

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



*Dr Ron Edwards – RLIAC Chairman*

Welcome to the latest edition of RLIAC news. A lot has been happening in the fishery since our last newsletter. There are a number of pressing issues currently facing the Fishery including the poor performance of the US market, labour shortages, high fuel prices and very low pot prices. Additionally, there has been significant debate and speculation over the implementation of a quota management system for the fishery. However, overshadowing these issues is the current trend in poor puerulus settlement.

At the time of preparing this newsletter, the September puerulus settlement figures had been on the Department of Fisheries website for little over a week and despite apparently more favourable environmental conditions, the settlement is below that seen at the same period last year. As you would be aware from the correspondence sent out to licensees by Peter Millington in response to the ongoing low settlement, the Department has initiated a number of reviews, both of the data and the current biological model. In addition, the Department will be undertaking two oceanographic studies (jointly with CSIRO), which, among other things, may assist them in determining if there has been a shift in the pattern of the distribution of phyllosoma in outer and inner shelf waters. However, while the researchers attempt to find an explanation for the poor settlement, despite a relatively healthy breeding stock,

the task left to industry, RLIAC, the WRLC and the Minister, is to work together to ensure the fishery remains sustainable, and to rebuild the overall profitability of the fishery into the future. I have met with the new Minister, The Hon. Norman Moore MLC, to discuss some of the challenges currently being faced by the rock lobster industry. He appreciates the difficulties faced by our industry and is interested in the measures we can take to ensure industry profitability and sustainability. These are tough times for the Minister to be taking over the portfolio and it is valuable that he has considerable experience as a Minister in previous Governments. We will be eagerly awaiting the October puerulus settlement figures, which should be released prior to the Tour.

Ron Edwards

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Puerulus Settlement Update**

The current Puerulus Settlement information is now available on the Internet, this data can be found on the Fisheries website at <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/docs/pub/PuerulusSettlement/index.php?0405> or by following the link from the front page of the Department's website. This website can be added to your

favourites and be checked as simply as checking the weather. The information will be updated 7-10 days after each full moon.

### **Quota Working Group**

A Quota Working Group was formed at RLIAC's meeting held on 28 February 2008 after there was a strong indication from industry that output controls be put back on the agenda. Membership of this group included –

John Cole (Chairman)  
Sam Koncurat  
Dexter Davies  
Angus Callander  
Greg Hart  
Leonie Noble  
Roy McVeigh  
Peter Glass

The group's inaugural meeting was held on 4 March 2008 and has met numerous times since to develop



the system controls and business case. The final advice was provided to RLIAC in July. At the time of writing this Newsletter, RLIAC's advice regarding the management settings paper was in the process of being provided to the new Minister, along with an interactive spreadsheet model for Zone C. Spreadsheet models for Zones A and B are also being finalised. RLIAC would like to thank the Quota Working Group, Kevin Donohue, Fiona Crowe, Nick Caputi, Chris Reid and Amie Steele for all their hard work on this project.

#### **Research and Development Subcommittee Update**

The Research and Development Subcommittee met on 18 April and approved the following four pre-proposals for projects seeking funding from FRDC -

1. Puerulus Distribution / Oceanographic Study and Climate Change – DoF / CSIRO  
*This is a study on the distribution of rock lobster larvae, which will look at the connection between the Leeuwin current and the La Nina / El Nino patterns, particularly looking at historical and future predicted relationships between these occurrences.*
2. Fishing Efficiency — Murdoch/DoF / WRLC  
*Improving estimates of harvest rates / catchability*
3. Genetic Structure – UWA  
*Study into genetic differentiation and how this impacts the provision of recruits*

*into different areas of the fishery.*

#### 4. Effort Distribution / Abundance Distribution / “Hot Spots” – DoF

There are also a number of additional projects being undertaken currently. These projects are centred around -

1. Low recruitment to the western rock lobster fishery in 2007/08 (lowest puerulus settlement in a 40 year time series of Puerulus collection at Dongara and Jurien)
2. Stock Assessment Report
3. Biological Model
4. Deepwater Ecology Project
5. Economic Model (WRLC)
6. Pot Efficiency (WRLC)
7. RFID Project (WRLC)

The RLIAC Research Subcommittee discussed the need for an independent research committee that represented all bodies, to provide a central role in state-wide rock lobster research. It is anticipated that this committee would replace both the RLIAC's R&D Subcommittee and WRLC's Research committee and would be essentially expertise based, providing information on research, not management, with executive support being provided by RLIAC.

#### **Western Rock Lobster Stock Assessment and Harvest Strategy Workshop.**

In July 2007, the Department of Fisheries held an international workshop on the Western Rock Lobster Stock Assessment and Harvest Strategy. The aims of the workshop were to review the stock assessment process for the fishery, to develop a harvest strategy (i.e.

levels of exploitation) and to have international experts peer review the stock assessment model that the Department's scientists are developing to help manage the fishery.

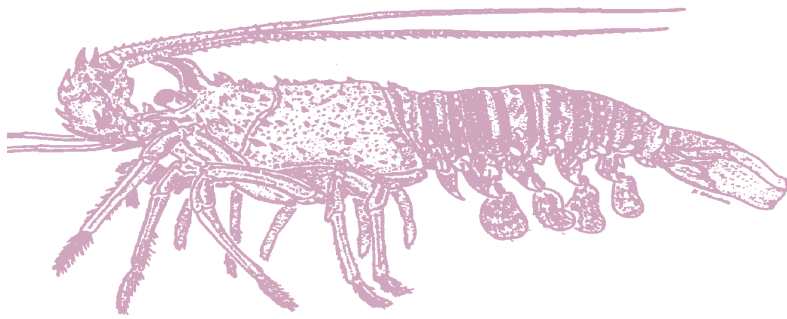
For full information on this workshop please visit <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/docs/op/op050/index.php?0206>. If you do not have access to the internet, and would like a copy of this document sent to you, please contact Amie Steele at the Department of Fisheries on (08) 9482 7267 or by post:

3rd Floor, The Atrium  
168 St Georges Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

#### **Closed Areas in the Fishery**

The Deepwater Ecological Working Group has provided its final recommendations to RLIAC proposing that two small areas either side of the 30°S line (the border of Zone B and Zone C) be investigated by the Research Division as possible areas of habitat that may be suitable for a long term study on the ecological effect of rock lobster fishing in deep water.

