

Working Group: Long-nosed fur seals in the Coorong and Lower Lakes

Communiqué No. 5

- The fifth meeting of the working group was held on Friday, 29th January 2016 in Adelaide with representatives from the
 - Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR): Sandy Pitcher as Chair, Michael Garrod, Brenton Grear, Matthew Ward, Nick McIntyre and Renate Velzeboer
 - Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA): Alice Fistr
 - SA Research and Development Institute (SARDI): Gavin Begg
 - Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA): Merilyn Nobes
 - SA Water: Garry Fyfe
 - SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board: Deana Mildren
 - Coorong District Council (CDC): Neville Jaensch
 - Conservation Council of SA (CCSA): James Brook; and
 - South Australian Museum (SAM): Peter Shaughnessy.

The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA), the South Australian Tourism Commission and the Alexandrina Council were an apology for this meeting.

- A community Open day was held on the 10th December 2015 from 2 – 7 pm at the office of the Coorong District Council at Meningie. Twenty-seven community members attended, shared information and joined the conversation on non-lethal actions taken or proposed by the South Australian government to mitigate the impact of the long-nosed fur seal (LNFS) in the Coorong and lower lakes.
- Feedback from working group members, including the Mayor of the Coorong District Council, was that the Community Open Day was a positive and useful step in engaging the community. There was discussion regarding holding another community Open day in surrounding and potentially affected areas.
- DEWNR provided an update on the LNFS distribution and abundance in the Northern lagoon of the Coorong. The number of LNFS counted was 9 in December 2015 and 14 in January 2016. Although numbers were still low, there appears to be an upward trend. Numbers are expected to increase further over the coming months when LNFS' are expected to return from their breeding colony.
- SARDI and DEWNR provided an update on the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation funded research project on alternative strategies for managing seal-fisher interactions in the Lakes and Coorong fishery. Industry have designed and constructed a fyke net and are currently discussing with SARDI a new design haul net. Preliminary testing of the fyke net is underway to determine its efficacy in catching fish.
- DEWNR and SARDI with assistance from two experts from Tasmania held a training day on the 27th November 2015 at Meningie to induct fishers on the handling and use of seal crackers to deter seals.



- Industry, SARDI and DEWNR decided that further field trials in determining the effectiveness of alternate fishing gears and seal crackers will be postponed until LNFS have increased substantially.
- SARDI provided an update on the LNFS movement of a sub-adult male that was deployed with a satellite tracker at Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, on 9 October 2015. The LNFS travelled more than 1,000 km south and has recently hauled out on King Island near Tasmania (see Figure 1).

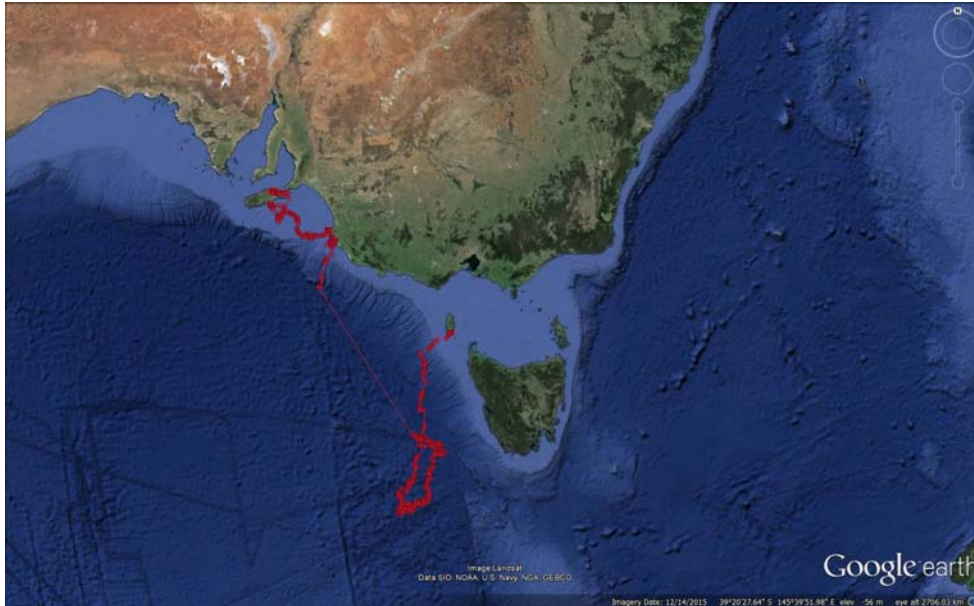


Figure 1. Movement of a sub-adult Long-nosed fur seal since 9th October 2015 (Picture: SARDI).

- SA Water has conducted the following modifications to discourage LNFS' from hauling out at Tauwitschere barrage and moving into Lake Alexandrina:
 - o Barriers have been constructed on the vertical fishway (see Figure 2);
 - o A barrier has been placed at the rock ramp fishway (see Figure 3); and
 - o Fencing has been erected along the access road to the barrage (see Figure 4 and 5).
- Working group members were pleased at the quick response by SA Water regarding the erection of the various barriers. DEWNR has provided funding for this work. SA Water and DEWNR have installed wildlife monitoring cameras to monitor the success of these modifications.



Figure 2. Barriers on vertical fishway



Figure 3. Barrier at the rock ramp fishway





Figure 4. Fencing along lake side of access road
(Pictures: SA Water)



Figure 5. Fencing along Coorong side of access road

- DEWNR provided an update on the monitoring of a breeding colony of the Australian pelican in the Coorong to observe breeding success and if LNFS' interact with pelicans. More pictures have been downloaded from the wildlife monitoring cameras in December 2015. All pictures analysed to date by a community member and DEWNR staff have shown that there have not been any interactions of the LNFS with the pelicans at the breeding colony. The wildlife monitoring cameras have been removed because the breeding event has naturally wound up.
- PIRSA is investigating options following an industry request to be considered for financial relief for the next financial year.
- Frequently asked questions, an option for the community to raise a question and the previous Communiques from the LNFS working group can be found on the DEWNR website: www.environment.sa.gov.au/seals.
- The next meeting of the LNFS working group is scheduled for the 3rd March 2016.

