

SeaNet Update

Autumn 2011



The SeaNet program is OceanWatch Australia's commercial fisheries environmental extension service, funded under the Commonwealth Government's Caring for our Country program. The program seeks to improve the sustainability of Australian fisheries and introduce conservation behaviours and new technology to the industry. The SeaNet program is the only dedicated extension program operating within the seafood industry.

Welcome to the Autumn 2011 Report of OceanWatch Australia

In order to expand the capacity of our multiple projects to reach a larger audience, from now on our publication will contain the usual SeaNet update, along with news from projects within other programs. Please send this newsletter to all your network contacts. Anyone wishing to receive future copies of the newsletter directly can email Eduardo at ocean@oceanwatch.org.au or call 02 9660 2262 to be added to the newsletter distribution list.

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TIDE TO TABLE
RESTORING AQUATIC HABITAT



EMS ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
NSW - OYSTER INDUSTRY

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Northern Territory

Lyn Lambeth

Environmental Management Systems in NT Fisheries

The revised Barramundi Fishery Environmental Management System (EMS) has been distributed prior to the start of the 2011 Barra season. The EMS looks at the environmental risks and public perception concerns surrounding the fishery and suggests practical, industry-driven actions to reduce those risks. The Barramundi Fishery consists of 21 full licences using a maximum of 1000 metres of net per licence across the 2000 kilometre Northern Territory coastline, excluding a number of areas closed to the commercial sector.



Risks identified included potential non-compliance with regulations, and industry interactions with sawfish. During workshops Barramundi fishermen looked at ways of ensuring those leasing a licence comply with regulations - by making it a formal part of a licence lease agreement for example. A whole list of actions was compiled addressing ways to prevent sawfish interactions with nets, and how to safely and quickly release entangled sawfish back into the water. These included doing low tide sets and not allowing nets to dry out as this leads to bycatch death, checking nets regularly and turning entangled sawfish upside down before attempting to remove them from the net – a practice which many fishermen said calmed the sawfish and made them easier to handle.

Barramundi Fishery operators did a great job working with me on this and the inclusion of a Sawfish Information and Identification section will be a handy tool. The EMS has been produced as a small, laminated booklet suitable for use on board. These are available from the NT Seafood Council offices. A copy can also be downloaded as a PDF file from the OceanWatch Australia website under “What’s New”.

Work has started on an Australian Government-funded project revising or developing the Environmental Management Systems or Codes of Practice for five fisheries in the NT. The first two fisheries involved in the project are the Aquarium Fishery and the Mud Crab Fishery. As an initial first step workshops are being held with industry members to undertake a risk assessment of each fishery and to provide ideas for practical actions to reduce risks. Public perception risks are being considered along with environmental risks.



Aquarium fishery operators attend a workshop to assess environmental risks in their fishery.



Customs vessel recovers a ghost net off the Wessel Islands after a report by a commercial fisher.

Fishing Industry Removes Ghost Nets

There has been a flurry of media interest in lost foreign fishing nets this wet season, starting with the net recovered by FV Wildcard from Money Shoal. That and subsequent actions by commercial fishermen have generated a lot of good publicity for the industry, with acknowledgement that the local fishing industry plays an important role in recovering all sorts of rubbish at sea. Fishermen hope that the publicity will help alert people to the extent of the problem and lead to ways of dealing with the issue.

Ghost nets and other marine debris pose a threat to fish and wildlife as well as being a danger to shipping. The vast majority of ghost nets encountered in the north of Australia are from foreign fishing vessels operating outside of Australian waters, with some being anecdotally attributed to illegal fishing activity in Australian waters. For a number of reasons nets are lost or dumped at sea and prevailing winds and currents carry them into Australian waters where they end up hooked up on reefs or washed into shallow waters of islands and the mainland. Once lost, the nets can continue to catch fish and other marine animals, can cover reefs leading to coral breakage and other damage and can wrap around vessel propellers or get caught up in fishing gear.

