

Oyster News

South Australian Oyster Growers Association

February 2020



Photo courtesy of OBA.

Be sure to attend the upcoming
Information Day on 28 February

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Information Day

Chairman's Report

Whilst oysters don't understand holidays, I hope everyone had a good Christmas and some extra time with family and friends.

As an industry the recovery continues, not as quick as some would hope, but through your hard work and resilience things are improving.

On 28 February we are holding the Information Day in Port Lincoln (see details on page 10).

As an industry we face a couple of issues regarding import of genetics. Some will see this as a massive

opportunity, and others will see it as a big risk. The SAOGA Board believes that all growers should have an informed say on the decisions.

I would ask that whatever your current view you come along to the Information Day with an open mind and listen to the experts, and take this opportunity to ask questions and hear others' opinions.

If it is an opportunity, we don't want to miss it, and if it is a threat, we must ensure we weigh that up as well.

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Chairman's Report

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Views are currently mixed, and I think all growers can benefit from hearing the expert views, the debate and questioning.

It is important that as an industry we are united, and we need to put emotion and pre-conceived views to the side and make the very best and well-informed decision for the medium and long term of the industry – whatever that is!

Sean Sloane has left his role as Director of Fisheries in SA and moved back to Sydney. We have thanked Sean on the oyster industry's behalf. He led fisheries through the industry's difficulties and supported us strongly on fee relief and much else that has happened in the last three years. His leadership has been strong and his contribution to, and empathy with, the oyster industry has served us very well. We wish him and his family well for the future.

Rob Kerin

Independent Chairman
South Australian Oyster
Research Council

Oysters Australia Report

Role of Oysters Australia

Oysters Australia (OA) is a national body formed by Australia's community of oyster growers in 2011 for advocacy, research and development. Our members are NSW, SA and TAS. One of the key roles of OA is to leverage state research funds, negotiate matching funding from the FRDC (on behalf of the Australian Government), and invest these funds in research and development for the betterment of the Australian oyster industry.

Changes within OA

There have been a few changes within OA of late, with Dr Len Stephens coming on as Chair, Andy Myers as Executive Officer, Graham Marshall as Company Secretary, and Giles Fisher officially added to the Board. Many thanks to outgoing Chair Bruce Zippel, Executive Officer Sue Grau and Director Trudy McGowan.

Current Board members

Len Stephens (Chair), Tony Troup (NSW), Caroline Henry (NSW), Ian Duthie (TAS), Giles Fisher (TAS), Gary Zippel (SA), Judd Evans (SA).

New Strategic Plan

OA is in the process of developing a new strategic plan, to help direct investment in Research, Development & Extension (RD&E). A structured survey will be distributed to state peak bodies shortly asking for your thoughts on priority areas for investment.

After analysing feedback, the OA Board will meet for a workshop (independently facilitated), to agree on priority areas for investment. While farmers/researchers can make individual submissions to the survey, it's recommended that peak bodies make a single submission on behalf of members.



Future Oysters CRC-P

The Future Oysters CRC-P is nearing completion. The CRC-P supported short-term, industry-led collaborative research for three years. There were seven research projects undertaken under the Future Oysters CRC-P:

1. Enhancing Pacific oyster breeding to optimise National benefits (led by ASI).
2. Accelerated Sydney rock oyster breeding research (led by NSW DPI).
3. New technologies to improve Sydney rock oyster breeding and production (led by NSW DPI).
4. Advanced understanding of POMS to guide farm management decisions in Tasmania (led by UTS).
5. Polymicrobial involvement in OsHV-1 outbreaks (and other diseases) (led by UTS).
6. Advanced aquatic disease surveillance for known and undefined oyster pathogens (led by SARDI).
7. Species diversification to provide alternatives for commercial production (led by SARDI).

