



smarter fishing for industry

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## ***Changing of the Guard***

With the new year has come a rollover of staff at SeaNet and Ocean Watch. Anissa Lawrence has replaced resigned Executive Officer, Christine Soul and Emma Bradshaw took over from Nicole Middleton as Program Manager of SeaNet, late last year.

In recent months, the SeaNet team has reached full capacity and can now cater more thoroughly to the needs of industry across Australia. Officers are located in Queensland (2), New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

Charlie Hewitt has joined the team as SeaNet Extension Officer in NSW, working with NSW estuary fishers to develop industry Codes of Practice and facilitate NSW EMS activities. Charlie has a Bachelor of Environmental Engineering and a Master of Marine Science. He has experience in observer and independent fisheries research as well as waste management, stormwater and bushland education. Charlie is hosted by Ocean Watch Australia.

The Victorian position has recently been filled by Jim Newman. Jim comes from a fishing family and spent many years skippering prawn trawlers in Queensland. In addition to his practical, first-hand experience, Jim has studied at the Australian Maritime College. This position is hosted by Seafood Industry Victoria.

Claire Van de Geest in South Australia has a degree in marine biology from James Cook University and has previously worked with QDPI on TEDs and BRDs. Most recently, Claire worked on the collaborative (CSIRO, AIMS, QDPI and the Queensland Museum) CRC Reef project collating baseline data on the biological organisms on the Great Barrier Reef seabed. Claire is hosted by the Seafood Council of South Australia.

For more information, or to contact the SeaNet Officer in your State, call Emma Bradshaw, Program Manager on: 02 9552 3181, or visit the website at: [www.oceanwatch.org.au](http://www.oceanwatch.org.au).



## Natural Heritage Trust

*Helping Communities Helping Australia*

An Australian Government Initiative

## Forging the way in WA

The SeaNet Environmental Extension Service is gaining momentum in Western Australia and SeaNet Officer Carl Bevilacqua has been busy developing contacts and networks throughout the WA commercial fishing industry.

A local steering committee has been formed to provide guidance and strategic direction to the program. The expertise-based steering committee is comprised of representatives from key industry stakeholders including the WA Fishing Industry Council, the Western Australian Department of Fisheries, Tuna West and the Conservation Council Sustainable Fisheries Office. This combination brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the SeaNet program in WA.

As part of establishing SeaNet in WA, Carl has been scoping industry to identify where SeaNet's efforts could be best directed. As a result, several project proposals have been generated and presented to the Steering Committee for consideration. Carl is now in the process of making contact with fishers and managers to facilitate commencement of these projects.



SeaNet WA is currently involved in trials of the Aquatic Release Conservation de-hooking and line-cutting devices in the Southern and Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery. This is an extension of trials currently running in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

Other projects include an education campaign to address the concepts of Ecologically Sustainable Development & Environmental Management Systems. Turtle and protected species handling workshops are scheduled in Geraldton and Fremantle ports for mid-March.

Carl is keen to hear from fishers who have developed gears and strategies that effectively reduce bycatch. This information is extremely valuable to the ongoing development of sustainable fisheries in WA and may be applicable to other WA and inter-state fisheries.

As the commercial fishing industry has evolved, fishers have contributed and developed many excellent ideas and strategies to reduce bycatch. In many cases, these developments have come directly from the fisher's own industrious efforts to improve their practices. These improvements are created only through a comprehensive understanding of the environment and developed through trial and error over many years fishing.

If the SeaNet extension service can assist your operation in WA, call Carl on (08) 9244 2933, 0429 110 026 or e-mail [seanet@wafic.org.au](mailto:seanet@wafic.org.au).

## ***Welfare Underwater***



For all creatures great and small.

The RSPCA recently held its annual Australian scientific seminar at the War Memorial in Canberra. This year's theme was "Welfare Underwater - Issues with Aquatic Animals". Emma Bradshaw (SeaNet Program Manager) presented "Fisheries Bycatch – A problem for welfare and conservation" addressing the "hows and whys" of bycatch and the ways in which SeaNet is working with industry to minimise interactions with non-target species.



The seminar was well attended by academia, NGO's Government, industry organisations and the private sector from around Australia and New Zealand. Emma's presentation drew significant interest, specifically de-hookers and line-cutters and the use of pingers to deter marine mammals from nets. The seminar was a great opportunity to promote SeaNet to a broader, non-fisheries specific audience.

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## ***EMS – a Solution to all our Problems?***

***(Well, maybe just one, but it's a big one)***

The two of them looked at me stunned, their rums going warm in the heat. "You mean every single trawler has to use nets fitted with some kind of bycatch reduction device?" "Yes, and for quite some time now." I answered. "Commercial fishers were heavily involved in the development of these trawl BRD's and all these other environmental initiatives that apply to many different fisheries."

I was hosting the SeaNet display trailer, as I have on numerous occasions at recent recreational fishing expos and seafood festivals. I must have spoken to around 150 people at these events, plus others outside of the industry that I have collared.

Only a handful of times have people had even the most basic idea of the raft of environmental management initiatives and requirements that apply to commercial fisheries. So what? After all, commercial fishing, like many other industries, is a bit of a mystery to those on the outside. The problem is, as all of us know, the community's unfortunate knowledge-gap is often filled with untruths about commercial fishers "raping and pillaging" (that painfully familiar phrase).

The community, as the consumer of our product, should be our biggest supporter – but it seems a large proportion of the community is, at worst, against commercial fishing and at best, ambivalent.

So, does this say more about, (a) the general knowledge of the public, (b) the success of an aggressive minority of anti-commercial fishing lobbyists, or (c) the failure of the

commercial fishing industry to promote its significant efforts and successes in environmental management?