Video Updates

There are now 12 videos posted to the SeaNet NT YouTube site, with the latest being video footage taken of the retrieval of a foreign fishing net hooked up on a shoal 80 km off the Northern Territory coast by Spanish Mackerel boat, Wildcard. The number of hits on the SeaNet NT videos has now passed 12000, which is a great goal to have reached just over one year after creating the site and with very little promotion. Visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/SeaNetNT>

The most popular video watched is still the one profiling the Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and the use of Turtle Excluder Devices, with over 4000 views. Turtle Excluder Devices, compulsory since 2000, have reduced the capture of turtles in the Northern Prawn Fishery by 99 per cent. Operators in the NPF have worked hard to improve their environmental responsibility and have welcomed the devices as having both a beneficial environmental and economic outcome – Turtle Excluder Devices reduce the capture of large bycatch such as turtles, sharks and rays, which is not only good for the animals but also good for the prawn product and the crew. Having a large animal trapped in the end of the prawn net when it is brought on board leads to damaged prawns and causes extra work and safety issues for crew who have to remove it.

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South Australia

Nathan Bicknell

Clean Up Australia Day 2011

OceanWatch Australia's SeaNet program together with local professional fishers, friends and family contributed in a small but unique way to "Clean Up Australia Day 2011". The North Arm Marina was chosen as the cleanup site as it is the prominent professional fishing infrastructure in Port Adelaide. The surrounding mangrove ecosystem also provides important estuarine habitat essential to a healthy marine environment and sustainable fishing.



We began by giving the wharf and car park the once over with the cyclone fence providing rich pickings. Upon completion we turned our attention to the surrounding waterways. Jeff Wait kindly

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donated his commercial net boat allowing us access to the mangrove systems of Torrens Island opposite the marina.

Venturing beyond the mangrove fringe we were greeted by a treasure trove of rubbish and flotsam and jetsam, highlighting the fact that what is out of sight is definitely out of mind. We went to work quickly filling our quota of Clean up bags and Jeff's boat just in time to retreat from the descending mosquito hoard.

While only a small operation we collected a Ute load of rubbish in two short hours. During post cleanup refreshments volunteers voiced their feeling of satisfaction and commitment to gather reinforcements and some tropical strength mosquito replant to make an assault on the mother load.

Special thanks to my small but esteemed army of volunteers:

- Karen and Sophie Holder (Women's Industry Network)
- Jeff Wait (SA Net Fishers Association President)
- Trevor Sims (Gulf St. Vincent Prawn Fisher)
- Tim Hoile (Marine Discovery Centre Henley beach)
- Sarah Bicknell (my lovely wife)

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[New South Wales](#)

Michael Wooden

Meeting at Portland: raising sustainability issues

NSW SeaNet facilitated a meeting between Hawkesbury River Estuary Prawn Trawl fishers, Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) management and local and regional compliance officers at Lower Portland. The meeting included a presentation from SeaNet and discussion between fishers, management and compliance officers regarding the bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) used in the fishery. This included staking out of a prawn trawl and squid trawl net.



Various BRDs were also displayed and included: the Hawkesbury River Panel which reduces the capture of juvenile mulloway; jellyfish shoots, a ramp that discard jellyfishes; square mesh codends which reduce the capture of juvenile prawns and fish; physical sorting grids such as the modified Nordmore grid to exclude larger fish from the codend (or bag) of the trawl net; radial escape panel, composite square mesh panel and other BRDs that reduce the capture of smaller fish by working on the fishes behavioural response to water flow changes and areas within the trawl with a substantially increased mesh size.

The information session allowed fishers and compliance officers to increase their awareness of sustainable practices available and utilised by fisherman, meeting bycatch reduction targets described in the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery Management Strategy. Information was also provided by fishermen describing the effectiveness of the various bycatch reduction devices and the effects of introduced weeds such as *Egeria Densa* and *Salvinia molesta*.



SeaNet gathers local estuary prawn trawl fishers, managers and compliance officers to improve understanding of bycatch reduction devices used in the fishery.

Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre (CCMDC) – Hawkesbury River Seafood Night

SeaNet Extension Officer Michael Wooden attended the CCMDC Hawkesbury Seafood Night in January, a community engagement evening held at the Terrigal lagoon education centre. The event was a real success, highlighted by the multitude of attendees, including around 70 members of the community, commercial and recreational representatives, members of the Lower Hawkesbury Estuary Management Committee, CCMDC and OceanWatch Australia.