Videos discussing these research projects are on the OA website: <https://www.oystersaustralia.org/crcp-news>

The final report will be finalised soon, and distributed to peak bodies – SAORC, TORC and NSW ARAC. Project summaries will also be uploaded to the OA website: www.oystersaustralia.org

Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Productive Coasts & Industries

The University of Adelaide is coordinating a bid to set up a CRC for Productive Coasts & Industries. Stage 1 grant submission is due in June 2020, which needs to include details of bid partners, projects and levels of co-contributions.

There was a National forum scheduled for March, but this has been postponed. Typically CRC's run for 10 years, and can fund up to 50% of your project value for an industry-led collaboration (the project must include at least one industry organisation and one research organisation).

OA is in contact with the bid coordinators, but without a current strategic plan and clear indication of industry priorities, we cannot commit to partner in the CRC bid at this stage.

This may change when the strategic plan is finalised. State peak bodies may wish to contact the bid coordinator directly to explore opportunities (contact Dr. Monica Ogierman: monica.ogierman@adelaide.edu.au).

Andy Myers
Executive Officer
Oysters Australia





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PIRSA Update: Aquatic Animal Health

Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS) has again been detected this summer in the containment zone of the Port Adelaide River. PIRSA continues to manage the Port Adelaide area as a POMS containment zone. This has involved destroying oysters at key locations, imposing a ban on taking bivalve shellfish, and providing advice to dredging projects.

An extensive communication and awareness campaign targeting the public and key stakeholders (in particular, vessel owners) is again being implemented, and this has a key focus on good vessel biofouling and ballast water management.

PIRSA has also continued to work closely with the oyster industry to monitor and test oysters from South Australia's oyster growing regions.



The spring early detection surveillance – across all oyster farming regions and hatcheries – did not detect the virus prior to water temperatures increasing. Warmer water is associated with disease outbreaks if the virus is present.

In autumn, PIRSA will undertake another early detection surveillance, however, as previously communicated, it will be up to industry to fund the program thereafter.

PIRSA will continue to maintain the passive surveillance systems which provide a rapid response to mortality events to rule out the POMS virus. To date, the virus that causes POMS has not been detected in these commercial growing areas.

During 2020, PIRSA has responded to three oyster mortality events which involved Smoky Bay, Coffin Bay and Streaky Bay. In each case, farmers promptly collected and sent samples to the laboratory for testing.

PIRSA issued a notice regarding livestock movement restrictions and the state's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory prioritised testing.

All results were negative for the POMS virus. The mortality events generally involved small oysters hung high on lease sites, and coincided with very warm conditions and low tides.

Over recent weeks, PIRSA has also investigated several wild fish kills, in addition to fish health and mortality issues in other aquaculture sectors, across the state. To view water temperatures, including upwelling events, go to the Integrated Marine Observing System's *OceanCurrent* at: <http://oceancurrent.imos.org.au/>

PIRSA would like to thank growers for their ongoing support to contain POMS, and reminds everyone to remain vigilant and report unusually high mortalities to SAOGA or PIRSA. Early detection of POMS, and other emergency aquatic animal diseases, is critical for an effective emergency response including containment of disease to infected areas.

For further information on POMS, including advice and factsheets for farmers, go to PIRSA aquaculture at: https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aquaculture/aquatic_animal_health/pacific_oyster_mortality_syndrome

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**PIRSA's Aquatic Animal
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Bay Representative and Hatchery Reports

Coffin Bay

With all the hatcheries doing a fantastic job at getting bigger spat on to farms, recovery rates have improved markedly.

Stock levels appear to be getting back to where they previously were, which would suggest there will be a much greater volume of product hitting the marketplace this year from Coffin Bay.

Growth rates over the summer months has been outstanding. We have recently witnessed some mortality events during February, all of which have tested negative to POMS. Tides and wind appear to have been contributing factors, so continual height adjustment, and on-farm vigilance is paramount.

I'd like to thank all the Board members for their outstanding efforts during what can only be described as extremely challenging times.

Here's to onwards and upwards for the industry!

Steve Thomson

Cowell

Hello to all.

