

In 2009 the national SeaNet program actively engaged (face to face) with 3,377 fishers/marine farmers, across 88 fisheries.

In 2009 SeaNet developed with industry 8 **Environmental Management Systems**, 8 **Codes of Practice** as well as 1 **Code of Conduct**.

- Over a 4 month period in 2009, phase one of the roll out of the **Marine Pests Communications Plan** and best practice biofouling guidelines was delivered in face to face meetings by the SeaNet team to 1,419 fishers across 83 fisheries and at 29 fishing ports nationally.

“This is the sort of information industry needs so we can help to manage our fishing grounds”.
Philip Nichol, Ulladulla fisher.



- In 2009 SeaNet engaged approximately 15,100 people from the wider community through displays, presentations at industry events, seafood festivals, agricultural field days and schools.



OceanWatch Australia has just signed a contract with the Australian Government that will ensure the future of the SeaNet program until June 2013.

The Dept of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry's priorities for SeaNet 2010/13 include:

1. Increased adoption by commercial fishers and aquaculturists of new practices and tools that will lead to a reduction in harmful interactions with protected and high-risk species, habitats or communities particularly through:
 - developing, trialing and implementing low impact gear and bycatch reduction devices;
 - targeted dissemination of information through workshops and on-deck visits to industry; and
 - engaging, developing and implementing environmental management systems and codes of practice.
2. Increased understanding amongst commercial fishers and aquaculturists of the linkage between the uptake of sustainable practices and improvements to the natural environment in which they operate through the dissemination of appropriate information and practices across Australia.
3. Increased community understanding of the uptake of sustainable practices by commercial fishers and aquaculturalists and resulting improvements to the natural environment in which fishers operate through the dissemination of appropriate information across Australia.

State roundup from your local SeaNet Officer

QUEENSLAND

Far North Queensland

Denis Ballam

The **Far Nth Qld SeaNet** Officer Denis Ballam aided the completion and participated in the launch of the Hinchinbrook Fisher's Code of Conduct. The Hinchinbrook Fishers operations are situated within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The code documents the environmental performance of the fishers, and includes actions to protect the reef from threats to its World Heritage status, as well as displaying to the general public the environmental awareness of the fishers.

Denis has recently retired after ten years service with OceanWatch and the SeaNet program. He was presented with the OceanWatch Australia Rare Fish Award for his work. Denis has recently bought a property and a whale watch/ fishing charter business in Tonga. We wish him well in his retirement. I know all his friends and colleagues will be very envious.



Denis Ballam (centre) with OceanWatch directors after receiving the Rare Fish Award

SE Queensland

Dave Kreutz

With the silly season behind us my focus in southern Queensland has been the re-establishment of networks and assisting the executive and other officers as SeaNet team leader.



Charting the course of activities for 2010 has involved port visits as well as liaison with partner organisations in Brisbane and Canberra. Given that we now are able to have a longer term focus it is important not only to exceed our grant milestones but to incorporate industry and partner requirements in my planning.

Turtle-safe crab pots, pingers and EMS have emerged as the key focus items to date for Queensland state fishers. These will be incorporated in my plan subject to guidance from the reference group. Reformation of our reference group will occur when our Northern Queensland officer is appointed.

Marine pest port visits are continuing with eight visits since the New Year. The majority of the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fisheries vessels have now received their information packs, as well as a number of Queensland operators. The information has been well received, but continued visits to promote awareness are still required. T-shirt rewards have been made to crews that have displayed the materials on subsequent visits, and these are now a sort after item.



I attended the Tide to Table Steering Committee meeting in Bundaberg, at which Michelle Haase our Tide officer gave an update of this important work. We then attended the World Wetland Day event at the Baldwin Swamp. A fish passage project is being built there by Tide to Table, DPI Fisheries and Bundaberg Regional Council. The work of both Tide to Table and OceanWatch was highlighted in a live radio interview on ABC Wide Bay.

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Victoria

Tim Liebelt recently moved on from his role as Victoria's SeaNet Officer, and applications have been received for a replacement. Tim's recent work has included:

- A beach clean up at Lakes Entrance;
- Abalone biosecurity protocol;
- Seal interactions;
- Octopus interactions in the Rock Lobster fishery; and
- Introduced Marine Pests roll out.



New South Wales

Michael Wooden

I have been helping to finalise a FRDC funded project which was initiated by industry. This examined the effectiveness of larger mesh size in reducing the capture of juvenile target species in select NSW beach seine operations; e.g. bream, luderick and tarwhine. He originally worked with Dave Cranston on the project which was done on the mid north coast with beach seine fishers based at South West Rocks and Hat Head (Dave has since moved on from OceanWatch). The report is being independently reviewed and following, will be made available to the NSW OHMAC representatives. Results are promising and beach seine regulations are currently being reviewed by the Department of Industry and Investment.