NSW SeaNet presented the audience with a 20 minute talk discussing the SeaNet program, providing examples of local NSW SeaNet work, including work with the Broken Bay Oyster Association on Environmental Management Systems and the FRDC funded and industry initiated beach seine project.

Loaves and Fish Barbeque at South West Rocks

SeaNet NSW has been working with ocean beach haul fishermen at South West Rocks (SWR) in organising a community engagement event, proudly supported by the SWR Surf Club and I&I NSW. The event is scheduled for Good Friday, 22nd April and located at the SWR Surf Club with a “free” seafood barbeque in the agenda. The event will present the history of beach hauling in Trial Bay and will also display the Ocean Watch Australia educational trailer to promote sustainably harvested Australian seafood.



Marine Debris Cleanups After Floods: work is underway

What a start to 2011! After years of drought the flooding in southern Queensland has affected our industry more than any other. The effects are both positive and negative. While some sectors have been unable to work for months due to debris, closures and safety issues; others have had large catches of prawns stimulated by the floods.

Fishers in Bundaberg have again shown their stewardship by carrying out a debris cleanup. A joint effort took place on the north wall of the Burnett River in early February. This was the third cleanup in this area that fishers have adopted. Brad Warren, our executive Chair, joined Tide to Table officer, Michelle Haase, and I for the activity. Two large skip bins were filled to capacity with 63 bags of litter plus an assortment of large debris such as white goods, wheelie bins, corrugated iron, sections of fencing, all in all totalling 2.5 tonnes of rubbish. This all from just one kilometre of river bank! On a positive note, rubbish left by day trippers to the area was significantly less than previous cleanups. I would like to thank the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Bundaberg Regional Council, the Gladstone Port Authority, and Impact Make Your Mark's National Green Jobs Corps team as well as volunteers from the local seafood industry.

The amount of debris in both Moreton Bay and the Burnett River is astounding as the dry season approaches. Small foam pieces to large pontoons have been found in the mangrove areas. Fishers and partner organisations will again be out and about doing a series of debris cleanups. In partnership with Queensland Fisheries I recently conducted an aerial survey in western Moreton Bay to identify fish habitat areas in need of attention. Currently, detailed planning is underway for a large scale cleanup. Details will be given as to when and where you can participate.

Finally, I have been liaising with local fishers along the southeast coast to assess and understand the impacts of the floods. Lowri Pryce, our executive officer, joined me for a few days in Bundaberg and Moreton bay talking to fishers and seeing the scale of the disaster first hand. I took their views and situations for inclusion in the flood recovery planning workshop that was held in late January. This workshop was attended by Queensland Fisheries, other government agencies, Queensland Seafood Industry association (QSIA), local fisher representatives and experts. Please check the QSIA website (www.qsia.com.au) to see what assistance could be available for your fishing business.



Bundaberg cleanup.



Left to right: Dave Kreutz (SeaNet) , Celeste Bounds (Queensland fisheries) and Michael Saviage (Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association) about to do the helicopter survey of marine debris.

Ahead of the Rest Workshops: following up

In my December report I mentioned the impending “Ahead of the Rest” workshops. Events were held in Tin Can Bay, Hervey Bay and Bundaberg, with a further workshop planned for Gladstone in May. Fishers that attended were updated on OceanWatch Australia Tide to Table and SeaNet activities in the area. A detailed presentation on acoustic pingers was presented by me on behalf of Geoff McPherson who was unable to attend. David Perkins, a Fisher from Hinchinbrook, shared his experiences with pingers with the local fishers. Pingers are acoustic warning devices designed to reduce dolphin interactions with fishing gear. Their adoption potentially reduces harm to these mammals from entanglements benefitting both marine wildlife and fishermen’s operations. I wish to particularly thank Geoff and David for their contributions and Michelle Haase for her organisation. These Workshops and Pingers were generously funded by the Burnett Mary Regional Group. A number of fishers took the opportunity to trial 10 Khz Fumnda pingers in their fishing operations and I will soon seek their feedback. If you wish to receive any information of pingers please contact me.