Franklin Harbour has been having mixed results in growth coming through spring last year into Christmas. Young, vibrant stock has been growing extremely well but anything with age had tended to stall, hence sale numbers in the larger sizes leading into Christmas didn't reflect sale forecasts. Because of this, a percentage of stock balance was left over on farm that potentially should've gone pre-Christmas. This has made it fairly tight for space with the young, vibrant product charging through.

Conditions, strangely enough, have been and held exceptionally well through this period with some sales continuing up until late January.

We are now seeing the older product move in growth coming into autumn, with our final blanket spawn occurring after our long-anticipated rain event in late January. Stock is coming back from spawn extremely quickly and we hope to be back online late February/early March (fingers crossed) with some reports that sales have already commenced.

Town Marina works are on schedule for completion for the middle of the year and the Lucky Bay port has been receiving grain over the harvest season for shipping in the coming months.

Our bay has been watching the feral population closely at the Lucky Bay port and knockdowns are in the pipeline. Proposed bay clean up for the harbour is scheduled for 1 March – Clean Up Australia Day – coupled with knockdowns also.

The bay activity is very vibrant with oyster punts back in full swing, coupled with our grey nomad season kicking in. The ramp is extremely busy at present, but good to see.

Other than all that it's been business as usual and we look forward to a new year, 2020, with its new challenges, I'm sure.

All the best to everyone.

Simon Turner

Haslam

Oysters at Haslam have coped well with the weather extremes so far. Tides until recently have helped on the extreme heat days. Food counts have been good, leading to growth, barnacles and flatworm.

Leases are restocking with Angel Oysters beginning to use their Haslam leases again.

Good farming in 2020 everyone.

Greg Window

Smoky Bay

From the start of winter until November (roughly), there was a strong positive Indian Ocean Dipole event. This is one of the events that the Bureau of Meteorology monitor, similar to El Nino and La Nino events. This influences Australian rainfall, but its effect on oysters was unknown. It appears to have created low tides and low productivity.

The concerning thing is that normally in periods of low productivity we experience low mortalities. However, Smoky Bay experienced some significant mortality events during this period.

This has certainly financially impacted some of the growers concerned. Getting back into full production is proving more difficult than anticipated.

The Thevenard wharf is being upgraded, so we were unable to do an oyster knockdown on it in 2019. Hopefully it will be completed in time for us to do a knockdown in October this year.

Smoky Bay Growers have erected a roof between the two coolrooms to assist with keeping shade on the oysters whilst McEvoy Transport is loading them. We would like to thank McEvoy Transport for a donation towards this shed. The majority of the rest of the funds came from years of accrued income from the Oysterfest tent, in which growers sell oysters every year at the Oysterfest.

We underestimated the demand for oysters at the Oysterfest badly last year. Nice to know that they are still a popular food item. Hope we do better this coming Oysterfest.

Gary Zippel



Streaky Bay

Things have been quiet in Streaky Bay, coming out of a very low year in sales, farms have been slowly refilling with new stock whilst still having to deal with pockets of disappointing, and sometimes unexplained, stock losses.

On a positive, we have been receiving encouraging growth in the small stock on farm, but have noticed very minimal movement in any larger stock as of yet.

Hopefully 2020 is the year things start heading back in the right direction.

Paul Evans

Yorke Peninsula

Growth rates have slowed as water temperature falls. Current temperatures are around 11 degrees.

A bit like the temperature, regrettably, the number of growers on YP with any numbers in the water has fallen as well, as YP growers continue to wait out the POMS disease outbreak in the Port River.

It has been a particularly tough year for YP growers – with now only two growers with anything of substance in the water.

Whilst YP oysters continue to enjoy exceptional survivability, growers are understandably reluctant to take on-growers from us, given the perception of a higher risk of disease. This is not made any easier by a Government that allows thousands of tonnes of dredged material from a confirmed POMS infected area (Port River) to be dumped 30km closer to an approved harvest area. This is the same Government that has banned hatchery spat from un-infected bays in Tasmania coming into South Australia. From my perspective, the hypocrisy is breathtaking.

