

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

## Communiqué No. 10

The eleventh meeting of the working group was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 in Adelaide. The following representatives were present:

- Sandy Pitcher, Chief Executive, DEWNR as Chair
- Dr. Matthew Ward, Executive Director Conservation and Land Management, DEWNR
- Prof. Simon Goldsworthy, Sub Program Leader Threatened, Endangered and Protected Species, SARDI Aquatic Sciences;
- Dr Belinda McGrath-Steer, A/Program Leader, Aquaculture Environment Program, PIRSA;
- Merilyn Nobes, Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA);
- Neville Jaensch, Mayor, Coorong District Council;
- Barry Featherston, Councillor, Alexandrina Council;
- Deana Mildren, member, SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board;
- James Brook, Marine Conservation Adviser, Conservation Council SA;
- Dr Peter Shaughnessy, Honorary Research Associate, South Australian Museum (SAM);
- Michael Garrod, Director Community Engagement, DEWNR;
- Renate Velzeboer, Ecologist Marine Interactions and Wildlife Biosecurity, DEWNR; and
- Nicole Westbury, Administration Support, DEWNR.

SA Water and the South Australian Tourism Commission were an apology for the meeting.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and COMMUNICATIONS**

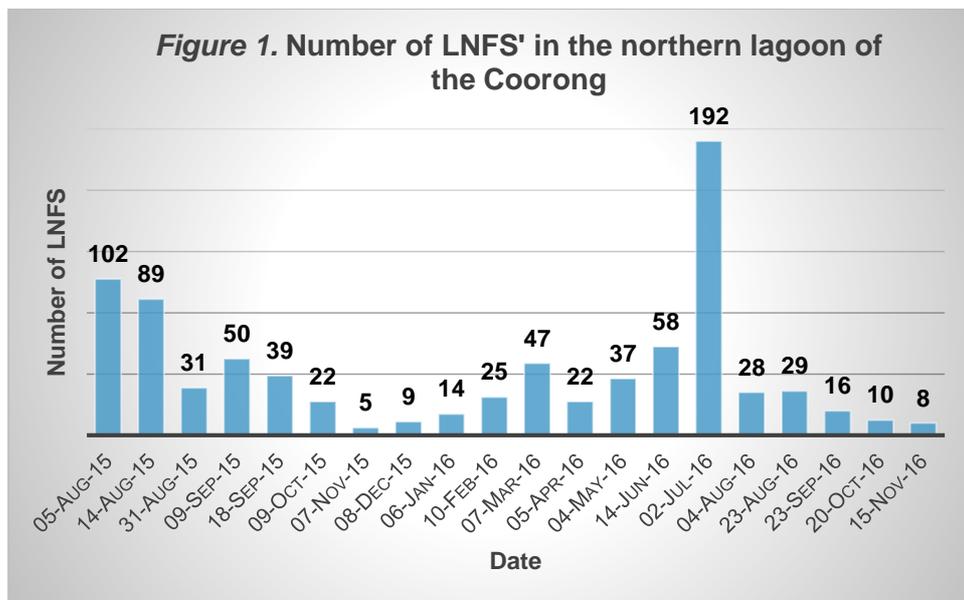
- The catalogue of literature references related to the Long-nosed fur seals (LNFS') in the Coorong and Lower Lakes, which has been put together by DEWNR with assistance from SARDI, has been updated. The catalogue assists in sharing our understanding of the issues, management options, research and experiences in Australia and elsewhere. DEWNR will publish this catalogue on the DEWNR website on [www.environment.sa.gov.au/seals](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/seals).
- The community phone link-up with DEWNR has been temporarily discontinued due to the seasonally low LNFS numbers. The community phone link-up will be reinstated upon the return of the LNFS' in 2017.

Please contact Natural Resources SAMDB on 8532 9100 for your enquiry.

### **MONITORING THE ABUNDANCE AND MOVEMENT OF LNFS'**

- DEWNR and two community members conducted monitoring for the distribution and abundance of LNFS' in the northern lagoon of the Coorong on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October (See Figure 1). A total of 16 and 10 LNFS' were counted, respectively, on these days. The majority of LNFS' were found at Goolwa and Tauwichee barrages on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September and at Goolwa barrage on the 20<sup>th</sup> October. LNFS' numbers are expected to decline further due to the seasonal movement of the LNFS' to their closest breeding colonies on Kangaroo Island.





- DEWNR is looking for trends in the abundance and distribution of LNFS' in the northern lagoon of the Coorong throughout the year. Anyone is welcome to come along on one of the monitoring trips. Please register your interest by phoning 0429 487 814.
- SARDI has developed a mobile phone App to record fishing effort and seal interactions. The App has been trialed by one commercial fisher for a limited amount of time and requires further testing with other fishers from the Lakes and Coorong fishery before it can be rolled out.
- Attempts by SARDI to deploy satellite tags on LNFS' from the Coorong has thus far been unsuccessful due to delays in obtaining a research permit, access restrictions, poor weather, low numbers of seals using the seal trap on the vertical fish way at Tauwitche barrage following the modifications made earlier this year and low fence height of the seal trap. Further attempts will be made in winter 2017 when the LNFS' have returned and finished moulting and modifications have been made to better trap the LNFS' at the fish way.

### MANAGING SEAL-FISHER INTERACTIONS

- DEWNR has made some progress in drafting a protocol for the use of the underwater seal deterrents and an industry proposed graded system for consequences in case of misuse or breach of the protocol before the underwater seal deterrents can be released to the commercial Lakes and Coorong fishers before May 2017.
- SARDI has contracted a marine scalefish fisher to trial power haul netting in the Lower lakes and Coorong estuary. The first of a series of three trials was undertaken in October to trial the suitability of this new method for the Lakes and Coorong fishery. Ten haul net shots were completed across a range of habitats (mud, sand, shallow and deeper water) in Lake Albert and the North lagoon of the Coorong. On all occasions the net was closed up with fish in the pocket and most of the fish caught survived, including the bycatch. There were two seals sighted during the trials and there were no interactions with the power haul net. One of the seals had some interactions with a gill net further away.
- Working group members discussed ways to potentially increase the efficacy of the method for use in the Lakes and Coorong fishery, which included changes to the configuration and mesh type of the net. Two



more sets of trials have been scheduled for November and December. The double winged fyke net has been modified and will be trialed at the same time.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- Frequently asked questions, an option for the community to raise a question and the previous Communiqués 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 will be held at the end of January 2017.

