



**SOUTHERN FISHERMEN'S ASSOC. INC.**

# THE FISHERMEN'S NETWORK

*Ethical, Sustainable Harvest*

*'Local commercial fishers, our local environmental sentinels.'*

July 2003

## Environmental Awards Keep on Coming

The Southern Fishermen's Association has gained a reputation as a leader in addressing environmental issues and this was ratified once again by winning their 5th award in seven years.

It was presented at the recent S A Seafood Industry Awards 2003, held on 31st May. A great night was had by all who attended including several representatives from the SFA and their partners.

The award was sponsored by the Dept. of Environment, SAFIC and SA WIN. and accepted by the President of SFA, Garry Hera-Singh.

Garry was nominated for two of the other awards which reflects the countless hours he contributes voluntarily to the association each year.

SFA is now this state's environment award entrant in the National Seafood Awards on Thursday 18th September as part of Seafood Directions 2003, being held in Perth.

The theme was stage and screen musicals and the event was held at the Grainger Studio on Hindley Street, home of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

The delicious meal was catered by Ayres House with hors d'ouvres of seafood donated by the fishing families of SA.

The committee of S A Women's Industry Network did a fantastic job of organizing the event.

A wonderful initiative by WIN was to ask each table to provide a small donation to sponsor a SAWIN youth member the opportunity to attend Seafood Directions 2003.

SFA thanks the Dept. of Environment, SAFIC and WIN for their support of the award.

The Southern Fishermen's Association...

Winners of the South Australian Fishing and Seafood Industry Environment Award 1997 and 1999

Winners of the South Australian Fishing and Seafood Industry "Fishing for the Future" Environment Award 2001 & 2003

Winners of the SA Great Regional Science & Environment award 2002

## Government Grant for Economic Development

The SFA has secured a \$29,700 grant to assist with their 'Wild Fisheries with a Future' project.

The Lakes and Coorong Fishery will examine their economic sustainability for the benefit of their employees and the regional community.

Funding was through the Federal governments Regional Assistance Program.

The RAP program, administered by the Department of Transport and regional services (DOTARS) provides seed funding for innovative, quality projects facilitating local solutions to local issues.

'Securing the grant is the first step towards achieving one of our goals, as identified in our strategic plan, of catching less fish for more dollars and

providing job and career opportunities with a future, in wild fisheries.' said Gary Hera-Singh.

'The project will complement our current initiative to achieve internationally accredited Marine Stewardship Certification, which will verify that the Lakes & Coorong Fishery is an ecologically sustainable wild fishery.



The environment award was sponsored by and presented by the Hon. John Hill MP pictured with Garry above.



***“The Southern Fishermen’s association believes that MSC certification, coupled with independent science, aggressive environmental partnerships with local conservation groups and active communication of our role as environmental watchdogs to our local community will guarantee our future. If like most fishermen, we just keep fishing and don’t work for the future, we won’t have a future.”***

*From ‘SFA and WWF–Partnership’ Brochure*

## Presidents Piece

By Garry Hera-Singh

The drought of 2002 could easily turn 2003 into the ‘mother of all droughts’.

For the first time in river regulation history (since 1914), South Australia looks unlikely to receive its entitlement of 1850 gigalitres. Caution by the MDBC has had preliminary estimates of maybe a 20% reduction on current water usage by all stakeholders as SA is highly likely not to receive entitlement this summer.

If it doesn’t rain buckets throughout the catchment this winter the reduction will be significantly higher.

However I do not think that the amount of reduction is the main issue although many dairy farmers, horticulturalists and viticulturist have understandably been very vocal about this.

The main issue will be that the water from our once mighty Murray will be too saline in the event of another exceptionally dry winter/summer.

Adelaide will not have to wait for 2020 before the water is too saline to drink 3 days out of 7. Government should be looking for alternative sources of drinking water now before it is too late.

Native freshwater fish have a high tolerance to saline water. In fact, the higher salinity water cleanses the fish of many parasites, lesions and diseases. This purification process was a regular occurrence prior to man’s regulation of the river prior to 1914.