One grower is getting his product PCR tested to assure customers in other bays that his on-growers are disease-free. This involves selecting samples of stock and challenging those oysters with no food and raising the temperature of the water above 20 degrees for seven days prior to submitting to Gribbles Vet pathology labs for testing.

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Following a great seminar in Streaky Bay I sense a glimmer of hope for the industry as confidence is returning. Unfortunately for many growers on YP it is too late.

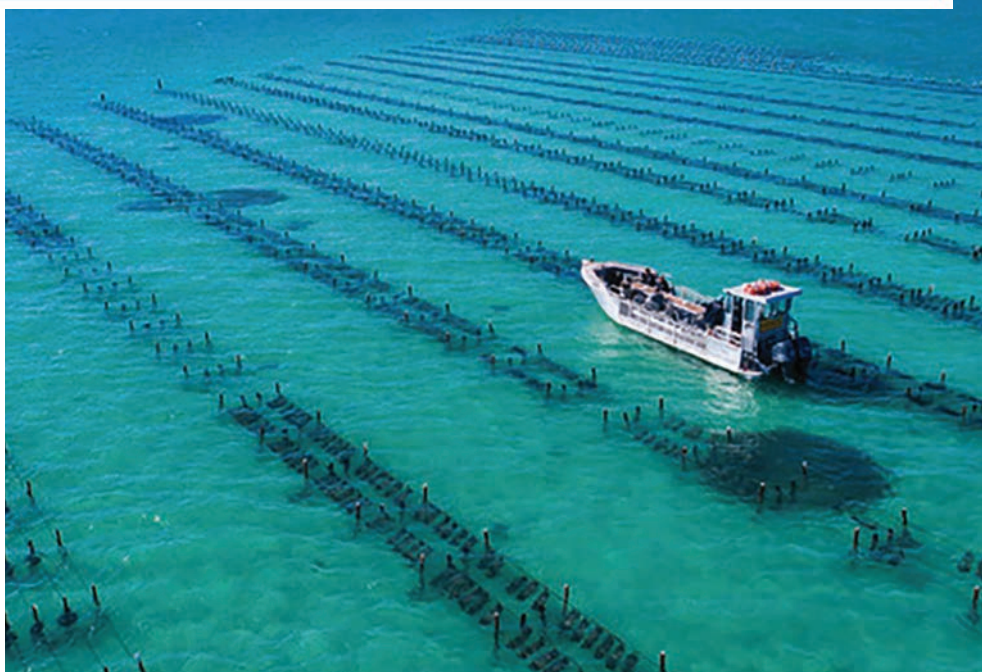
I would like to acknowledge the great work as Bay Representative over the last couple of years by James Nagel, who has gone overseas to work. (James is one of the many growers on YP who has had to find work away from their farm to survive).

Steve Bowley



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Information Day program

The South Australian Oyster Industry

Hilton Motel, 11–13 King Street, Port Lincoln
Friday 28 February 2020

10.00am	Registrations
10.20am	Searching for the cause of mortalities <i>Dr Matt Landos</i>
10.40am	Port River family lines mortalities <i>Marty Deveney</i>
11.00am	Risks of genetic importation <i>Shane Roberts</i>
11.20am	Genetic improvement in ASI stocks <i>Matt Cunningham</i>
11.40am	The impact of hinderances to the SA breeding program <i>Peter Kube</i>
12.00pm	Lunch
1.00pm	What's changed since 2016 <i>Gary Zippel</i>
1.20pm	SAOGA/SAORC update <i>Rob Kerin</i>
1.40pm	Licences and leases plus reefs <i>Adam Main</i>
2.00pm	What is known about mortalities <i>Stephen Pyecroft</i>
2.20pm	Oyster mortality discussion

Lunch and light refreshments provided.

Please RSVP with dietary requirements to Terri at
hello@oysterssa.com.au by Thursday 20 February 2020.



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