



http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20081020_abalone.html



NOAA

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA Completes White Abalone Recovery Plan

October 20, 2008

NOAA's Fisheries Service has made available the final recovery plan for white abalone, a marine mollusk listed in 2001 as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

This recovery plan outlines reasonable actions which are believed to be required to recover and/or protect white abalone, and is required by the ESA as a guideline for the conservation and survival of ESA listed species. The primary goal of this recovery plan is to establish self-sustaining populations of white abalone in a number of locations throughout its historic range.

The plan recommends a number of actions. NOAA scientists will work closely with the state of California, other federal agencies, private organizations and the Mexican government to monitor white abalone. They will use acoustic remote sensing technology to identify and learn as much as possible about potential white abalone habitat and will continue to expand the captive program, so more can be released into the wild.

The white abalone is the first marine invertebrate to be listed as endangered under the act. It was once abundant off the coasts of Baja and southern California, where it thrived in waters from approximately 15 to 200 feet deep, making it the deepest occurring abalone species in California.

Abalone reproduce by releasing eggs or sperm into open water. Usually, large groups of abalone gather in a single location to do this, increasing the chance of fertilization. At the height of the commercial fishery in the 1970s, divers harvested abalone in large quantities - resulting in a decreased population able to reproduce.

Today, scientists' estimates of white abalone densities show much lower numbers than historic estimates. There may be just a few thousand left in southern California. The white abalone population in Mexico is thought to be depleted based on commercial fishery data, but the status of the species in Mexico remains uncertain.

The final plan is available on the [web](#) or by emailing: whiteabalone.recoveryplan@noaa.gov. NOAA made the draft recovery plan available for public comment in 2006.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/21/2396851.htm>

 ABC News

If you have an interesting **Photo, Story, Issue or Report** that you would like included in Abalone Stories send it to:

Mogo man to front court over abalone haul

Posted Tue Oct 21, 2008 11:13am AEDT

A man is due to appear in Nowra Local Court charged over the seizure of abalone in the Shoalhaven, worth about \$14,000 on the black market.

The 51-year-old from Mogo was stopped on the Princes Highway near Nowra over the weekend and was found to have 1,365 blacklip abalone in his possession.

The shellfish were in six large bags which fisheries officers allege were bound for the black market in Sydney.

The man has been charged with exceeding the recreational bag limit for abalone and if convicted could face three months in jail, as well as fines of more than \$10,000.

Tags: [crime](#), [courts-and-trials](#), [fishing-aquaculture](#), [bega-2550](#), [mogo-2536](#),

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=14&art_id=vn20081017083523603C291688



'Government mismanaged the abalone industry'



Melanie Gosling
October 17 2008 at 09:40AM

The commercial abalone industry, which was closed by the Cabinet in January, has hit out at the government for "complete mismanagement" of the shellfish resource and says poaching has escalated since the commercial ban.

Now the commercial abalone divers, who say they have had creditors knocking on their doors since the ban, have called on the government to make available to them some of the around R80-million it gets a year for selling abalone confiscated from poachers.

In 2007, an estimated 2 000 tons of illegal abalone, worth R1,2-billion, was smuggled out of the country, and experts say the trend has continued in 2008

This is 10 times the amount of abalone harvested by the country's 302 commercial quota holders, according to researchers at the University Cape Town and Rhodes University.

Environmental Affairs Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk closed the commercial abalone industry in January as the "only viable option to prevent a total commercial collapse of this highly valued resource".

At a press briefing yesterday, representatives of the commercial abalone industry said they were being punished instead of the poachers.

MCM had also undertaken to implement a "social plan" from October in 2007 to alleviate the financial plight of the commercial quota holders who would lose their livelihoods, and to complete a research plan to ensure recovery of abalone stocks. Neither of these had been done, they said.

Abalone poaching syndicates are now using unendorsed permits from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to export their spoils.

MCM does not have the capacity to endorse the permits, which enables crime syndicates to re-use and even sell them.

Industry representative Scott Russell said on Thursday: "The industry is very unhappy. The resource is being wasted and falling into criminal hands, which is driving myriad other illegal activities. And we're battling."

Many who were given 10-year abalone quotas in 2004 had secured loans to buy vehicles and equipment against their valid expectations of earning an income from abalone. At least one quota holder now stood to lose his house.