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Far North Queensland

David Schubert

Cyclone Yasi: on the way to recovery

The start of 2011 has seen a hard time for fishers all over QLD, especially up north, in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Yasi. Most fishers in the Cairns to Townsville region copped a battering from the strong winds, which resulted in major damage and loss of access to ports and boat ramps, and in some cases complete loss of fishing vessels. To the fishers who escaped damage,



catch rates have been poor; this can be attributed to the major habitat destruction to the reefs and mangroves, two foremost habitats relied upon by fishers and marine enthusiasts alike. The SeaNet program is in talks with local fishers to offer support in whatever way we can to get things back on track. Once the rain ceases and the roads north re-open, I plan on holding a meeting with the Hinchinbrook Seafood Industry Incorporated to talk about co-management for the region as well as discuss current fishing zones and access.

Touch Screens: a tool to support local seafood

SeaNet in conjunction with Mark Partland, from Ingham Road Seafood, have started work on the ‘touch screens in restaurants’ project. The aim of this initiative is to introduce touch screen technology into restaurants for the promotion of local seafood. Ideally, the screen will come out with the menu containing pictures of what seafood dishes are on offer, displaying pictures and short videos at the fingertips. The video will involve a local commercial fisher and highlight:

- The fisheries sustainability
- Quality and freshness of the product
- What Bycatch Reduction Devices are currently in place
- Show the public that most operations are small family businesses, and how everyone along the chain will benefit by supporting local fishers, from boat to belly

The outcome of the project hopes to see an increase in turnover to the local fishers, eventuating in better prices back to the boat, also an enhanced knowledge of commercial practices for the consumer, demystifying rumours in the industry. The maiden video is in production with Burdekin crabber John Buyers, the first fisher to put his hand up.

Barotrauma Kits: reducing fish mortality

Mortality in the commercial and recreational fishing sectors can be reduced by managing barotrauma in demersal species. Barotrauma occurs when gasses in the swim bladder of fish expand due to decrease in external pressure with proximity to sea surface. This process can damage tissues and induce death. OceanWatch Australia was awarded a small grant from the Townsville Local Marine Advisory Committee to produce 300 Barotrauma kits for commercial and recreational fishermen. The kits will help reduce reef fish mortality minimising the effects of barotrauma by helping fish return rapidly upon release to their normal depth in the water column where they are adapted to live in. The kits contain a small venting tool, an information guide and a how to DVD.



A reindeer rack with half a dozen barnacles was caught whilst netting for Barra out of the Burdekin.

A Fun Note

Undoubtedly the big question plaguing fisheries experts up north is - shall we need to implement Reindeer Exclusion Devices? A reindeer rack was caught whilst netting for Barramundi out of the Burdekin. It was the most unusual capture John has had in his two decades of fishing.

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Western Australia

Neil Webb

Bycatch Reduction and Dredging Concerns

Mid February saw SeaNet at the Albany professional fisherman AGM. Fishers met to discuss the south coast purse seine protected species bycatch mitigation program which is in a 3 year trial period. The trial has reduced the entanglement of Flesh-footed Shearwaters, a migratory sea bird that feeds on small fish being attracted to the catch in the net. The

industry program is now in its last year and has been an outstanding success with interactions of this seabird species down by 99 percent since the program began in 2008. Another topic on the Agenda was the Port of Albany dredging works. Fishers attended a presentation by the Department of Conservation regarding the impacts to the fishing industry and marine environment. The Port of Albany is currently expanding its operations and the dredging could release heavy metals from previous industries established in the port. Fishers are now working closely with the Department of Conservation and community representatives to monitor any impacts that the dredging of the channel has in King George Sound.



Annual Industry Meeting

A critical topic on the agenda of this meeting held in Broome was the proposed changes to the management plans of the Kimberly gillnet barramundi fishery and mud crab fisheries. The Kimberley

mud crab fishery has 11 fishers that operate in the numerous inlets along the Kimberly coast, where pots are set and checked each day. Fishers suggested the Department of Fisheries to investigate the reduction of pot numbers from 300 to 150 units to protect mud crab stocks in this pristine environment. The Department of Conservation presented the proposed Marine Park boundaries that will extend along the Kimberley coastline. The proposed marine parks will include no take zones, whale sanctuaries, and marine habitat protection areas. Presentations were also made to members of the community at the Kimberly anglers club and it was great to see professional fishers there engaging the community on issues that affect the whole Kimberly region.

