

**Wild
Fisheries
With
A Future**

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Stories were deemed correct at
the time of publication.

We apologise for any
unforeseen omissions or errors.

Winter Wader Survey - Lakes and Coorong Fishers important contribution

The first Winter Wader Survey of the Coorong took place on Saturday 23rd June 2001. It was the first attempt to count the whole Coorong on one day.

What made this significant from the Lakes & Coorong Fishery's point of view was that we were invited by David Dadd to participate by providing boat transport for three teams of counters. (Other teams were on foot).

In the past counts have been made on consecutive days or only one lagoon has been counted regularly. The main reasons for this is a shortage of qualified or experienced wader experts, and the ability to cover such a large area comprehensively. On this occasion, a couple of areas were left until the next days due to access problems and lack of time.

The outcome of the day was so successful, the organisers agreed that any future projects of this kind would be hard to achieve without the assistance of the fishers.

SAFIC Ports Meeting

A small dedicated group of fishers took the time to attend the SAFIC ports meeting at Meningie on Friday 13th of July.

Bob Pennington, President and Lorraine Rosenberg, General Manager were nearing the end of their statewide trip after visiting members as far away as Ceduna.

As well as being a service provided to the membership, it is also a valuable tool for the management of our peak body to keep in touch with the grassroots of the industry.

Several key issues were raised including the unification of the two industry bodies. Lorraine requests that the survey that was sent out in the last member's newsletter be filled out and sent back as soon as possible. If you do not have a copy contact SAFIC.

This was due not only because of their boat and navigation expertise but also because of the extensive knowledge that the fishermen had of weather and water conditions, probable locations of birds and other factors important to the data collection.

It was apparent to the organisers that because of the fishers' daily presence on the water and their interest in the environment in which they work, that local knowledge of this kind should be valued and utilised.

A barbecue tea was held at Noonameena House for the tired but enthusiastic group.

Thanks go to the three fishers who volunteered their time, boats and fuel for this project.

If you are interested in participating in future counts keep your eyes on the newsletter's "Coming Events" section.

The review of the Fisheries Act, 1982 under the National Competitions Policy. This paper has important, far-reaching implications for this fishery and all members are urged to respond.

Food safety legislation is also cause for action by the industry. SAFIC is organising a series of Food Safety workshops, details of which are to be advised.

There has been a new SeaNet officer appointed, replacing Tim Braund who has taken up another position within the organisation.

Will Zacharin has been appointed the Director of Fisheries. Bob Pennington explained the selection process.

SAFIC will be shifting offices to a location near the SAFCOL fish market. The new address and contact numbers will be advised.

President's Piece - The saga of the Area 1 closure

Garry Hera-Singh

Firstly we apologise that the June newsletter is coming out mid-July. Normally when an organisation's newsletter is late the usual excuse is to blame the end of financial year or the GST. Most Lakes and Coorong fishers wish the delay was that simple!

The reality is that our industry has been fighting for its very survival due to an unfair and undeserved cabinet decision. As a supplier of fresh, "clean and green" fish to the local community, and the Australian consumer at large, our existence as a very important commercial fishery was on the line. No small thanks to the efforts of PIRSA Fisheries.

Their lack of consultation with commercial fishers and the complete bypass of Fishery Management Committees, meant that we were about to be "shafted" - bureaucratic style!

Industry was informed by letter from PIRSA Fisheries that we were about to have the most significant area of the Coorong fishery closed to commercial fishing. No warnings, no debate, no compensatory gestures (a dangerous precedent for other commercial fisheries).

An industry delegation met with the Minister of Fisheries, Hon. Rob Kerin who gave fishers a fair and reasonable hearing at Parliament House. Industry fully briefed the Minister on the social and economic assessments that should have been provided to him prior to making this decision. Clearly they had not been.

In light of this new information, the Minister had no choice but to review the closure (in his words, "for the time being."). So commonsense has prevailed, although we have still not had official confirmation of this. The information was gleaned from reliable sources.

A proposed closure for 5 months during a peak production time would have financially crippled the 12 fishing families, with 14 children under 10 (and 1 on the way!) This may not sound lots to city folk, but to rural regional Australia 12 families out of 38 is very significant. In addition the displaced fishing effort and the additional pressure on other fishing areas would have caused hardship to the other remaining fishers and their families.

