

## **NEWSLETTER No. 6**

## **MAY 2002**

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE Summer Wader Count**

#### **λ Summer Wader Count**

Lakes and Coorong commercial fishermen were called upon to assist with a bird count on the Coorong. It is the third count in the past 18 months that the fishery has been invited to participate in.

#### **λ Visit by Fishery Manager**

A number of wader experts were teamed with amateur bird watchers and were deployed along the length of the estuary and wetland areas both by boat and on foot.

#### **λ HACCP Plans**

Butch Ritchie, Gary Hera-Singh and Greg Kessegian generously donated time and expertise to transport the bird counters and get them into some of the less accessible spots to enable a comprehensive count.

#### **λ MSC Certification**

#### **λ Compliance Matters**

#### **λ SARFAC**

It turned out to be a very rough day with strong winds blowing up mid morning.

#### **λ Presidents Piece**

The organisers of the count were very pleased with the results of the day and acknowledged many times, the value of having the commercial fishers involved.

#### **λ SA Great Visit**

#### **λ Draft Goolwa Cockle Stock Assessment**

### **HACCP PLANS**

Most fishers would have received a letter advising that a copy of their HACCP Plan/Food Safety & Quality Manual should be sent to SAFIC to have it reviewed and a certificate issued.

#### **λ FMC Update**

#### **λ River Fishery**

This is not an audit but will ensure that your plan is of auditable quality.

#### **λ Fish Donation**

Anyone with any queries. can contact SAFIC. Tracy Hill available to assist SFA members requiring assistance with completing their plan.

WRITTEN ,COMPILED &  
PUBLISHED BY: TRACY HILL  
EDITOR: GARRY HERA-SINGH

Stories were deemed correct at the time of publication. We apologise for any unforeseen omissions or errors.

### **Fishery Manager Visit**

Sean Sloan, Inland Waters Fisheries Manager, was a guest of the Lakes and Coorong Fishery for several days last month.

He spent time with a number of fishers involved in both mesh netting and cockling. This was to give him an overview of the fishery area and fishing methods, to enable Sean to get his head around exactly what we do on the water.

He also had a chance of picking mullet out of nets that had been picked up during the night because of the warm conditions. It was a very long day for him.

After some persuasion Sean also had a meal of Coorong Mullet, which he wasn't too keen to try. Not only did he clean up his plate, he came back for more and even had some for breakfast. We knew he would!

It is hoped that the visit was able to dispel any myths or preconceptions he may have had and that he took back to Adelaide some good memories and useful information.

It would be nice to have more of the bureaucrats and "experts" come and spend some time with us. Decisions should be based on facts gathered at the source.

#### **POSITION VACANT**

Are you a conservationist, love working with nature, committed to being an environmental sentinel, want to provide the community with a quality, safe and healthy food source?  
JOIN THE LAKES AND COORONG FISHERY

## Presidents Piece

Garry Hera-Singh

### Political Whims have replaced Responsible Management!

The recent state election in South Australia was a sad indictment on small business and sustainable enterprise for 30 South Australians and their families.

Independent MP's wielding enormous political power, favouring misguided and misinformed minority groups, clearly sends a disturbing message to 902 other small businesses in South Australia. The Commercial fishing industry investment, commitment to rural communities, social and economic fabric and employment is the basis for many of our coastal regions in South Australia.

Peter Lewis MP and his compact with both main parties agreed to secure his support to form government. The compact had a range of demands. One that is close to the hearts of the fishing industry was the removal of gill nets and eventually commercial river fishers in the state.

Thirty fishers and their families, harvesting only 30% of the River in "reaches" (individual zoned fishing areas). A 150 years of sustainable fishing through floods, droughts, massive river regulation, invasion of exotic fish eg Carp, redfin and mosquito fish), willows, the enormous clearance of riparian and native vegetation, increasing salinity and increasing demands on river flows for agriculture, urban and industrial use.

In spite of these and many more serious threats to the fish and their ecosystem, they still were able to maintain their livelihoods.

The fact that a decision based purely on shallow political motives, but disguised and touted as a "sustainability issue", has ripped the hearts out of the true environmental sentinels of the river system. They are devastated not just to lose a business but a lifetime working with nature.

I have spoken to many of the River fishers. The high stress levels are clearly evident on the fishers and their families.

Inland Waters Commercial Fishers have always taken pride in their level of knowledge of the ecosystem, inputs into the levels of harvest and selective fishing methods.

These river sentinels were dedicated to providing the public with crucial environmental data on which to base sound sustainable aquatic ecosystem management.

Did you know that Commercial River fishers undertook sampling of yabbies from backwaters of the River Murray when the public raised concerns about pollution impacts? This work was voluntary and totally privately funded - while analyses were conducted by a major public laboratory

Results were alarming; the levels of arsenic in yabby flesh were up to 40 times higher than the World Health Organisation recommendations. Arsenic can reach backwaters from diverse sources, most notably it is a key ingredient in the chemical treatment of permepine posts used by the millions in the burgeoning wine industry.

Within months of these results becoming available, commercial fishers lost access to Yabbies in backwaters. Yet recreational still have access.

Closing down potential whistleblowers on the environment and the impacts of hazardous chemicals in the Riverine ecosystem is alarming and sets a disturbing precedent.

Good science, wise use and sound management of our natural resources are notions of a bygone era.