Recently, Brad Warren - OceanWatch Australia's executive chair and I were involved in a community engagement day at Kooragang Wetlands in the Hunter. Approximately 250 people attended on the day. Geoff Hyde a local trawl fisher showed off his new "Violet Crumble" trawler to the public and his fishing gear was staked out near the river. Brad and I described the gear to the attendees and highlighted the bycatch reduction devices that are used in estuary trawls, including blubber shoots, escape panels and the infamous square mesh codend.



A follow-up evaluation of the OceanWatch's BRD library program highlighted some important work that fishers have been doing to reduce the amount of small prawn and improve counts in the Hunter. I will be heading up there to get a first-hand look at what our estuary trawl fishers are trialing, capture some of their thoughts and provide some advice.

I am currently on the South Coast, and have been meeting with South East Trawl operators at Greenwell Point and Ulladulla. These port visits are a follow up to the delivery of the National System for the Prevention of Marine Pest Incursions and further work is being done to evaluate marine waste disposal in the fishing industry. Discussions have been diverse, regarding awareness and adoption of sustainable practices, bycatch reduction techniques and methods to mitigate TEP species interactions. I am pleased to say that the South East Trawl fisherman I have met are happy to work with SeaNet; in helping to create individual vessel management plans which highlight the best practice methods and techniques to be used in their fishing operations.



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Tasmania

Fiona Ewing

SeaNet in Tasmania is championing an old idea, but a goody! For many years, fishermen have been visiting schools on an ad hoc basis. At the root of this is a desire to share their knowledge of marine and aquatic life and to inspire youth to perhaps take up a career in the industry. In Tasmania, SeaNet is piloting a “Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools” program which is a collaborative educational project between the Seafood industry and Schools. This is not at all meant to replace existing arrangements between industry members and schools, but to inspire new partnerships and provide resources to these as well as existing initiatives.



There will be two streams to the program; “Adopt a Fishing Boat”, and “Adopt a Marine Farm”. During the last term of last year, we conducted our first trial partnership between professional fisherman, Bryan Denny and class four of the Lauderdale Primary School. The class loved it and as Bryan said ‘you can see that the kids gained a lot of knowledge from it’. More schools, fishermen and marine farms are already lined up to participate this year and it is hoped that this concept can be extended nationwide in the not too distant future.



Coastal cleanups are happening in the D’Entrecasteaux Channel and Huon River areas. I am working closely with the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council on a Caring for our Country Community Coastcare Grant for a coastal cleanup of Channel and Huon Coastal waters. The response to this seafood industry initiative has been positive, with community environment groups, recreational boating clubs, local landholders, schools and oyster and salmon farmers being actively involved. The excellent relationships created during this project will ensure that these cleanups will continue beyond the end of project date.

Rollout of the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions has two years to go and I will continue talking to fishers about this important issue. Tasmanian fishers are very aware of the dangers of marine pests, so the reception has been really good. I have discussed sightings of possible marine pests with fishers – they turned out to be a native, but similar species. I have had a zillion comments about ‘seals’ being the ‘biggest’ marine pest.

Dinghy fishers fishing in remote locations have had concerns about access to fresh water when travelling between boat ramps. Many remote boat ramps in Tasmania don’t have taps/water tanks or any running freshwater, which means that they can’t clean their boats properly. The SeaNet Office sought advice from the DPIW marine pest officer, who indicated that special care should be taken when travelling from ports of a high risk (i.e. international shipping) such as Triabunna, Devonport, Launceston and Hobart, but in general, removing macrofouling would be adequate in remote locations (i.e. rinsing dinghy at sea with deck hose/bucket).

Some fishers on west coast have reported Japanese longline buoys washing up on shore, as well as the occasional piece of large marine debris. It is obvious by the fouling that they have been at sea for many months and the fishers were concerned that marine pests may enter our waters via this vector.

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Lyn is working on ways to promote the professional fishing industry within the wider community, particularly with regard to sustainability and bycatch issues. Industry and government have spent many years and dollars on improving the environmental credentials of Australia seafood, but their achievements remain largely unrecognised in the wider community. The SeaNetNT YouTube channel www.youtube.com/user/SeaNetNT uses short videos to show different aspects of the fishing industry in Northern Australia. The channel currently has 6 uploaded videos, including several on the development and use of Turtle Excluder Devices in the Northern Prawn Fishery.



The NT Marine Resource Management Network was started by Lyn to keep interested stakeholders up to date with SeaNet, OceanWatch Australia and general marine resource news. A monthly summary email is sent around to fishers, seafood processors and retailers, government and non-government marine resource management workers. If you would like to be added to the network, please email lyn@oceanwatch.org.au

Lyn has also been working on a revision of the current Barramundi Environmental Management System (EMS) with the assistance of an EMS team from the barra industry. The group has looked at ways of strengthening the EMS and increasing industry responsibility for improving environmental performance. As a part of this the group has also developed a Sawfish Information Sheet to advise fishers on avoiding or minimising sawfish interactions, and handling and release procedures for captured sawfish.