Sardine Quality Trials

SeaNet in conjunction with the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council and Curtin University travelled to Esperance to start the Sardine Quality trials. Sardines are caught by Purse Seine nets that circle fish schools. Once fish are concentrated in the end of the net, they are scooped out onto the boat. Sardines are a soft fleshed fish and require careful handling along the full trade chain, from catch through sale to consumption. The trials include logging temperature of the Sardines with electronic data loggers attached to the fish from capture and following the Sardines through to point of sale. This process also includes exploring the methods to best prepare this valuable pelagic fish. It is hoped this initiative, along with bycatch reduction actions, will add value to this fishery that is an important industry to communities' on the South Coast of Western Australia.

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Tasmania

Fiona Ewing

Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management and Cleanups

An exciting project that I have been working on with the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC) is the “Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management in Tasmanian Wild Capture Fisheries”. So, what is “*Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management*” (EBFM) and why is it a management framework that TSIC supports?



Our inshore ecosystems are under increasing pressure from recreational and commercial fishing as well as the impacts of changes in climate. The range extension of the long spined sea urchin and Bio-security issues are further complicating the ecosystem based impacts of fishing and highlight the need for a more holistic management approach. Currently, Tasmania’s wild capture fisheries are managed on a single species basis. This method of fisheries management does not take into consideration the impacts that removing target species may have on other fished species, or indeed the impact on the broader ecosystem. EBFM is a form of fisheries management which does take into account the complex ecosystem impacts of fishing and the overall objective of EBFM is to sustain healthy marine ecosystems and the fisheries they support. A large part of this project will be the development of environmental management systems and SeaNet is in a great position to assist with this.

Another exciting project I have been working on with the TSIC is the “Channel and Huon Coastal Waters Clean-up : A seafood Industry Initiative”. TSIC led this great initiative and ably assisted by

an impressive list of project partners: Huon Aquaculture, Tassal, the Bruny Island Oyster Growers, NRM South, OceanWatch, Bruny Island Environment Network, Tasmania National Parks and Wildlife Service, Bruny Island Boat Club, Birds Tasmania and numerous community groups and individuals actively got behind the project. The long list of positive outcomes include:

- Strengthening connections between local seafood producers and community groups
- Community organisations increasing their knowledge and understanding of seafood production in their local area
- Identifying shorelines within the Channel and Huon regions which have accumulated marine debris
- “Adopting” of shorelines by relevant sectors of local seafood industry
- Developing a community reporting system
- Establishing response capabilities within local seafood industry
- Creating a complaints database to be managed by TSIC
- Improving the amenity and environmental outcomes for cleanup sites and broader Channel/Huon waterways
- Completing 12 shoreline cleanup activities involving seafood industry and community groups
- TSIC staff partnering with Birds Tasmania to successfully apply for an NRM South ‘Naturally Inspired Grant’ titled “Minimising The Impact Of Marine Debris Removal On Tasmania's Resident Shorebirds”

This will be my last article for our newsletter. I have accepted a position with Tassal as their Community Relations Coordinator and will be leaving my role as the Tasmanian SeaNet officer in early May. I'm excited by the opportunity to work with Tassal and at the same time, sad to be leaving the crew at OceanWatch. It has been my privilege to work with each and every staff member over the last 4 years.

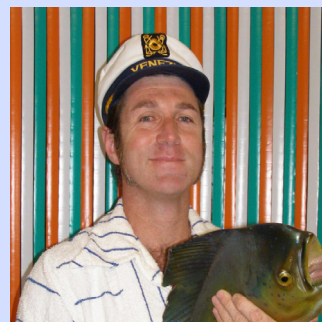
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Victoria

Steve Hay

The Victorian Sustainable Seafood Assessment Project

The Sustainable Australian Seafood Assessment Program developed by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) ran a successful pilot project in 2009-2010 assessing five seafood products as sustainable. Now, these two organizations in conjunction with Seafood Industry Victoria, OceanWatch



Australia and the SeaNet program are establishing the Victorian Sustainable Seafood Assessment Project with funding from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation.

The Victorian project involves the assessment of at least six seafood products. The products will be selected by the project's science reference panel, with the assistance of the science research team that has been recruited for the project. The science research team will compile the initial data and evidence base for each of the products.