In a letter to Van Schalkwyk, the quota holders said that, in the absence of any plan to "assist us in feeding our families and keeping kids at school and creditors at bay", they asked that they be given a "modest" abalone quota until a social relief plan was in place.

Alternatively, they called for the R80m from confiscated abalone to be put into an interest-bearing trust account to "service our financial loss".

- o This article was originally published on page 3 of [Cape Times](#) on October 17, 2008

<http://gansbaai.wordpress.com/2008/10/18/big-perlemoen-abalone-bust-in-gansbaai-on-16-october-2008>

October 18, 2008...8:46 am

Big Perlemoen (abalone) bust in Gansbaai on 16 October 2008

[Jump to Comments](#)

At 10 am on Wednesday morning 16 October 2008, police received a tip off that perlemoen was being stored in the garage of police inspector JP October (27 Roos street, Blompark, Gansbaai).

Marine and Coastal Management, as well as some other policemen (also from Gansbaai), led by inspector Danie Rautenbach, went to investigate.

They found 8379 abalone, packed into bags, and loaded onto a pickup truck ready to be moved.

At this time inspector October was at work in the Gansbaai police station.

Inspector Rautenbach went back to the station, and arrested inspector October.

The case is being investigated by the Organised crime unit of the South African Police, and should they investigate properly, they will find that the MCM and certainly some more of the police in Gansbaai and Hermanus, are rotten to the core.

From Saturday 11 October to Saturday 18 October, poachers launched from Kleinbaai every single night.

When one of the residents walked into the Gansbaai Police station to report that the poaching boats were being launched at that very moment, the officer on duty was not interested at all, and told the person to phone the Hermanus office of MCM.

The Hermanus office of MCM certainly phoned someone, 15 minutes after the Gansbaai resident had phoned the hermanus MCM, the poachers were observed receiving a warning phone call, and they promptly but their boat back onto the trailer, and sped off back to Blompark.

About an hour later, the MCM patrol vehicle dove into the now deserted Kleinbaai harbour.

This incident was observed and documented by a concerned Gansbaai resident , his identity will obviously remain protected, as MCM and the local Gansbaai police have not yet been “disinfected” enough.

There are still to many discreet and not so discreet warning calls going out to the poaching gangs.

Catching one policeman that was stupid enough to store perlemoen at home in his own garage is not enough.

Inspector October claims that he did not know that perlemoen was being stored in his garage, as he was renting it out to somebody ??? To who ???

Currently divers are being paid R 220 per kilogram of perlemoen by local middlemen.

A size perlemoen weighs about 320 grams shucked.

8379 pieces of perlemoen at an average wight of say 180 grams, we are assuming many were undersized would weigh about 1.5 tons. So the shipment was worth around R 300 000 or more. All depends on the size of perlemoen taken.

What was the effect of the “diving ban” between Gansbaai harbour and Quin point ?

answer : nothing.

MCM cannot or are not interested in enforcing their own ban properly.

If the MCM diving ban made a serious difference it could be supported in the short term.... but no, it makes absolutely no diffrence, and also serves to restrict normal law abiding citizens.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-abalone18-2008oct18,0,6466343,full.story>

Los Angeles Times

Abalone divers in a perilous quest for a succulent snail



Jay L. Clendenin / Los Angeles Times

Dick Nachtshiem, left, and Chris Ingram rest on their flotation tubes while hunting for abalone in the kelp-filled waters of Van Damme State Park on the Northern California coast. Nachtshiem and Ingram, both Reno firefighters, make an annual trip to the coast with a group of co-workers, diving for abalone and camping with their families. They noticed kelp being much thicker this year than in the past, making the diving harder and more dangerous. [More photos >>>](#)

Diving for slow-moving abalone has become one of California's most hazardous recreational activities. Seven divers have died so far this year off the rugged coast of Sonoma and Mendocino counties.

By Richard C. Paddock, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
October 18, 2008

MENDOCINO, CALIF. -- Shaun Stratton pulled on his wetsuit, grabbed his inner tube and headed to the beach to take part in one of California's riskiest pastimes: hunting for abalone.

It's not that abalone is an elusive quarry. The giant snail inches its way across the rocks in relatively shallow water. Even so, diving for abalone has become one of California's most hazardous recreational activities.

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Photos: Deadly catch

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At least seven abalone hunters have died so far this year along the rugged coast of Sonoma and Mendocino counties, authorities say. Last year, seven died in Mendocino County alone.