Future NT work will include:

- working with the Carpentaria Ghost net Project on their pilot project in identifying the potential sources of ghost nets and developing an identification system;
- Organising a Darwin Harbour clean up weekend in partnership with Coatscare, the NT Seafood Council, the commercial fishing industry and numerous stakeholders.
- Trials of acoustic alarms in gillnet fisheries.



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Western Australia

Neil Macguffie

There's always something happening in the West Australian Fishing Industry and 2009/10 proved to be no exception. In October 2009 I was approached by the professional fishermen of the South Coast Estuarine Fishery and informed of a pelican problem in the fishery.

The fishermen use gillnets to fish for bream, mullet, whiting and other estuarine fishes, when retrieving their nets they often release undersize and unwanted species back into the estuary. However pelicans are attracted to fishing activities and prey upon released fish before they have the opportunity to escape.



Concerned with the rate of predation upon released fish, a member of the South Coast Estuarine Fishery approached me and we discussed finding a solution to the problem. After a great deal of trial and error and the development of a number of prototypes I developed a device that would provide a solution to the problem.

Appropriately named the "Fishute", the concertina style mesh chute attaches to the side of the vessel and extends below the surface of the water. The fishermen release the undersize fish into the Fishute allowing them to acclimatise, get their bearings and avoid predation by seabirds.

This project showcases the innovation and adaption the South Coast Estuarine Fishers are making in the implementation of the Code of Practice for Responsible Fishing, which is a fundamental part of the Environmental Management System of the fishery.

The Fishute project was made possible through funding provided by South Coast NRM and support by the professional fishermen of the South Coast Estuarine Fishery.



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South Australia

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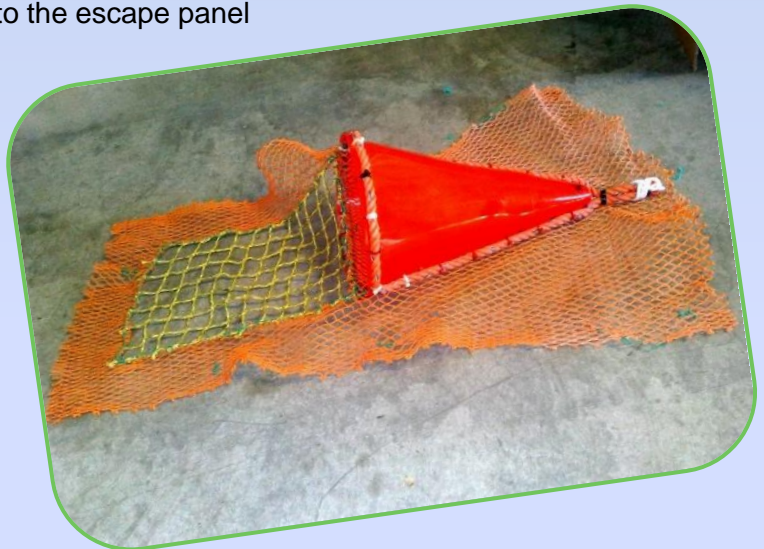


SeaNet SA is proud to announce a strategic partnership between OceanWatch Australia Ltd, Gulf St Vincent Prawn Boat Owners Association (GSVPBOA), Spencer Gulf Prawn Boat Owners Association (SPGPBOA), Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board (AMLR NRMB) and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

This joint initiative will explore the concept of developing a framework for advancing trawl technologies in SA. Survey trawls underpin the real time spatial management of South Australia's prawn fisheries. Broadening the scope of surveys to include technical trials has the potential to remove the significant risks and prohibitive costs that currently stifle innovation. Fishers are also excited at the prospect of the concept to invigorate innovation in the industry and adding significant value to the survey process.

Pilot trials during the March 2010 Gulf St. Vincent survey will assess the practicalities of combining these activities. The pilot will test a bycatch reduction device known as the "Witches Hat BRD Enhancer" developed by J. Wakeford of the Australian Maritime College in 2007. The device generates a wake of low pressure water directing mobile species to the escape panel

The enhancer has been rigorously tested by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) during sea trials in the 2008 and 2009 Northern Prawn Fishery seasons. This BRD has proven successful in removing up to 40% of bycatch without loss of target species.



"The performance of this particular device is complemented by its comparative simplicity, which will ensure it is readily accepted by fishers" (Alan Moss, AFMA Gear technician 2009).

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SeaNet is supported by OceanWatch Australia, though funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

For more information contact the SeaNet Officer in your State or Territory, visit the OceanWatch Australia website www.oceanwatch.org.au or ring OceanWatch Australia headquarters in Sydney PH 02 9660 2262

More information?

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