Victorian project includes:

- The assessment of up to six seafood products. The products will include both wild-caught and farmed seafood products

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- A three-day workshop (31 January to 2 February) of the Panel in Melbourne to review data and conduct assessments
- Peer review of each of the initial assessments of the panel
- Engagement with, and input from, the fishers and fisheries managers of products assessed.
- The establishment of a small regional advisory committee in Victoria to advise UTS on the project
- The committee will comprise a representative from each of the Victorian wild-catch and farmed sectors, Victorian fisheries managers, Victorian National Parks Association, the SeaNet coordinator, ACF, UTS and the Panel.

The outcomes of the Victorian assessment project include:

- The reward, encouragement, promotion and guidance of the efforts of the seafood industry to enhance the sustainability of wild-caught and farmed seafood products
- The building of effective partnerships with the seafood industry, fisheries agencies and environment departments, scientists and environment organizations, and strong links between producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers
- The enhancement of sustainable seafood consumer choices through different communication and media channels including restaurant menus
- A very cost-effective and time-effective rapid assessment program that is well suited to smaller regional fisheries
- Increased media interest in the sustainability of Victorian seafood products

To conduct this assessment is not an easy task and as such, I have been out on the boats observing fishing methods and bycatch incidence, compiling interviews and historical and anecdotal evidence from local fishermen, as well as liaising between all parties involved. This will be a very important project that not only highlights the benefits of locally caught seafood but how seasonality and industry knowledge can promote and encourage sustainability within the industry and community at large....watch this space.

Talking about watch this space, relationships between recreational fishers and commercial fishers will be on the table at the VRFish Roundtable Workshops. I have been asked to comment on the possibility of these two warring clans working together due to increasing pressure from interest groups (through unscientific or unsubstantiated claims) that fishing in general should cease. My first draft to Christopher Collins, the executive Officer of VRFish, has been well received and I have been invited back to address the board on strategies.....stranger things have happened.

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Tide to Table roundup

Regional Landcare Facilitator-Sydney

The OWA office at the Sydney Fish Market has taken up a contract for 3 years to host this position for the Sydney Metro Region. The Landcare role is one of 56 around the Country paid for by the Australian Governments Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Regional Landcare Facilitators support Landcare and production groups by helping groups to plan projects, apply for funding and coordinate training on issues such as activities to help mitigate climate change. Simon Rowe works in this position 3 days a week mainly focusing

Simon Rowe



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on land based production in the nursery, vegetable, fruit, seafood and cut flower sectors however as a wider personal goal he is keen to develop ideas for closer Landcare/ Seafood industry projects around Australia.

Carbon Farming Initiative

A recent trip to Canberra took in information related to the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI). The legislation is going to parliament this week and if passed will allow people to voluntarily reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions in their business to earn tradable offset credits. Separate to an Emissions Trading Scheme, the CFI will be related to topics such as landfill gases, broad scale farm forestry, livestock emissions and cropping modifications. The price per tonne of carbon is yet to be set. A board called the Domestic Offsets Integrity Committee (DOIC) is open to assess offset methodologies which will be used to set up CFI projects. Anyone can develop a methodology for an eligible activity (livestock, fertiliser and manure management, agricultural soils, reforestation and avoided deforestation) which the DOIC will assess. I have sought clarification and the fishing and aquaculture sector for water based projects are currently ineligible.

However more information can be obtained at www.daff.gov.au/cfi or 1800 156 858
<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/government/submissions/carbon-farming-initiative.aspx>

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Queensland

Michelle Haase

The start of 2011 brought about widespread flooding and general chaos to the Burnett-Mary region, with devastating effects on the local seafood industry. It also saw the end of the Burnett-Mary Tide to Table program which started in March 2009. The Australian Government funded Caring for our Country project was the second Tide to Table project for the Burnett Mary region, and focussed



on habitat protection and rehabilitation at four key sites. Here is a snapshot of each project.

Coonarr Tidal Wetlands, Coonarr

A joint effort between OceanWatch Australia, Bundaberg Regional Council and local residents, this project was aimed at restoring ecologically significant wetlands by managing impacts of destructive vehicular activity, rubbish dumping and unmanaged camping. The project funded fencing and interpretive signage, involving Qld Parks & Wildlife, Qld Fisheries, the Burnett Mary Regional Group, and the Bundaberg 4WD group.