"When you throw yourself into the food chain, there are a lot of factors," said Stratton, 54, a general contractor from Chico. "You lose your advantages. You can't just pull yourself out if you get in trouble."

Some divers say the danger is compounded by a ban on the use of air tanks by abalone divers and a lack of education about the hazards divers face.

One recent casualty was Richard Baer, a former U.S. Coast Guard rescue crewman and California Highway Patrol officer. An experienced diver, the 57-year-old businessman drowned Sept. 12 near Sea Ranch in Sonoma County after he got tangled in thick kelp.

"I spent a lot of time training for this kind of thing and I have dealt with a lot of death," said Ron Long, a certified diving instructor who tried to save Baer. "But there was nothing that prepared me to go down in 12 feet of water and stare at the face of my best friend who was drowned."

Long added: "I am not ever going abalone diving again."

The quest for abalone brings thousands of people to the Northern California coast during the season, which runs from April 1 to Nov. 30 with a month-long break in July. The divers swim down and pry the abalone off rocks in water as deep as 15 feet.

Abalone aficionados rave about the slow-growing mollusks' "velvety tenderness" and "succulent flavor." Divers often come to the coast in groups -- renting a house or camping out -- and cook their catch at the end of the day. Some divers return year after year.

As the numbers of abalone have declined over the years, the state has banned commercial harvesting and imposed ever stricter regulations on recreational hunters.

Abalone divers must have licenses and can take only one species, the red abalone, north of San Francisco. Divers are limited to three abalone a day and 24 a year. Each one must be at least 7 inches in diameter.

Divers are allowed to use a mask, snorkel and flippers. Typically, they also wear a weight belt and take along a covered inner tube to hold their gear.

Statistics indicate that abalone diving is more dangerous than some other activities commonly held to be risky.

Of roughly 40,000 licensed abalone divers, at least 23 have died since 2004 in Mendocino and Sonoma counties, according to official records and news reports.

Officials acknowledge that some fatalities may go uncounted because no agency is responsible for recording them.

By comparison, of about 300,000 licensed hunters in California, 11 have died in accidents since 2004, state records show. The website *dropzone.com*, which tracks sky-diving fatalities, reports 12 sky-diving deaths in California during the same period.

"We deal with a lot of recreational activities -- hunting, fishing -- and abalone diving takes more lives than any of them," said Sgt. Shannon Barney, deputy coroner of Mendocino County. "There's a lot of ways to get in trouble."

In addition to getting tangled in kelp, divers can be buffeted by strong waves that smash them against the rocks. In 2004, one ab diver was killed by a great white shark off the Mendocino coast.

During extremely low tides, some abalone hunters clamber onto the rocks to pick the mollusks out of pools.

Occasionally, a hunter is swept out to sea by a wave.

Some divers die simply because they underestimate the ocean -- or overestimate their own fitness.

"A lot of our folks don't necessarily die of drowning," Barney said. "They end up perishing because of heart-related issues because they aren't in the physical condition to get into the ocean."

There is also what locals call "Sacramento syndrome."

After traveling here from other parts of the state, some divers are loathe to depart empty-handed -- no matter how rough the ocean.

"By the time you get your wetsuit and your vacation house rental, you are spending a significant amount of money," Barney said. "You can't spend all this money and not come home with something."

All 14 abalone hunters who died in the last two years came from outside the North Coast area. Among them were three who died in Mendocino County over two days in April 2007, when the ocean was particularly rough.

The most recent fatality was Robert Stewart, 38, of San Francisco, who died Sept. 21 after he became ill while diving off Shell Beach in Sonoma County. Stewart's friends pulled him onto a rock 100 feet from shore and gave him CPR. A county rescue helicopter rushed him to waiting paramedics, but efforts to revive him were unsuccessful.

"People don't understand how strenuous it is and how dangerous the ocean can be," said Jerry Kashiwada, a state biologist and diver who surveys the abalone population.

Blake Tallman, who runs Sub-Surface Progression Dive Shop in Fort Bragg and rents gear to abalone divers, is an avid ab hunter himself. He said locals have an advantage because they can wait for good conditions. "The ocean is a lot more dangerous and unpredictable here than people think," he said. "They definitely underestimate it."

Some divers and officials say it may be time for the state to require "diver ed" when issuing abalone licenses. They note that mandatory gun safety education has been successful in reducing hunting fatalities.

Since Baer's death, his friend Long has taken up the cause of alerting people to the dangers of abalone diving.

