



Australian Southern Rocklobster Industry

Australian Southern Rocklobster season launched



Debra Ferguson, Ferguson Australia presents Hon Mike Rann, Premier of South Australia with a southern rocklobster at the season launch.



Part of the crowd at the launch enjoying new season seafood, including barbequed lobster medallions.

The Australian southern rocklobster season was launched on Tuesday, 2 December 2003, in Adelaide by Hon Mike Rann, Premier of South Australia.

Newly appointed Southern Rocklobster Ltd Chair, Roger Cotton, (story page 6) said that the industry is looking forward to the season with some optimism with the stocks in the three states fully sustainable and improving.

"The industry, having established a whole-of-species industry body in the last few months, is well placed for its future and is enthusiastic on what the coming season has to offer," said Mr Cotton.

In speaking at the season launch, rocklobster fishing family identity Debra Ferguson, said that the changing market environment presents great opportunities to invest in the rocklobster industry and provide jobs for local people.

"We at Ferguson Australia, have invested heavily in market research which found that people around the world are becoming increasingly time-poor and although they love lobster, are put off by the work involved in shelling lobster and then cleaning up the mess afterwards," said Ms Ferguson.

"In a world-first, we have launched a premium value-added range of southern rocklobster products, aimed specifically at meeting the emerging market trends."

"Our ready-to-use range including lobster medallions, hand-picked lobster meat with lobster oil and glazes allows us to turn \$30 a kilo lobster into \$100 a kilo lobster."

"Looking forward, I see enormous potential for the continued growth, development, and sustainability of our southern rocklobster industry through continued innovation and responsible management," continued Ms Ferguson.

"The opening of the season provides an opportunity to reflect on the potential the future holds if we are strong and daring enough to grasp these opportunities."

Increase in lobster quota to result in more jobs and export revenue

The South Australian rocklobster industry applauded the announcement on 16 September 2003, by Hon Paul Holloway, SA Minister for Agriculture, Food & Fisheries, that the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for the Southern Zone Rocklobster Fishery would be increased for the 2003/2004 lobster season.

The TACC was increased from 1,770 tonnes to 1,900 tonnes from 1 October 2003.

Roger Edwards, South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council (SARLAC) estimates that this will have enormous follow-on effects for the regional economy.

"Economic analysis indicates that the extra tonnage will result in up to 100 new jobs," said Mr Edwards.



"As well it can be expected that there will be \$5 million generated in direct export revenue."

"This will drive \$12.5million in new business turnover, primarily in the South East region of South Australia, through the follow-on impact into related industries, such as the processing, transport and cold chain areas," continued Mr Edwards.

Cathy Cooper, Chair of the Southern Zone Rocklobster Fishery said that the decision to increase the quota was based on strong scientific data to ensure the sustainability of the stocks.

"This is the result of years of rebuilding within the fishery, which has been a successful partnership between the industry and government," said Ms Cooper.

"The South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Aquatic Sciences advised that the fishery had exceeded the performance indicators established for the fishery in the management plan."

"Essentially the scientific evidence demonstrated that the fishery is in a good position to capture a range of economic and social benefits whilst still being able to achieve long term management goals," continued Ms Cooper.

"Sustainability of the Southern Zone Rocklobster Fishery is crucial, and it has taken a number of years for the fishery to achieve its current stock level and to give both Government and industry confidence to increase the TACC."

Cutting edge lobster biology and management information at International Lobster Conference



The Seventh International Conference and Workshop on Lobster Biology and Management will be held in Hobart, Tasmania from 8-13 February 2004.

This will be the first time the Conference has been held in Australia in 30 years and presents a rare opportunity to hear the latest research from 150 scientists and managers from over 20 countries around the world.

Sessions will cover a range of topics including environmental impacts, disease, behaviour, larval transport, physiology, management and assessment, aquaculture and enhancement.

Although the conference will run for a week, single day registrations are available. Papers on management systems will be grouped into a session from Thursday morning to Friday midday, which is available for a special registration fee of \$250. Issues to be covered include MPAs, quota management systems and systems for setting TACs, resource sharing with other sectors and the impacts of gear limitation systems.

A similar grouping of aquaculture-orientated sessions will also be designed for day registrations.

Support for the conference has come from across Australia with sponsorship from FRDC (principal sponsors), NHT, AFFA, TRLFA, SARLAC and state agencies in SA, WA, NSW, Victoria, and Tasmania. Registration costs are \$800 for the full week of the conference. Further details are available on the website: www.cdesign.com.au/lobster2004 or by calling Stewart Frusher on 03 6227 7271.

Clipping of recreational catch endorsed by study

Clipping of the central tail fan is a universally recognized way of marking recreationally caught rocklobsters for stock management purposes, assisting industry and fisheries managers to ensure the sustainability of the rocklobster population.

Sean Sloan, Rocklobster Fisheries Manager with PIRSA Fisheries in South Australia, noted that earlier this year, the practice was questioned as being painful to rocklobsters, and the management practice was investigated to determine if there was scientific evidence to support this viewpoint.

