

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

## Communiqué No. 9

Meetings of the working group were held on 14<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016 in Adelaide. The following representatives were present at one or both meetings:

- Sandy Pitcher, Chief Executive or Dr. Matthew Ward, a/Executive Director Conservation and Land Management, DEWNR as Chair
- Prof. Gavin Begg, Research Chief, SARDI Aquatic Sciences;
- Prof. Simon Goldsworthy, Sub Program Leader Threatened, Endangered and Protected Species, SARDI Aquatic Sciences;
- Alice Fistr, Manager Fisheries Policy and Management or Belinda McGrath-Steer, Program Leader, Aquaculture Environment Program, PIRSA;
- Neil MacDonald, Executive Officer or Marilyn Nobes, Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA);
- Garry Fyfe, Senior Manager River Murray Operations, SA Water;
- Neville Jaensch, Mayor, Coorong District Council;
- Barry Featherston, Councilor, Alexandrina Council;
- Deana Mildren, member, SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board;
- Craig Wilkins, Chief Executive or James Brook, Marine Conservation Adviser, Conservation Council SA;
- Jodie Gregg-Smith or Lynne Hare, A/Director Community Engagement, DEWNR;
- Mike Greig, Senior Ecologist Abundant Species, DEWNR;
- Nick McIntyre, Manager Public Lands, Natural Resources South-East;
- Renate Velzeboer, Ecologist Marine Interactions and Wildlife Biosecurity, DEWNR; and
- Miranda Leckie (minute taker) and Nicole Westbury, Administration Support, DEWNR.

The South Australian Museum and the South Australian Tourism Commission were an apology for both meetings.

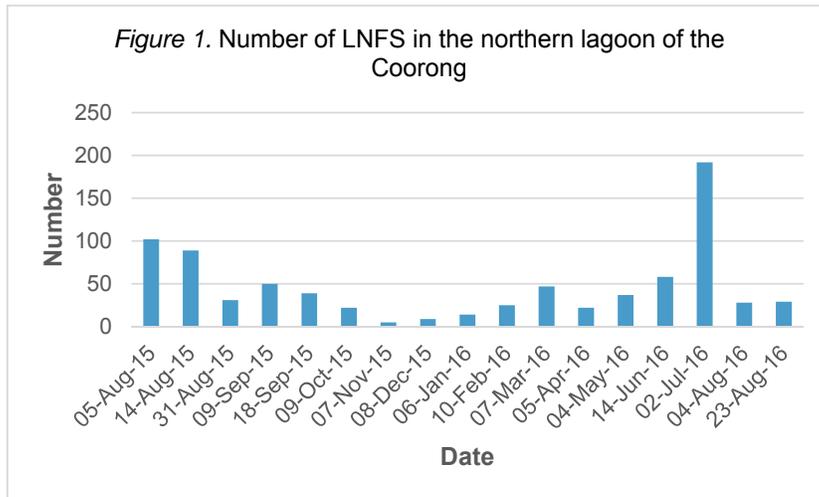
### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and COMMUNICATIONS**

- DEWNR with assistance from SARDI have collated a catalogue of literature references related to the Long-nosed fur seals (LNFS') in the Coorong and Lower Lakes. This assists in sharing our understanding of the issues, management options, research and experiences in Australia and elsewhere. DEWNR is looking into the best way to present this on the DEWNR website. In the meantime, copies of the document can be obtained from DEWNR by calling 0429 487 814.
- An opportunity for the community to get engaged in sharing information is through the monthly phone link-ups with DEWNR. Anyone with an interest in the LNFS' in the Coorong and Lower Lakes can ring in by dialing the free call number 1800 151 624 followed by the pin number 675 372 479#.

Please contact Natural Resources SAMDB on 8532 9100 to find out when the next phone link-up will be held.