He first met Baer 38 years ago when they were Coast Guard rescue crewmen in San Francisco. Both were trained in helicopter water rescue and flew missions in the area where Baer drowned.

Baer, who made his home in Scottsdale, Ariz., had built a successful food-packaging business. He leaves two adult children and an 8-year-old daughter.

Long, who now lives in Granite Bay near Sacramento, said he was surprised when they arrived at Sea Ranch this year to find that the kelp was much thicker than in the past.

Some divers strap knives to their legs so they can cut the kelp if they get in trouble. But Long said he and his friends didn't carry a knife because it creates its own hazard: It is one more protrusion that can get caught on the kelp.

Long, a retired Sacramento fire captain, said he was 30 to 50 feet away when he saw Baer dive under the surface. When he didn't come up after more than a minute, Long swam down and found him trapped by kelp around his waist and shoulder.

Paul Baker, another longtime friend and diving buddy, joined Long in trying to free Baer. Long said it took him three dives to clear the kelp. By then, he estimates, Baer had been underwater five to seven minutes.

Long said he believes he could have saved his friend's life if he'd been allowed to have a small oxygen cylinder. He argues that the state should change its rules and let certified divers carry a thermos-size air canister for emergencies. The canisters could be sealed so that game wardens could determine if one had been used.

"I firmly believe if I had one, Rich Baer wouldn't be dead today," Long said.

Harry Morse, a spokesman for the Department of Fish and Game, said the scuba tank ban is intended to limit the overall abalone harvest and protect the scarce resource.

He called the circumstances of Baer's death a "unique situation" but said the Fish and Game Commission should consider Long's proposal to let divers carry an emergency air supply.

Long, with a lifetime in the business of rescuing people, finds it hard to accept he could not save his best friend and realizes now how risky abalone diving can be.

"It's a hell of a lot more dangerous than people realize it is," he said. "It's my mission to educate people about the danger."

richard.paddock@latimes.com

http://www.news24.com/Regional_Papers/Components/Category_Article_Text_Template/0,2430,486-658-672_2410811~E,00.html



16/10/2008 12:18 PM - (SA)

No plan as poaching continues

Feike is a Cape Town based independent group of natural resource advisers. This is an extract from the newsletter Feike News.

Several commitments were made by the minister of environmental affairs and tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, and his department during 2007 and 2008 with respect to the recovery and management of the abalone fishery.

· A year ago - on 25 October 2007 - Van Schalkwyk's official media statement on the suspension of abalone rights read:

"I today also give notice that if there is not a drastic decline in poaching, I will have to apply my mind at the start of the next season as to whether it is perhaps time to consider a complete ban on all perlemoen harvesting?"

It is therefore apparent that the initial suspension was a temporary emergency measure pending a comprehensive ecological and management study of the abalone stock prior to the commencement of the 2008/2009 fishing season, which is scheduled to commence in three weeks' time, on 1 November.

As at 15 September there has not been any -

- research undertaken in any abalone fishing zones to determine stock status or the socio-economic impacts of the suspension;
- informal liaison or communication with the abalone divers despite the fact that they remain valid holders of ten-year long commercial abalone rights.

Since the suspension of fishing rights, marine and coastal management has not formally communicated any message, intention or request to the registered industrial body for the abalone fishery;

- research working group meetings to discuss stock status etc;
- management working group meetings to discuss social plans, compliance plans or a recovery plan;
- any fundamental compliance with the re-quirements for the issuing of permits in terms CITES.

As the minister's department has not undertaken any work to determine the biological status of abalone, the ecological impacts of the first year of the suspension period, or any form of consultation with the abalone industry and the registered industrial body for the sector, it is unclear how the minister intends to properly "apply his mind&3148 to determine the proper status of the abalone resource and the socio-economic impacts of the suspension.

Commercial extinction

Although never defined, it has been readily assumed that the entire abalone fishery is on the brink of commercial extinction.

Commercial extinction of a living natural resource must necessarily mean that the continued profitable commercial trade in the resource is no longer possible.

After all, no person engages in commercial activity, let alone illegal commercial activity, to lose money.

The fact that more than 20 million units of abalone worth a conservative R3 billion were illegally harvested during 2006 and 2007 must seriously question the validity of the assertion that abalone stocks are on the brink of commercial extinction.

It is estimated that during 2008, at least a further 10 million units of abalone will be poached.

