a modified eel trap that allows the escape of undersize individuals while retaining the larger market size eels. By constructing traps with a specific sized escape ring the selectivity of the trap can be greatly improved. There are several benefits both to the environment and the fishermen through the development of specialised eel traps. Primarily, the reduction of undersize eels caught in the traps reduces unnecessary interactions and handling, while allowing fishermen to efficiently catch market size eels. There are other benefits such as faster processing of the catch that leads to reduced stress on the live eels.

"The good news is there is an obvious difference between the traditional style trap compared with the modified trap. The modified trap retains catches of market size eels, yet almost completely eliminates the catch of undersize eels" Carl Bevilacqua - OceanWatch Australia.

Pilot trials comparing the modified trap to a traditional trap were conducted during April/May this year to determine the modified traps efficiency.

"The grids are working well allowing small non marketable eels to escape, however they still need some minor sizing refinements as they are still allowing some market size eels at the lower end of the scale to escape" Glen Dawson – Clarence River eel fisherman.

This project will lead to the development of an extension video, to demonstrate to other fishers and the community the effectiveness of the escape rings. The video will highlight that incorporating an escape ring into a trap is an effective modification for reducing the capture of juvenile eels.

"Trials such as this utilise the skill and knowledge of fisherman that have been involved in the fishery for many years. This allows OceanWatch to extend and communicate these kinds of developments to benefit the wider fishing industry and the community". Carl Bevilacqua - OceanWatch Australia

For more information please contact Carl Bevilacqua of OceanWatch Australia on carl@oceanwatch.org.au



Above: Glenn Dawson Clarence River eel fishermen with one of his modified traps

Below: The escape ring incorporated into a modified eel trap



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