Another major concern is the message this type of decision sends to other commercial fisheries. The Lakes and Coorong Fishery has gone down the environmental certification pathway and has tried to operate in a transparent and accountable way. We are proud of our achievements we have numerous environmental awards as testimony to our hard work. Yet we are still threatened with restriction and possible financial ruin without good reason.

The feedback I am getting from numerous fisheries around Australia is the conclusion that no matter how well they perform with environmental initiatives, or how much money they spend, they could find themselves in a similar position. So why bother?

If this was a script for "Yes, Minister" the whole farce may have been laughable. The rhetoric and misguided assumptions were originally made from commercial catch and effort data. PIRSA fishery managers implied, in their profound wisdom, that Mulloway stocks were under threat - over exploited. So in their view commercials should go. If any fish stock is "under threat" then the obvious management strategy is to "stop **all fishing** of the threaten species" (in the words of my 4 year old daughter.)

This was clearly a smoke and mirrors attempt to reallocate the resource to the recreational sector. What it would do is remove the very source of this information/data on fish abundance in the Coorong. Our catch and effort data is very detailed and is the only indicator of the level of the resource within the Coorong estuary and at no cost to Government. In fact through cost recovery, we actually pay for the privilege.

The alternative methods of collecting this data would be expensive, unreliable and inconsistent. However PIRSA fisheries managers with their crystal ball approach (a new management tool) will be able to determine the inter-annual variations in stocks, environmental and oceanographic factors on recruitment, plus resolve the resource allocation issues for government within a massively altered ecosystem called the Coorong.

The recent attack on the Lakes and Coorong Fishery highlights the need for government to produce a fair and equitable process for resource allocation. It is clear that this issue will not just go away and the recreational lobby who wants this proposal to proceed will keep putting pressure on. This reinforces ill feeling from all sectors and individuals, most notably with no improvement or resolutions.

The recreational sector continues to be subsidised by the State Government to the tune of \$2.5million per annum. Commercial fisheries on the other hand contribute over \$7million annum, 100% cost recovery for management of the resource in South Australia.

Industry believes it is time to formalise a legislated allocation process that is truly independent of government and conflicting sectors. This challenge should be pursued immediately.

The Lakes and Coorong Fishery is committed to the Marine Stewardship Council certification regardless of the hurdles, trial and tribulations placed before us.

Cockle Beach Accreditation

Those with cockle endorsements will have noticed a fee of \$199 on their licenses this year. This is the first year of a two-year payment for accreditation of the area to be used for harvesting cockles for human consumption. PIRSA is meeting half the total cost.

Discussion is currently underway with Ken Lee who is in charge of the Clean Water Program under the South Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program.

He is coming to a meeting at Wellington on 27th July to take the committee step by step through the process, answer questions and discuss other issues.

One of the issues he has asked the fishery to consider is a marketing name for the cockles. The idea of a marketing name is to identify a product by:

1. A specific area,
2. A specific product,
3. A specific organisation
4. A particular method of preparation/harvest
5. Or a combination of these.

The result is a brand/product name that has consumer appeal and is unique to that product.

We are aiming for the human consumption/export market, so while the cockle has been traditionally called the Goolwa Cockle, is this going to cause confusion with bait cockles?

With the impending certification both with cockles and the Marine Stewardship Council, our fishery is quickly moving towards the need for a brand name that conveys who we are and what we produce.

The committee is looking for suggestions and the best of these may be put to a vote at the AGM.

Other issues with the cockle beach certification will be how much of the beach do we have certified? There are many factors to consider including costs, likelihood of use and collecting regular water samples.

These water samples are to be taken every few kilometres along the beach. To keep costs down these will have to be done by the fishers. There will be a set of standards that need to be adhered to, and volunteers will be put on a roster basis.

Ken will be coming down to inspect the beach area being certified first hand so he can get a clear idea of the logistics involved. Once he has done this and the program has been defined and, there will be an opportunity after the AGM for the fishers to discuss the process.

Cockle harvesters if you want further information and/or input you should attend the meeting at Wellington on August 6th at 2pm.

Important Dates:

SFA - Committee	27 TH July - Wellington 2pm
SFA AGM	6 TH August - Wellington 2pm
SAFIC AGM	30 TH August - Adelaide
WIN AGM	30 TH August - Adelaide
WIN Workshop	20/21 st September - Goolwa

WIN Business Skills Workshop

Goolwa on 20th & 21st September

This is a follow-up workshop to the one last year and is being funded through FARMBIZ. It is the first of only two fishing industry workshops in this State and part of an Australia wide project. It is important that as many participants as possible take advantage of this opportunity to learn skills in areas such as finances, business planning, marketing and human resource management.