"A neuroanatomical study, involving an examination of the distribution of nerves in the tail fan, was carried out, followed by a detailed literature review of previously published scientific work in the field of invertebrate, fish and insect pain research," said Mr Sloan.

"The results of this review found that the vast majority of scientific evidence currently available indicates that any response to clipping of the tail fan is more likely to be a reflex escape response (similar to a knee jerk reflex in humans) rather than a conscious emotional awareness of pain sensation."

"The stimulus of the clipping directly induces the large axons in the tail to fire and cause the tail flicking, similar to the response if the lobster were to be threatened by a predator," explained Mr Sloan.

"The central nervous system of the lobster lacks the nerve structures necessary for the complex processing of these signals into what would be regarded as pain sensation."

"The scientific papers highlight the importance of distinguishing between these reflex responses, which they call nociception, and the processing that can only occur in complicated brain networks to produce a sensation of pain."

"The review also highlighted that there was a benefit to the sustainability of lobster catches derived from distinguishing recreational catches," concluded Mr Sloan.



First view of giant crabs – at home on the slope



Australian scientists have had their first view of the habitats and ecosystem that support Australia's largest commercial crab – the "giant crab" (*Pseudocarcinus gigas*).

A series of five surveys are planned in waters of 150-350 metres depth to assess the seabed habitats of the giant crab at the edge of the continental shelf around Tasmania. The pilot survey was completed on the State's east coast earlier this month in a collaborative project between CSIRO Marine Research, the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) and the University of Tasmania.

"We used a specially designed camera platform towed behind a research vessel to provide a tremendously exciting first look at the type of habitat that supports the giant crab fishery," says project scientist, Dr Alan Williams, from CSIRO Marine Research in Hobart.

"We were as pleasantly surprised by the extremely good detail provided by the new camera's system as we were by the range of habitats we were able to film," he said.

Seafloor features observed ranged from large plains of muddy sands supporting communities of small invertebrate animals, to ridges and rock outcrops exceeding 20 metres in height.

The project includes a study of the distribution of the giant crab in relation to habitat features, evaluating ecosystem links with the seabed habitats and assessing the abundance, sex, condition and size of the giant crabs.

Funded by the Tasmanian fishing industry and the Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment, the project is a joint study involving TAFI, CSIRO Marine Research, and crab trapping and finfish trawling sectors.

Little Tassie champions



Tasmanian rocklobster management is regularly confronted by the extreme differences in growth rate around the State, which affects the sex-ratio and size structure of commercial harvests.

Dr Celeb Gardner, Leader Crustacean Research Section, Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI), said that in the south, females rarely reach legal size while males are harvested so the population is skewed towards females and in the north, some females reach legal size before they become mature.

"Both these scenarios have created long standing concerns about the ability of females to mate and produce eggs," said Dr Gardner.

"As part of research addressing this issue, TAFI investigated the size that males start producing sperm."

"We found that tiny males from the south coast were able to produce sperm when they were only 70 mm CL, not much more than large prawns," explained Dr Gardner.

"Although they produced sperm, it wasn't clear if they were actually able to mate with a large female at such a small size."

"So we put some of these small males to the test by pairing them up with large females from higher growth areas as an extreme test of the ability of small males to woo larger females."

"This work hasn't been completed but it's clear that these small males have no problem mating and in some cases small males were able to mate with 2 females well over double their weight."

"This is impressive but we're still not sure if the amount of eggs produced by the females is substantially reduced."



Research in Victoria

The rocklobster research program was established in Victoria in 1993 and has focused on monitoring key fishery and population indicators to assess the state of the stock. Dave Hobday, Fisheries Scientist at the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute said that emphasis has been placed on involvement of fishermen in collecting the data through voluntary logbooks, tagging, chartering commercial vessels and the interpretation of research through annual stock assessment workshops.

"The research team works closely with the TAFI and SARDI lobster programs and is currently involved in a 3 year FRDC funded program investigating post-settlement biology in the three states," said Mr Hobday

"The main tool used in the assessment is a length-structured population model, which simulates the fishery in each Zone and uses a wide range of data inputs."

"This model assesses the current state of the lobster biomass and enables risk assessments to be carried out for a wide range of management options," continued Mr Hobday.

During 2002 an annual fixed-site survey was established to monitor the stocks independently from the fishery.

The future direction of the research program is to increase the spatial resolution of the assessment modelling by dividing each Zone into smaller models to better represent the population and fishery.



An Occupational Health and Safety Code for the South Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian commercial fishing industries will be developed through a FRDC National Occupational Health and Safety extension project.

Seafood industry Occupational Health and Safety developer Tanya Adams believes that this Code is being designed to be a "one stop shop" for fishermen in all areas of marine safety and occupational health and safety. It will cover all areas of commercial fishing including the southern rocklobster industry.

