

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

## Communiqué No. 6

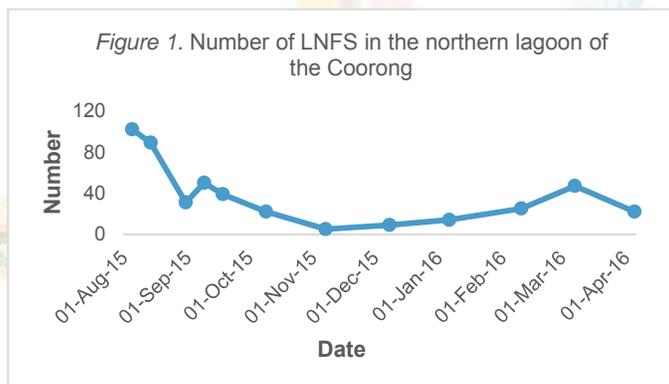
- The sixth meeting of the working group was held on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 in Adelaide with representatives from the
  - Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR): Sandy Pitcher as Chair, Michael Garrod, Matthew Ward, Nick McIntyre, Claire Stephenson and Renate Velzeboer
  - Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA): Alice Fistr
  - SA Research and Development Institute (SARDI): Gavin Begg and Simon Goldsworthy
  - Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA): Neil MacDonald
  - SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board: Deana Mildren
  - Coorong District Council (CDC): Neville Jaensch
  - Conservation Council of SA (CCSA): James Brook
  - South Australian Museum (SAM): Peter Shaughnessy; and
  - South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC): David Lake.SA Water and the Alexandrina Council were an apology for this meeting.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- DEWNR reported on a series of upcoming community engagement events planned for the Goolwa Wharf markets on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 15<sup>th</sup> May and 19<sup>th</sup> June. The community will be able to share information and join the conversation on non-lethal actions taken or proposed by the South Australian government to mitigate the impact of the LNFS' in the Coorong and lower lakes.
- DEWNR informed that the fortnightly phone link-up with the community has been an effective way of getting information to and from the community. Anyone interested in the LNFS issue can join this phone link-up. In addition, a free call number has been established for the community to phone in by dialing 1800 151 624 followed by the pin number 675 372 479#.

### DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF LNFS'

- DEWNR provided an update on the long-nosed fur seal (LNFS) distribution and abundance in the Northern lagoon of the Coorong. The number of LNFS counted was 47 in March and 22 in April 2016 (See Figure 1). This variability in numbers highlights the transient nature of LNFS in the Coorong. A community member assisted DEWNR with the monitoring in March and community members will have the opportunity to take part on future occasions.



- SARDI presented information on their 28<sup>th</sup> annual survey looking at LNFS pup production in the Cape Gantheaume Wilderness Protection area on Kangaroo Island, which was held in January 2016. It is estimated that a total of 4904 pups were born in four separate breeding colonies. These are the closest LNFS breeding colonies to the Coorong. Pup numbers have not varied much in the last few years indicating that population numbers may be stabilising.

#### **DIET AND MOVEMENT OF LNFS'**

- SARDI provided an update on their research into the diet of LNFS' in the Coorong. Seal scats were collected in the Coorong between June and October 2015. Hard part analysis showed that European carp and Bony herring made up 90% of the bony structures' biomass found in the seal scats. Bony structures from Mullet, Tamar Goby, other Goby species and Mulloway were also present in the scats. The scats are not wholly representative of the LNFS diet in the Coorong and lower lakes because LNFS move in and out of the area.
- SARDI informed that the satellite trackers used to track the movement of several LNFS' have stopped working. Satellite trackers generally run for 3 to 4 months. SARDI is planning to deploy more satellite tags on LNFS' in May or June to coincide with the gear trials in the Coorong.

#### **MANAGING SEAL-FISHER INTERACTIONS**

- 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 trialed a fyke net, which has not been successful in catching fish in the Coorong. Further trials are planned in the lake. An appropriate vessel has been identified to test the power haul nets and trials are expected to be carried out in coming months.
- Fishers together with SARDI or DEWNR staff have held four pre-trials to gauge LNFS interactions at the net and practice the deployment of the seal deterrents. A number of adaptations have been made to the trial design with the seal deterrent, as follow:
  - Reduce the number of boats in the water at any one time from four to two to increase the number of days the trial can run for;
  - Use new nets to gauge the damage done by the LNFS;
  - Use nets with a larger weave; and
  - Carry out the trials at night when the LNFS' are more active.The field trials are expected to start this month once animal ethics approval has been granted.
- The Coorong District Council informed that Liberal politicians recently held a tour in the Coorong to discuss the LNFS issue and fee relief with the fishers.

#### **TOURISM**

- LNFS working group members held a discussion on current status in tourism in regards to LNFS. The SA Tourism Commission informed that LNFS' are part of the tourism portfolio in South Australia.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 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](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/seals).
- The next meeting of the LNFS working group is scheduled for the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