The course is free and would normally cost around \$750. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea will be provided. Child care costs will be reimbursed upon forwarding an invoice to SAFIC. You only need to arrange and pay for overnight accommodation if you choose to stay, and your evening meal. (The flier you received from SAFIC shows an indicative cost only).

The Southern Fishermen's Association is offering SFA members a subsidy of \$20 per family.

It is a great opportunity for a group to have a weekend away and learn some new skills. Share a room and a car to reduce costs. More information will be forwarded shortly. ***Register your interest with SAFIC now!***

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (FMC'S) - Why were they bypassed?

The FMC has representation of all user groups of the resource, and is the agreed mechanism for changes affecting commercial sector. It is funded by industry and is one of the few avenues that we have for influencing decisions.

In some reports the Minister stated that industry had had consultation on the proposed changes. While SAFIC had responded with a generic submission, the only input **Lakes and Coorong fishing industry** had to any of the proposals was the Southern Fishermen's Association response to the "Review of Recreational Fishing in South Australia May 2000".

This Recreational Review paper was described at FMC as having "no status" and the Minister had signed a letter stating that any recommendations affecting commercial fishing would be raised at the Inland Waters FMC.

Industry must question the value of the FMC process that we pay for through our licence fees under the "cost recovery process". A sum of \$224 per fisher x 69 Inland Waters fishers = \$15,456. If we are to continue paying this rather generous amount, then isn't it reasonable that the FMC's are used for the purpose for which they were intended?

SAFIC raised this same question in it's last members newsletter and I am sure Henry Jones, as our FMC representative will be raising this issue and at the next FMC meeting.

Fisheries Act, 1982 - National Competition Policy Review - Issues Paper

Psst! Want a nice piece of light bedtime reading? The latest "in thing" from the government is the National Competition Policy. A paper produced by PIRSA looks at this issue as applies to the Fisheries Act.

The Terms of Reference states that the Competition Principles Agreement..... "requires governments to "...review, and where appropriate, reform...all existing legislation that restrict competition by the year 2000."

Fishers are strongly urged to obtain a copy of this paper even if they do not intend to respond. It is in plain english and easy to understand. Speak to SAFIC or one of the SFA committee members if you want clarification on any issue

The Issues Paper needs to be read in full to get a clear picture of where the Government is heading with this type of approach.

This paper has looked at the Fisheries Act purely from a legislative and economic rationalists point of view. It has then drawn conclusions and Cost/Benefit analyses.

SeaNet

As stated in the SAFIC news Tim Braund has taken up a new position within Seanet and we wish him all of the best.

The new Seanet officer, Cherie Heyes will be visiting Meningie soon to go on a familiarisation tour with a couple of fishers.

She will be finalising the By-Catch Reduction Strategy for the Coorong Mullet Fishery which has been a collaborative project with several mullet fishers. It will be published as a booklet and distributed to all current and future Lakes and Coorong Fishers.

Following that she will be utilising her expertise for the MSC process on behalf of the fishery. There will be a technical analysis of by-catch reduction methods to meet minimum requirements of the certification process.

We welcome Cherie to the team.

Thankyou to all of the following who gave their time, money, support and offers of assistance during our recent crisis including:

- ★ SFA Committee Members
- ★ Those who attended meetings
- ★ Local Councils & members of the community
- ★ Local businesses and support services
- ★ SAFIC
- ★ Seafood Council & Brian Jeffries
- ★ Coorong Good Food Program

The resulting recommendations will astound and shock most fishers, especially in light of the recent message fisheries management around Australia have been promoting for responsible management techniques and ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

If any or all are applied to this fishery without consideration for the environmental or social impact they would cause, then many of you may not want to be fishers any more.

If you need some illustration of National Competition Policy in action look at the example of the state power supply.

Copies of the Paper can be requested from:
PIRSA fisheries, GPO Box 1625, ADELAIDE 5001

Or check out the PIRSA website to download a copy.

But be quick because submissions close on 31/7/01

Food Safety workshops

Remember the food handling workshop we held a couple of years ago? At that time a phrase called HACCP was introduced to many of you for the first time. Well the time has come.