Eighteen months on; Coonarr Tidal Wetlands are recovering beautifully with locals observing the largest influx of soldier crabs in their backyards for a very long time (left: before May 2009; right: after March 2011).

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The 300 metres of bollards erected resulted in the protection of 71 ha of tidal habitats in the Kinkuna fish habitat area, and has been the instigation of collaboration by all stakeholders to address access issues nearby which additionally impact on the Kinkuna and Elliot fish habitat areas. The project also involved the Green Army to remove noxious weeds from the foreshore and tidal areas which will enhance the biodiversity conservation value of the site.

Baldwin Swamp

A brackish urban wetland in Bundaberg, Baldwin Swamp is linked to the highly modified Burnett River by Bundaberg Creek. A weir between the swamp and the creek disrupts the movement of commercially important fish species, such as barramundi, which migrate upstream as part of their life cycle.

To remediate the problem, OceanWatch Australia has negotiated the support of Bundaberg Regional Council and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) to construct a fishway which will restore connectivity between 1.6 kilometres of brackish habitats, to over 3 km of freshwater habitat. DEEDI has developed the designs and is managing the construction component, whereas Bundaberg Regional Council is assisting in the construction by providing infrastructure and work crews.

Eli Creek, Point Vernon - Hervey Bay

A joint initiative of Fraser Coast Regional Council and James Cook University this project focussed on connectivity and water quality in productive estuaries of Eli Creek, and a highly modified constructed freshwater lagoon system called Eli Waters. Additionally, the project has funded marine debris cleanups and instigated a collaborative foreshore fencing and rehabilitation project at Eli Creek. The local 4WD club were a driving force in the marine debris cleanups at Eli Creek. A half-day effort by the club resulted in 4 tonnes of rubbish being collected and disposed of for free courtesy of Fraser Coast Regional Council's waste management facility.

Walkers Point Shell Midden

This exciting project involved a high level of consultation and engagement with indigenous representatives, traditional owners, land management agencies and native title applicants, to protect a significant shell midden on the Burrum River at Walkers Point. This effort has resulted in the following outcomes:

- Establishment of a shell midden protection committee
- The Burrum Shell Midden Festival at Woodgate, featuring a bus trip that took 60 people to the midden, with archaeologists and Traditional Owners as guest speakers
- An archaeological survey
- Carbon dated shell samples
- Rubbish removal and weed control
- Fencing to manage vehicle and camping activities
- Development of interpretive proposal and interim signage
- Installation of signage shelter shed

The next phase of Tide to Table – Queensland wide!

OceanWatch's Tide to Table crew were successful in securing significant investment from the Caring for our Country program last year, to further the Tide to Table program for fish habitat protection and enhancement. The program will see Tide to Table in Queensland go statewide. It will fund a new Project officer to deliver around \$100 000 in on-ground works in Moreton Bay, and a continuation of the position

based in Bundaberg. Michelle Haase will remain in the Bundaberg position, managing the Qld Tide program, as well as delivering additional funding from the Burnett Mary Regional Group for onground works in the Great Sandy Straits region.

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Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools

[Project Officer - Tasmania](#)

Jennifer Hemer



Seafood Industry Partnerships Take Off

It was a beautiful day in Hobart on March 17, as the Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools (SIPS) project was officially launched by Neil Stump, Chief Executive of the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council.

The SIPS project connects commercial fishermen and marine farmers with Tasmanian school classes from years 1 – 10. By forming a partnership, teachers and fishermen work together to educate students about day to day life in the seafood industry and issues such as seafood sustainability and environmental protection.

Neil Stump told the 60 or so guests at the launch, ‘the Tasmanian Seafood Industry sees the Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools program as a way to educate our community about the seafood industry; the benefits we provide to local communities, our strong environmental credentials and that we offer career opportunities across a range of occupations within marine industries.’

The launch was attended by people from across the Tasmanian seafood industry, including marine farmers, commercial fishermen, fisheries managers and scientists. The education sector was also well represented by school teachers and associated organisations. A number of people from the FRDC People Development program were also able to make the event. Most importantly, a group of students from Year 6 at Lauderdale Primary School came along to join in the celebration – firing crackers into the air to mark the occasion.