Many of the introduced species such as European carp, redfin, and mosquito fish will not survive any significant rise in salinity.

This is not a bad outcome for our aquatic ecosystems. Therefore not all of the news is bad.

As for the Lakes & Coorong fishers, events such as this ‘dry spell’ exemplify the importance of industry having access to traditional marine, estuarine and freshwater components of the fishery.

This allows industry to rotate their harvesting of species, not only in dry years but also in flood events.

Currently with activity within the Coorong being quiet aside from mullet fishing, our Lakes and Coorong fishers have diversified and are now spreading out to the freshwater and ocean beach areas.

This adaptability enables fishers to synchronise their harvest of species with seasonal peaks and not having to put pressure on species that are vulnerable or sensitive to a constricted Murray Mouth or extended periods of no flow.

There is no stakeholder more alert to the fact that a healthy ecosystem means a healthy fishery.

We accept droughts and floods, this is a boom–bust type of fishery.

However the degradation of habitat issues are unacceptable to industry and the broader community. This doesn’t mean ‘get rid of the commercial fishery–problem solved’!!

The Lakes and Coorong Fishery is an indicator of how healthy our marine, estuarine and freshwater ecosystems are. We are a better source of environmental information than a Marine Protected area, Ramsar listing or National Park.

If by using our primitive harvest methods, our fishers cannot survive then every-body has failed.

## Inland Fisheries Management Committee

On July 24th the Inland FMC held their regular meeting at the Waterfront Motel in Meningie. A public meeting followed and was open for anyone interested in issues affecting the fishery and it’s management.

11 commercial fishers attended and were given an overview of FMC activities by independent Chair, Mr. Ken

Meek and also representations from representatives from SAFIC, SARFAC, PIRSA Fisheries and SARDI.

Inland Fisheries Manager, Mr. Sean Sloan flagged to industry the concerns PIRSA has over the lack of river flow and the effect this will have on fish stocks, including cockles, mulloway and cod.

With little confirming evidence (scientific or other sources) presented, suggested measures recommended by PIRSA are knee-jerk and premature at this point in time.

Industry has no major concerns yet, however we will be the first to initiate moves if we believe there is concern for mulloway and cockles.



## Regional Toursim Awards

The Lakes and Coorong Fishery Women's Network were successful in bringing the Limestone Coast Regional Tourism Awards to Meningie on 25th May.

A committee was formed and the recently re-opened Cheese Factory Museum and Restaurant was selected as the venue and to provide the meal for the 150 person luncheon.

The guests were able to sample the delicious seafood produced by the fishers and

their families as entrees. The selection included smoked and pickled coorong mullet as well as carp roll mops and other delicacies.

The menu featured wines and produce sourced from the Limestone Coast region.

The Swing Sisters sax quartet provided the musical entertainment and students from Meningie Area School served the guests in a very friendly and professional manner.

Another successful WIN event.

## Murraylands Export Identity Launch

Members of the SFA were invited to participate in the launch of the Murraylands Export Identity Launch held at Wellington Lodge on March 12th.

The program will look at networking, marketing and regional branding, with a view to assisting those wishing to developing an export market

Glen and Tracy Hill 'The Coorong Fisherman', gave out samples of smoked coorong mullet.



## ABC Country Hour visits Meningie

An outside broadcast in March by the ABC Country Hour crew at Melaleuca Centre, Meningie gave SFA WIN committee member Tracy Hill a chance to speak about her passion for the Lakes and Coorong Fishery.

Garry was interviewed in May by the radio program and discussed the drought and its affect on the fish and the industry.

Fishing industry issues are featured regularly and archived at the website [www.abc.net.au/rural](http://www.abc.net.au/rural). Follow the Countrywide links.

## Marine Stewardship Council Briefing

World Wide Fund for Nature and SFA held a joint briefing on 9th December 2002 in Adelaide, for key stakeholders in the L&C Fishery.

Participants included Duncan Leadbitter (MSC), Kathryn Short (WWF), Dr. Trevor Ward (assessor).