## COMPLIANCE MATTERS

A couple of issues have been brought to the attention of SFA by Mike Koch, PIRSA Compliance, that fishers need to be aware of and if applicable, to take corrective action.

To enable Compliance officers to differentiate illegal nets from commercial gear, the marking of gear must be clear and the appropriate coloured buoys used.

It is understood that after a time that gear becomes discoloured and worn, but the standard has dropped considerably and this will only cause problems both with compliance and from the public.

The license number must be on all buoys used and may be painted on or burnt in. The colours must be obvious eg. Clearly yellow, red, black etc. The correct marker buoys should end at either end of the line, 2 black buoys one end and one yellow at the other. Red buoys must be at the prescribed 50m intervals.

Mike also raised concern about buoys and anchors being left in the water with no gear attached for some time. He suggests that they should not be left in any longer than one day to allow nets to be cleaned and replaced.

Finally it is reinforced that any undersized fish must be returned to the water as soon as the nets are lifted.

In the coming weeks Compliance will be conducting patrols of the fishery and any gear that does not comply may be removed. Mike is happy to speak with anyone with concerns about these matters 08 85550172 or 0418 845732.

## INLAND WATERS FMC

The FMC has a new chairman, Mr Ken Meek. Tracy Hill and Garry Hera-singh are the Lakes and Coorong Fishery Industry members, and they have attended 3 FMC meetings and one cost recovery meeting.

There are several issues that have been identified by the FMC representatives and these will have to be worked through with the Chairman and the government bodies that make the decisions about how our fishery is managed.

The Riverland Fishery has withdrawn from the FMC process, which is understandable given the recent decisions affecting their future.

L & C Fishers should be aware that they are funding the FMC, which is in effect only an advisory committee. The Minister does not have to adopt any of the recommendations made by his committee.

The Management Plan **that we are still being charged for** and has **yet to be produced by PIRSA**, is the single most important document for this fishery. Once we have this signed off by the Minister we should have a better idea about our future direction.

License fees are in the process of being set for the next financial year. While we have endeavoured to keep costs down, there will be a substantial rise.

While PIRSA is able to continue using their system and hold the monopoly on how we are charged and what services they provide, this will only increase.

## **DRAFT COCKLE ASSESSMENT**

The Draft Cockle Assessment by SARDI was distributed as a confidential document to the Inland Waters FMC. The industry FMC members pointed out that the cockle fishers should have access to the document as the industry has paid for it.

SARDI agreed to release the draft to the L&C Cockle fishers and anyone who has not received a copy should contact either Tracy Hill or Garry Hera-Singh.

It is important that all cockle fishers go through this document carefully because there are several issues in it that need addressing.

Please direct all issues to the SFA committee so that all of the information can be collated into an industry response.

## **SA GREAT**

The board members of SA Great are coming to Meningie and district to have a look at opportunities within the area.

They will be given a chance to see mullet being picked from nets and given an insight into the fishery by Garry Hera-Singh. There will be a luncheon at Hacks Point Restaurant and representatives from the Lakes and Coorong Fishery have been invited to attend.

## **MSC Certification Update**

On Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, Katherine Short, Sustainable Fisheries Officer from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), met with Rob Lewis, CEO of SARDI, Bryan Pierce, Principal of Fisheries Innovation Systems, and Garry Hera-Singh, President SFA.

Discussions at this meeting were centred around the technical aspects required to facilitate the MSC process for the Lakes and Coorong Fishery.

## **FISH DONATION THANKS**

A letter of thanks was received from Marion Ayres on behalf of the Meningie Hospital Auxiliary for a donation of Coorong Mullet.

The auxiliary hosted the annual hospital auxiliary conference and Marion said that they enjoyed their mullet lunch immensely. SFA thanks the Lakes and Coorong fishers for their generosity.

## **SARFAC – STRATEGIC PLAN**

It is no secret that there are some recreational fishers who would love to see the end of commercial fishing. Their reasoning is that with less commercial fishers there will be more fish for them to catch.

This is a very selfish viewpoint, especially considering that commercial fishers supply fresh, healthy fish to those who cannot or choose not to fish for themselves, which constitute the majority of the community (more than 2/3rds in fact).

SARFAC the peak body for recreational fishers has spelt out clearly that their intentions are to remove all gill netting from SA coastal waters. They are still working on Area 1 and the Mulloway fishery and this is documented in a submission to the FMC.

Recently a recreational member of the FMC stated that now that they have effectively removed the Riverland fishermen, they will target Lakes and Coorong next and then the Marine Scale Fishery.

## **RIVERLAND FISHERY SUPPORT**

At the recent general meeting, members of the Southern Fishermen's Association voted unanimously to financially support the Riverland Commercial Fishermen's fighting fund.

Fishers are also urged to consider making personal contributions of any amount they feel appropriate.

In view of the article above, it is clear that all fishers should be sticking together to fight these unlawful and unnecessary mesh net closures. Lawsuits are expensive to fund and any precedents won by the Riverland fishers can assist the Lakes and Coorong and Marine Scale commercial fisheries with their future battles.

Anyone who has not contributed \$100 to the United Scale Fishers Fighting Fund to fight the cost recovery process should reconsider. It could mean a large saving in license fees.

Addresses are included in the Fishermen's Information Sheet.