"The Code will provide information on all the legislative requirements as listed under relevant Occupational, Health, Safety and Welfare Acts and Regulations and as well as the Harbours and Navigation Acts and Regulations," said Ms Adams.

"The Code will also provide best practice guidelines on specific hazards faced by fishermen and wherever possible provide sample policy statements and procedures for industry to use."

"Where appropriate, one page check sheets will be designed, similar to the process being developed for the Clean Green Certification," explained Ms Adams.

The Code will include:

- Duty of care responsibilities.
- Hazard management in general
- Training and supervision for marine safety procedures
- General OH&S
- Industry specific areas that provide best practice

"Industry consultation is one of the keys to the success of the project and all rocklobster fishers are invited to request a copy to allow them to comment and provide feedback," continued Ms Adams.

For further information on the OH&S project please contact Tanya Adams on 08 9248 1405

Industry gets on board with Occupational Health & Safety



John Ashby and Roger Cutting, experienced rocklobster fishermen based in the Port MacDonnell area in the South East of South Australia recently won the 2003 Scania Rocklobster Industry Environment Award. The Award, now in its third year, recognises the contribution made by members of the rocklobster industry to the marine environment in which they work.

Kym Redman, South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council (SARLAC) Director said that both John and Roger are worthy recipients of the Award.

Industry stalwarts receive Scania Environment Award

Photo: L - R John Ashby and Roger Cutting receive the Award from Nick Panpanikolaou, Scania.

"They have held leadership positions and been long serving members of the Fisheries Management Committee, as well as involved with industry organisations including the South East Professional Fishermen's Association (SEPFA) and SARLAC," said Mr Redman.

"They have been key drivers of the Coast and Clean Seas program which has seen 17 waste oil recycling facilities set up along the coast."

"Port MacDonnell was initially set up as a national demonstration site established for the recycling of waste oil, plastics, cardboard, bilge rats, oil and water mixtures," continued Mr Redman.

"It included setting up all the infrastructure and getting skippers and crews on rosters to compact the waste before collection."

"This has been a national first, which has been profiled around the country to other fishers and would not have happened without Roger and John."

For more information about the Marine Waste Recycling Project please contact Samara Miller on 08 8682 4600.

Rocklobster Industry appoints marketing expert



Southern Rocklobster Ltd, Australia's national southern rocklobster industry body, has announced the appointment of Roger Cotton as inaugural independent Chair.

The southern rocklobster industry generates an estimated 4,000 jobs, \$200 million in exports and nearly \$1/2 billion in economic activity across regional South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

South Australian Rocklobster Industry Executive Officer Roger Edwards, said he was encouraged by Mr Cotton's appointment.

"Mr Cotton has contributed to the agribusiness industry for more than 35 years, previously as Director of Operations for a trans-Pacific agribusiness enterprise with a \$1 billion annual turnover," Mr Edwards said.

Mr Cotton is currently the Chief Executive Officer of professional accounting body, the National Institute of Accountants, serves as a member of the Australian Stock Exchange Corporate Governance Council and is an alternate Director of the Financial Reporting Council.

"Mr Cotton brings a wealth of relevant experience to this role, through his extensive involvement in agribusiness and leadership at the peak of Australia's accounting industry," Mr Edwards said.

Southern Rocklobster Ltd's strategic plan identified the establishment of a national organisation and market development as significant priorities for the industry across the southern states.

Mr Edwards said that the appointment of Mr Cotton could be viewed as a significant step towards meeting both of these priorities.

Mr Cotton said that he looked forward to joining Southern Rocklobster Ltd as independent Chair, in achieving results that would benefit the industry and thousands of families in regional communities.

"Southern Rocklobster offers a quality product and with the full support of the industry has a strong and viable future," said Mr Cotton.

It's stumps for Neil

After eight years at the helm of the Tasmania Rocklobster Fisherman's Association (TRLFA), Neil Stump has handed over the keys to the wheelhouse.

Neil started rocklobster fishing in 1982 as a deck hand and worked on a number of different boats in waters all around Tasmania before purchasing his own vessel, "The Carmel" in 1987.

Neil is in his second term on the Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council and is currently the the Council's Vice-Chairman.

"Neil's support of industry operators, both large and small, was recognised earlier this year when he was made a life member of the TRLFA," said Rodney Trelloggen, TRLFA Chief Executive Officer.

In 1999 Neil studied for a Bachelor of Applied Science Fisheries, followed by Honours in 2002. He is currently doing his Masters in Environmental Studies.

Neil is still involved with TAS-FRAB, a Rocklobster Aquaculture Sub-program, Rocklobster Research Advisory Group and has been leading the Tasmanian involvement in the current

Commonwealth MPA process.

Neil will be replaced by John Sansom, who has been a member of TRLFA for 12 years and a Board Member for the last 5 years.

John started as a crew member on rocklobster boats in 1975. He was a Fisheries Inspector and boat driver in 1980 and commenced rocklobster fishing on his own boat in 1981. He has had a number of boats and currently owns "Waygoe".

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