The purpose of the briefing was to showcase that the fishery has successfully completed the first stage of the MSC Assessment and been declared inherently sustainable due to the rotational harvest practices that fishers employ.

The fishery is now address-

ing several areas where more species data and analysis is required, and collecting of voluntary environmental data about the Lakes and Coorong Fishery which will be compiled into a holistic data set for the fisheries.

The fishery is one of eight smaller scale fisheries that has succeeded the pre-assessment stage and is part of the WWF Community Fisheries Programme.

WWF Australia is focussing on two areas of operation with respect to the MSC in the region:

- Working with small fisheries seeking MSC certification and;
- Working to foster marine conservation outcomes through MSC certification.

The partnership, supported by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, WWFUS and Environment Australia is building support for the final stages of Full Assessment, and if successfully completed, Chain of Custody certification and market development.

This is in line with the goals set out in the SFA strategic plan.

## SA Great Regional Award

Degradation of Habitat issues were the focus of the recent SFA nomination for the Regional Environmental Award which they won in November 2002.

Garry and his wife Christine traveled to Mt. Gambier to attend the presentation.

## Carping on

Fishers are conscious of the impact that shorter rock lobster seasons and alternatives bait sources are having on the ability to sell carp catches.

Keith Bell of Bell Fisheries Victoria, a carp exporter and product development company, recently spent the

weekend in the region. He met with SFA members, looking at the fishery and discussing various issues.

This culminated in a meeting with the Murraylands Regional Development Board to look at opportunities for developing Lakes and Coorong carp markets.



*Southern Fishermen's Association*

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Content was deemed correct at the time of publication. SFA apologises for any omissions or errors. Please bring these to the attention of the editor and a correction will be published in the next edition.

## In Brief

### License Fee Negotiations

Once again license fees were set to rise to an unacceptable level and given the uncertainty about the effects of the drought, industry was adamant that it could not bear any increase above CPI.

This was achieved through a drought relief subsidy from the government, but the underlying issue of 'cost recovery' still has to be addressed.

### Bird Count

Fishers were once again asked for assistance with the summer wader count. This is the fourth bird count on the Coorong that SFA members have volunteered their time and boats. Fishers provide transport and expertise to get the bird enthusiasts to places they could not reach on foot.

### Meningie Show

WIN members cooked Coorong Mullet burgers at the show for the first time. \$500 was raised on the day and the funds will be used to update the industry photographic display at the tourist centre in Meningie.

### Strategic Plan

The finalised SFA strategic plan is being distributed to members in time for the AGM. It has been developed over the past eight months and is currently being printed. All work on the plan was voluntary and thanks to those who provided comments and feedback.

### Fisheries Act Review

The SFA submitted its response to the review and over 600 responses have been received by PIRSA.

## Beyond Sustainability—Taking the Lead

## Seafood Directions 2003

Every two years the seafood industry holds a conference which explores issues relating to its future development.

This year it is Western Australia's turn to host the event and on the 17th & 18th September at the Hyatt Regency hotel, guest speakers from around the world and Australia will be on hand to discuss and answer questions relating to fisheries management, aquaculture, marketing and sustainability.

As well as the conference the Women's Industry Network will be holding their conference and AGM.

Several other organisations have taken the opportunity to hold AGM's and conferences during the same week, making it a good time to network, meet new people and have fun.

WIN have organised a field trip which will look at different aspects of the WA fishing industry.

Several other activities and dinners are available to attend including the Seafood Awards.

Accommodation has been secured at reduced rates and registration forms are available from EventEdge Tel. 08 93871488.

Did you know that recent science has indicated that the decline in fish catches is attributed to:

- Habitat degradation 69%
- Introduced species/exotics 26%
- Commercial and Recreational Fishing 5%



Pictured at the SA Seafood Industry Awards  
Back: MC Ian Doyle, Glen Hill, Adrian Phillips,  
Hon Paul Holloway (Minister for Fisheries)  
Front: Henry Jones (President SAFIC), Garry Hera-Singh  
(President SFA) Senator John Hill (Minister for the  
Environment)