SAFIC is organising a series of workshops for the fishing industry to assist fishers to comply with the new laws under the Act. The workshops will be funded under FARMBIZ and will involve developing and writing a HACCP plan for your individual business. This equally applies to fishers and processors.

A template HACCP Plan will be sent to all fishers prior to the workshop. Basic information can be filled in then taken to the first workshop for completion. During the workshop you will be assisted with writing the plan so you don't have to do it all yourself..

The plan will then be taken home and trialed for several weeks. A follow up workshop will then be held to amend and fine-tune the plan so that it is workable and fulfils the requirements of the Act. While this may sound like a lot of work, you will only be writing down what you already do in most instances. However it will be a legal requirement to have a HACCP Plan.

A nominal fee will be charged (anticipated approx \$50). This is considerably less than hiring a private consultant who may charge up to \$10,000. You will be advised dates and details as soon as they are available.

Away with the Birds

A personal account of a day with the Winter Wader Survey

By Tracy Hill

Did I want to go to the Coorong on Saturday for the bird count? Yawn, boring!, I thought to myself, but I hadn't been out on the boat with Glen for a while so off I went.

It was a lovely sunny winter's day, with very little wind, although when cruising along the Coorong it can get a bit draughty, especially when your husband forgets to put your wet weather jacket in. After boarding the boat at Betts' Landing, Glen introduced me to Bryan Haywood from Mt. Gambier who was our bird counter. (He and Glen had already covered the area from Parnka Pt. northward in a smaller boat to be able to navigate through The Needles.)

We left the shore and started heading towards Mark Point while observing the western shore of the Coorong. There weren't a great many birds in our section, due to the high water levels but there were some significant sightings recorded. (As was explained to us, all of the data adds to the knowledge base, so seeing nothing is often as significant as seeing something if analysed in conjunction with other data.)

I was overawed once again by the sheer beauty of our "backyard" and feel sorry for those who live so close to it, but never take the time to experience it. I used to be one of those people.

Whenever he has the opportunity to take people out with him, Glen always tells them with pride that the Coorong is "his office". He never gets tired of it and I can see why.

Bryan Haywood was quietly spoken and obviously very committed to his bird watching. He was a bit worried when we were motoring through an area of reef. Bryan was even more worried about my reaction when we "hit" and I was sent sprawling onto the floor of the boat. Due to the sun being in his eyes Glen had told us hang on tight. But my hand slipped!

The highlight of the day for Bryan was the sighting of a sea eagle wheeling overhead. It appeared almost close enough to touch. My crappy little camera made it appear like a tiny white dot in the sky.

As well as the familiar species of pelicans, gulls and terns, I learned that we had birds like Royal Spoonbills, which used to fascinate me as a child when I watched nature documentaries.

The intricacies of bird counting soon became apparent with a group of cormorants kept flying ahead of the boat each time we motored to another site. We had to make sure that they were only counted once. Trying to count musk duck that popped under the water and reappeared 200m later and paddling away in all different directions took several pairs of eyes.



Glen Hill and Bryan Haywood setting out on the afternoon section of the bird count on the Coorong.

As the sky became overcast and conditions became cooler, I really wished I had my jacket. By that time however we had reached the end of our section and so quickly headed home.

Back at Noonameena we enjoyed the hospitality of David and Margaret Dadd and had a delicious spread of barbecued meats, salads and potato bakes. We were also treated to some warm apple and pear juice that had been heated on the stove. Over the meal we chatted with the various people that had been involved, although some had to go home immediately after the count. We were warmly welcomed by all we spoke to and they were very interested to find out about our fishery.

I thoroughly enjoyed my day on the Coorong. The following weekend we took our children Rachel and Roxanne for a tour down to the Needles. We had a picnic lunch and went for a walk on the sandhills. We even saw a group of spoonbills. Another great day with the birds!

Coorong Good Food Program (CGFP)

A recent meeting with the Regional development Board has provided the Lakes and Coorong Fishery an opportunity to participate in the Royal Adelaide Show at no cost to us for the site.

A joint project will be initiated between the CGFP, Meningie Area School Stage 1 SACE students and the fishery will be providing samples of our local product. This will be done on two half day sessions with the possibility of a third if we want it.

As the show starts on August 31st we need to make arrangements for brochures and product soon.
Update at the AGM.