## MONITORING THE ABUNDANCE AND MOVEMENT OF LNFS'



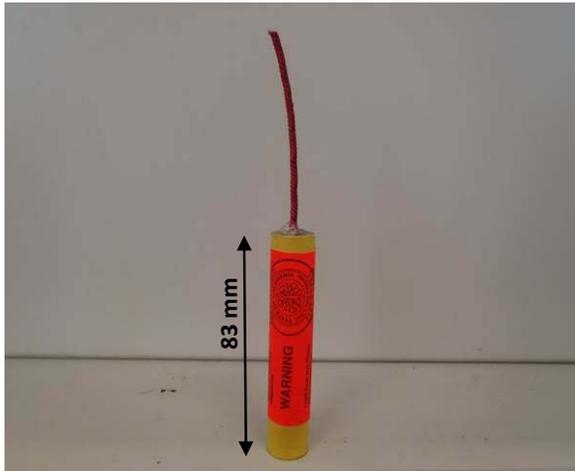
- DEWNR and a community member conducted monitoring for the distribution and abundance of LNFS' in the northern lagoon of the Coorong on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. A total of 192 LNFS' were counted, of which 173 at the Murray Mouth. This is the highest number recorded since the start of the monitoring program in August 2015. A storm went through the area and at sea at the end of June and it is possible that the LNFS' were seeking shelter in the Coorong.
- Another two monitoring trips were conducted on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 in the same area and there were 28 and 29 LNFS', respectively, counted on these days. The majority of LNFS' were found at Goolwa barrage. Gates of most barrages had been open prior to the monitoring to let large amounts of freshwater out from the River Murray and through the Murray Mouth into the ocean. This may have resulted in the LNFS' moving away from the Murray Mouth and the northern part of the lagoon.
- DEWNR is looking for trends in the abundance and distribution of LNFS' in the northern lagoon of the Coorong throughout the year (See Figure 1). We have chosen this particular area of the Coorong and Lower Lakes because that is where the majority of LNFS' are known to haul out. Anyone is welcome to come along on one of the monitoring trips. Please register your interest by phoning 0429 487 814.
- SARDI is working with a commercial Lakes and Coorong fisher to trial a mobile phone App for monitoring LNFS' interactions at the net. The aim is to discuss this App with the broader industry group in the near future to get more fishers involved.
- SARDI is planning to deploy satellite tags on seven LNFS' from the Coorong in the coming month to track their movements. All approvals needed to conduct this work have been granted by DEWNR and the Animal Ethics Committee. SA Water has constructed a moveable gate on the vertical fish way at Tauwitschere barrage (see Figure 2). This enables LNFS' to haul out on the vertical fish way when the gate is open. Once the gate is closed, SARDI staff will be able to deploy a satellite tag on the LNFS to track their movements.



*Figure 2. Gate at Tauwitschere barrage*



## MANAGING SEAL-FISHER INTERACTIONS



SARDI reported that data collected from the nine underwater seal deterrent trials have been analysed. Results show that the underwater seal deterrents (see Figure 3) can alter the behaviour of LNFS' in some situations and reduce the level of damage to nets considerably. The underwater seal deterrents will now be rolled out and released to the commercial Lakes and Coorong fishers once a protocol has been finalised. DEWNR is currently in the process of developing this protocol with assistance from SARDI, PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture and the SFA.

Figure 3. Underwater seal deterrent

The protocol will need to be consistent with all relevant legislation. DEWNR is planning a workshop with all applicable agencies to discuss a draft protocol, as well as an industry proposed graded system for consequences in case of misuse or breach of the protocol.

- A marine scale fish fisher from Port Pirie will work with SARDI, the SFA and DEWNR to trial a power haul net in mid-October. Depending on the outcome of the trial, there may be another two sets of trials. The double winged fyke net has been modified and will be trialled at the same time.
- The LNFS working group will be considering the next step(s) in addressing negative interactions with LNFS' in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth area once the results of the fishing gear trials have been analysed.
- PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture reported that the current financial relief and management arrangements will be continued for 2016/17.

### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016.