SIPS champion fisherman Bryan Denny brought his boat, the ‘Motonui’, into Constitution Dock for the event. It provided a great backdrop for photos and magnificent entertainment for the school kids.



Neil Stump officially launches the Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools project with the help of students from Lauderdale Primary School.



Bryan Denny, Commercial Fisherman, talks with students from Lauderdale Primary School on board his boat at the launch.

More information?

www.oceanwatch.org.au

The Tasmanian school year commenced in February, and with it a number of new SIPS partnerships. Teachers see the value in the project because traditionally it's difficult to find information about the seafood industry, and in particular, career pathways into the industry.

The project offers many links into the school curriculum. For example, teachers are keen to see students utilizing information communication technology. The remote nature of fishing means that commercial fishermen use text messages, email and other electronic means of communicating their daily activities with their class back on the land.

Fishermen and marine farmers could also talk with their class about how the weather impacts their working days, linking science and vocational learning in a real world example for students.

In a short space of time the SIPS project has become very popular with schools, and matching fishermen and marine farmers with a school is an extremely rewarding process. If you are a commercial fisherman or marine farmer and you'd like to get involved in the SIPS project, please contact me.

Jennifer Hemer Seafood Industry Partnerships in Schools Project Officer PH: 0428 026 356

jennifer@oceanwatch.org.au

NSW Oyster Industry Environmental Management Systems

Project Officer - NSW

Andy Myers



The future of the oyster industry depends on our capacity to demonstrate that natural resources, and the environment in which we work, are utilised in a sustainable, responsible way. One way of doing this is to develop an Environmental Management System (EMS) to show how environmental impacts and risks are managed.

OceanWatch Australia (in partnership with the NSW Farmers Association) and Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority have respectively received \$400,000 and \$240,000 through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative, to develop, review and implement Environmental Management Systems for the NSW oyster industry.

Participation in an Environmental Management System is voluntary; however engaging in the process offers significant benefits, including the opportunity to:

- Document farmers current stewardship of the environment and aspirations
- Identify realistic and achievable environmental improvements
- Identify external water quality concerns and engage with landholders
- Increase profits by identifying business development opportunities
- Increases exposure to, and prospects of receiving grants

As part of our funding, OceanWatch have \$200,000 to address some of the risks identified through the EMS process. \$100,000 of this will be allocated to on-farm improvements, and the remaining \$100,000 used to tackle risks identified in the surrounding catchment. Southern Rivers CMA have a further \$150,000 available to undertake infrastructure conversion in the south of the state. It is anticipated that we will run a combined grant application process opening in June 2011. To be eligible for OceanWatch funding, oyster farmers need to be engaged in the EMS process. As the NSW Oyster EMS Officer I am currently in the process of undertaking an audit of the oyster EMS landscape in NSW and planning for the Ministerial Launch of the project on the 14th April. I have also held meetings with oyster farmers from Wagonga, Tuross and Shoalhaven to initiate environmental management systems in each of these estuaries. Thanks to Kevin Mcash and Southern Rivers CMA staff, Jillian Keating & Adam Gietzelt, for their input and help.

More information?

www.oceanwatch.org.au



Andy at work at an Oyster Farm in the Hawkesbury.



EMS meeting in the Shoalhaven region.

If you would like to learn more about developing an EMS for your estuary, and to register your interest, please contact me.

Andy Myers NSW Oyster Industry Environmental Management Systems Project Officer
PH: 02 9660 2262 or 0488 656 366 Email: andy@oceanwatch.org.au

Employment opportunity

Tide to Table Project Officer - Moreton Bay

We are currently seeking an experienced person to coordinate, support and foster partnerships between the fishing and aquaculture industry, community groups, NRM Groups, local governments, Government Agencies and other key stakeholders to manage and implement habitat rehabilitation works which directly benefit fish habitat. The successful applicant will hold a relevant degree and have demonstrated experience working and communicating with key stakeholder groups relevant to NRM. Also key to this position is a proven commitment and understanding of environmental issues relevant to the commercial fishing industry.

Application packs including full selection criteria and the position description are available to download from the website (www.oceanwatch.org.au), or via email (ocean@oceanwatch.org.au). For all enquiries please contact 02 9660 2262.

Applications close: 27 April 2011.