I'd say you already know the answer. But what's the answer to the answer – how do we start promoting all the good work that is going towards reducing the impacts associated with catching seafood on behalf of the community. Perhaps Environmental Management Systems are part of the answer. My job for 2004, as you might have guessed, is to work with NSW estuary fishers, and possibly oyster farmers, on the development of EMS.

If you have come within 100m of anyone from Seafood Services Australia or FRDC, or even the Federal Minister, it's likely you've heard all about EMS in the seafood industry. Much of the talk surrounding EMS centres on reducing environmental impacts and increasing business efficiency and profits. This is admirable, but hardly revolutionary; fishers have been pursuing these goals for years.

EMS however, does offer a formal structure by which the maintenance, sharing, and introduction of environmental and efficiency initiatives and ideas can be done much more effectively, both within and between fleets. In this way, EMS is a big step forward along a path that fishers have been travelling for some time. But what about that path of environmental self-promotion that industry now needs to begin following more than ever? How does EMS contribute to this journey?

The range of environmental initiatives associated with a fishery is often a large and complex system of both goals and methods – no easy task to communicate. Lack of community understanding of such a system is therefore understandable, but gives the appearance of the fishery failing to operate in a transparent manner. This also provides a knowledge gap perfect for spreading “rape and pillage” misinformation.

An EMS introduces a simple structure of objectives each with subordinate actions, the actions each having responsibilities, targets and timeframes. This structure is familiar to many audiences and if not familiar, it is certainly logical. Other stakeholders, often those attacking the fishery, also generally share the objectives outlined in an EMS. Therefore, an EMS is an effective way to improve community understanding of a complex system and identify objectives shared between groups that may initially appear to be in conflict.

An EMS, in particular the review process, can provide a way to invite ‘outside’ stakeholders to offer comment and advice on management of the fishery. This is likely to be more an act of goodwill and further transparency, than a source of management change. It is possible though, that the culture of conflict surrounding many fisheries has silenced a potentially rich forum of ideas from outside the usual top-down management approach.

An EMS also represents a way of integrating a fishery with broader management frameworks such as Catchment Action Plans or Estuary Management Plans. It seems that even experienced natural resource managers are sometimes unclear about the level and process of environmental management of fisheries. Much the same as communicating with the community, an EMS is a means to educate natural resource managers, identify shared goals, contribute to broader catchment management regimes and thus gain respect.

All these communication opportunities of an EMS won't happen by themselves, the EMS is simply the platform that draws everything together. It's then a matter of getting active through the local media, community events, establishing direct links with key groups, joining committees, forming Professional/Amateur Associations etc.

But of course this focus on communication of environmental management is not simply for the sake of it – this is all about resource access security, the number one concern among fishers. A fishery with an EMS operating above and beyond regulations, integrated with broader management plans and with community support is going to be in a stronger position when tough decisions are made on resource access.

It must be noted that EMS is about building on government work, not replacing it. EMS is about promoting and contributing to what is already in regulations (i.e. the work done by management agencies), moving beyond minimum regulatory requirements and providing a basis for pro-active self-management.

Hopefully EMS represents an opportunity to remove the potential for divisive, politicised, misinformation campaigns entering the resource allocation process. Information is a powerful thing, you just need to deliver it in the right way – and right now.

Charlie Hewitt - SeaNet NSW, Ph: 9660 2262 or 0403 573 041

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## ***Spotlight on Victoria***

Jim Newman started as SeaNet extension officer for Victoria in February. Projects already underway include development of Codes of Practise for Scallop and Squid Fisheries and EMS's for Victorian Bays and Inlets Fishery. The Codes of Practise are at draft stage and will soon be released to industry and stakeholders for comment. These codes will enable fishers to demonstrate management of the ecosystem effects of their fishing activities while raising awareness of other features and practises of the fishery.

Currently SeaNet is scoping for new project opportunities through port visits, research and contacting stakeholders. For more information or suggestions of potential projects, contact Jim Newman on (03) 9824 0744 or 0413 949 562.



## ***US TED Assessment Team Inspects East Coast and Torres Strait Trawl Fishery***

Three trawl fishery experts from the US National Oceanographic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service visited QLD in February. The visit was to inspect Turtle Exclusion Devices (TED's) used in the trawl fishery in QLD East Coast and Torres Strait. The inspectors were seeking to accredit the TED's as conforming to standards for the import of prawns into the US and to ensure the devices are consistent with the requirements for domestic trawler operators in the US.

SeaNet, in association with the regional seafood industry association ECOfish, organised trawlers, GNM Chandlery and Popeye net making to accompany the team during their inspections and for the US team to interview them and inspect their operations. Officers from the QLD fisheries service, Australian Fisheries Management Authority and GBRMPA also accompanied the US team.

The Inspectors also visited the Boating and Fisheries patrol for a briefing on enforcement procedures. The innovations and pro-active approach of the commercial fishery in QLD impressed the US team. Certification of the trawl fisheries will reopen exports to the US and local trawl operators are hopeful of a positive result.

Another highlight of the visit was inspecting the latest fishbox BRD developments. SeaNet has been communicating with the extension officer from NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Two members of the visiting team have been involved in the development and trialing of the fishbox in the Gulf of Mexico and were keen to see how the fishbox had been modified to suit QLD conditions.

After taking many photos and measurements of the "Aussie Fishbox", they assured us there will be plenty of interest from NOAA in Pascagoula. SeaNet will follow up on the feedback from the US. For more information on the visit, call Denis Ballam - SeaNet QLD on: 0403 065 723 or mail: burbrook@bigpond.com.au.



*John F. Mitchell and Eric Hawk from NOAA with Bridgid Kerrigan (QFS East Coast Trawl Manager) inspect a TED at Popeye netmaking*