A three-year FRDC project is about to begin which will provide the baseline ecological data and habitat mapping required to determine the size and shape of the area that would need to be closed. It is likely that any potential closure relating to this project would not be implemented until the 2010/11 season, and not without comprehensive industry consultation. Further information on this project will be presented on the Tour at the end of October. The progress of this project to date



is within MSC required timeframes.

### MSC Update

The Western Rock Lobster Council (WRLC) officially took over the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification of the western rock lobster fishery (WRLF) from the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council in November 2007. The MSC auditor, Dr Chet Chaffee of Scientific Certification Systems, completed a comprehensive annual audit of the WRLF in April 2008. The audit went very smoothly thanks to a good team effort and Dr Chaffee complemented the WRLC and the Department of Fisheries on the excellent progress that had been made in fulfilling the conditions of the fishery's re-certification. In particular he praised the progress made towards establishing a research area closed to fishing on the 30°S line, near Jurien Bay (negotiations are still taking place with industry to make sure this area is the minimum size

that will still provide credible research results), so that the ecological effects of fishing can be investigated. Dr Chaffee also indicated that the stock assessment work to develop a fishery model and develop performance indicators for the breeding stock and the harvest rates were vital for the management of the fishery and would stand it in good stead in future MSC audits. The notification of the WRLF successful audit is expected to be posted on the MSC website in the near future. The next audit will be conducted in late November 2008.

last 2 years and wish him well in his new position in the Department. Clinton Syers will be filling this position until a permanent replacement is appointed. Amie Steele joined the Rock Lobster group in March, accepting the Management Officer position vacated in 2007 by Carol Saddler. Amie has worked for the Department for 15 months, previously as Personal Assistant to the Director of Fisheries Management Services. Amie brings great enthusiasm and organisational skills to the team, and we wish her a warm welcome.

### Staff Changes in the Department of Fisheries

After a collective 5 years (in 2 stints) as the RLIAC Executive Officer, Kevin Donohue has recently accepted an appointment as the South West Bioregion Manager within the IFM Branch of the Department. RLIAC would like to thank Kevin for his hard work, particularly over the

## RLIAC MEMBERSHIP

The membership of several members expired at the end of August, two of whom have not re-nominated – Jenny Shaw and Roy McVeigh. Additionally, Sam Koncurat has resigned from his position on the RLIAC. We would like to take

this opportunity to thank Roy, Jenny and Sam for their individual contributions to the committee during what has been a demanding time in the rock lobster industry. The nominations are now with

the Minister and we look forward to announcing the Committee's membership for the 2008/09 season in the near future.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 2008 RLIAC Meetings

- 28 October – RLIAC Coastal Tour 2008 at Conversations By Indigo, Geraldton
- 30 October – RLIAC Coastal Tour 2008 at Fremantle Sailing Club, Fremantle
- 31 October – RLIAC meeting
- 10 November – RLIAC Research and Development Sub-committee meeting



**ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Independent Chair  
Dr Ron Edwards

**Commercial Members\***

Zone A ..... Leonie Noble

Zone B .....

Zone C..... Chris Beissel

\*8 Members to be appointed

Processing..... Greg Hart  
Recreational ..... Des Wood  
Dept of Fisheries..... Peter Millington  
Executive Officer.... Clinton Syers

Permanent Observer

Dr Nick Caputi ..... DoF – Research

**SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Finance**

Angus Callander ..... Processor  
Clinton Syers..... DoF – Acting Principal Rock  
Lobster Manager  
Dexter Davies..... Western Rock Lobster Council  
Leonie Noble ..... Licensee  
John Fiztharding...Licensee  
Keith Pearce ..... Licensee  
Bruno Mezzatesta ... DoF – Manager of Finance  
and Administration  
David Burgees.....  
Graeme Stewart ..... Western Australian Fishing  
Industry Council  
Dr Nick Caputi.....DoF – Research  
Tony Cappelluti.....DoF – Regional Services  
Branch

**Compliance & Education**

Des Wood..... Chair  
Andrew Basile..... Zone A Licensee  
Greg Hill ..... Zone B Licensee  
Mike Jones..... Zone C Licensee  
Dexter Davies..... Western Rock Lobster Council  
Clinton Syers.....DoF – Acting Principal Rock  
Lobster Manager  
Tony Cappelluti..... DoF – Regional Manager, Metro

**Research & Development**

Greg Hart..... Chair  
John Newby ..... Licensee  
Eddy Toomey..... Licensee  
Chris Beissel..... Licensee  
Gill Waller..... Licensee  
Andrew Winzer ..... Western Rock Lobster Council  
Richard Stevens..... WAFIC  
Stephen Hood ..... MG Kailis  
Prof. Neil Loneragan...Murdoch University  
Dr Nick Caputi ..... DoF – Research  
Kane Moyle..... Recfishwest  
Clinton Syers..... DoF – Acting Principal Rock  
Lobster Manager

If you have any comments, items for discussion or know of someone who would like to be included on the mailing list, please contact the RLIAC Executive Officer:

Mr Clinton Syers



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