



NSW DPI Oyster Industry Update – Fire Impacts

January 2020

DPI met with members of the oyster industry on 7th January to discuss the impacts of the recent bush fires across NSW. Shellfish Committee members, Shellfish Program Coordinators, disaster event contacts, oyster marketers, the NSW Oyster Extension Officer, NSW Farmers Association, DPI Food Authority and Fisheries were involved.

Key Immediate Issues:

A summary of available assistance will be put on the DPI, NSW Oysters and NSW Farmers websites and notified to permit holders by SMS.

See <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquaculture/natural-disaster-assistance>

Transport for water monitoring samples is available through Metrostate from Merimbula to the north.

A south coast business has offered support for transport of water samples or stock to market.

Immediate assistance has been requested through the state response team for Wonboyn Lake.

DPI is working with Bega Council regarding the opening of the closed entrance of Wonboyn Lake.

The Food Authority is developing a plan to increase the level of water testing in the coming months and has allocated funding to pay for this. Fisheries will also add funding to assist.

The Food Authority is responding to reported sewage spills in Eurobodalla Shire.

The Food Authority and DPI have been in contact with the Tasmanian oyster industry to learn from their fire experiences in relation to ash and runoff impacts. The Tasmanian industry has offered every support to NSW growers. The Tasmanian industry did not report direct impacts from ash falling around oyster leases during their recent events and continued to market product.

Clearing of fuel built up on Crown Land oyster depot leases at Merimbula has been raised with agencies. Vegetation in Barlows Bay in close proximity to oyster sheds is to be raised with Council.

Marketing impacts will be discussed with oyster marketers and oyster processors to investigate whether a promotional campaign is appropriate.

Access to additional manpower will be investigated with volunteer organisations.

Longer Term Impacts:

Industry across the state are concerned about the potential impacts of rainfall runoff from the fire grounds in the next 12-18 months.

Potential strategies to manage this upcoming risk to industry include:

- increased water quality monitoring;
- raising industry awareness that poor water quality conditions will occur;
- industry supporting each other;
- making business decisions regarding stock and location of stock; and
- access to grants and loans.

The difficulty involved in moving large quantities of oysters was raised by industry as were biosecurity concerns in attempting to move stressed oysters should an event happen, particularly where there is evidence of unexplained mortalities.

Industry raised concerns regarding oyster producing estuaries that are either closed to the sea or under threat of closure due to the drought. DPI will be having discussions with relevant Councils, Crown Lands and Environment, Energy and Science in regards to estuary opening strategies and approvals required for coastal lake or lagoon openings.

Shellfish Committee will meet on 26 February 2020 and will consider: the options for when assistance measures expire (many grants expire in six months); a promotional campaign for NSW oysters; a long term strategy for water quality management; and preparation of advice on procedures and actions should a mortality event occur in an estuary.

Potential impacts from fire control and containment actions within catchments are being discussed with the relevant agencies.

DPI will continue to investigate assistance a range of measures for industry.

More Information:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquaculture>

02 4916 3919 or contact aquaculture.administration@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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