And South Africa has yet to develop an abalone management recovery plan.

<http://www.news.com.au/mercury/story/0,22884,24509757-3462,00.html>



\$1m fines defaulter does vanishing act

Article from: **MERCURY**

DAMIEN BROWN

October 17, 2008 12:00am

AUTHORITIES can not find a man who owes the State Government more than \$1 million in unpaid fines.

Monetary Penalties Enforcement Scheme director Seth Hills said the individual owed \$1.2 million but his whereabouts were not known.

"But attempts to trace him are ongoing," Mr Hills said.

Attempts include investigation by Tasmania Police in other police jurisdictions and general inquiries by the Department of Justice.

One of the last mammoth fines to be handed out by the Tasmanian courts was for David Wei Meng Lee in 2006.

The Queensland businessman was fined \$1.2 million by the Tasmanian Supreme Court.

The 50-year-old was found guilty of five charges of illegal possession of fish and was fined the large sum, which remains unpaid, and served three months in jail for his role in a scam that resulted in dried abalone meat secretly being sent to his Gold Coast business in removalist boxes marked as household goods.

The delicacy was then packaged into smaller packets and sold to Asian tourists bused to his business premises.

Hobart men who supplied the abalone were also jailed for their roles in the scam in 2002 and 2003 that was uncovered by a police sting called Operation Oakum.

The news comes with the announcement from the State Government that offenders will be named and shamed from October 27 if they do not pay their outstanding fines and infringement notices.

The move has angered civil rights groups who are concerned the information could be used to harm the safety of individuals.

Mr Hills said several other people owed more than \$10,000 for abalone and crayfish fishing related offences.

"At the moment the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Scheme is targeting for enforcement a group of defaulters that have each accumulated in excess of 50 individual offences."

A total of \$38.6 million in unpaid fines and \$7.3 million in local government fees are owed to the Government.

The figure represents more than 55,000 people.

Justice Minister Lara Giddings told Parliament this week that people who had not paid fines by the end of the month may have their names, addresses and penalty details posted on the MPES website.

"This is one of the new powers that allow the State Government to get tough on collecting unpaid fines," Ms Giddings said.

"This is the last chance for fine defaulters."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/15/2392047.htm>

Quick action on abalone virus praised

Posted Wed Oct 15, 2008 4:00pm AEDT

Updated Wed Oct 15, 2008 4:35pm AEDT



Authorities tested 1,000 abalone. (ABC News)

A quick biosecurity response to the presence of a deadly abalone disease in Tasmania is being credited for saving the \$100 million dollar industry.

An abalone with symptoms of the ganglioneuritis virus was found at a southern processing plant early last month.

More than 1,000 abalone have been DNA-tested but there have been no more positive results.

The Minister for Primary Industries and Water David Llewellyn says the disease wiped out Victoria's industry and it is lucky it did not do the same here.

"I think it's a great credit to the processes we've got in place and the people we've got involved and the industry themselves and the way that they've been able to accept and work with the department with resolving these matters," Mr Llewellyn said.

<http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=25009>



David Llewellyn, MP

Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Wednesday, 15 October 2008

Government Acknowledges Abalone Disease Response

The Primary Industries and Water Minister, David Llewellyn congratulated all involved in the rapid response to the

Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis situation in Tasmania.

Mr Llewellyn told Parliament that industry and the responding authorities had earned acknowledgement for their co-ordination, transparency and persistence.

“This was a good model of rapid action in the face of uncertainty,” Mr Llewellyn said.

“And this approach will continue for as long as we live with the uncertainties which characterise the sudden detection of disease.

Recapping events since AVG was detected on 8 September at a Tasmanian processing facility, he said that more than 1000 abalone had been DNA-tested for the disease as part of the wild surveillance program.

“There is now sufficient information from the surveillance program to allow some relaxation of restrictions to allow a wider range of movements between regions around the State under a permit system.

“The windy spring weather has delayed surveillance in some areas. As soon as adequate information is available all restrictions will be reviewed and, based on the assessment of the risk, they may be removed.”

Mr Llewellyn said that the finding of only one wild abalone which returned a weak DNA-positive result for the disease is unexpected.

“A trial has been initiated in our Animal Health Laboratory in Launceston to attempt to determine the true status of this abalone.”

Tasmania’s abalone industry has been fully involved in the response effort.

“I would like to commend them on their cooperation all the way through this event. Tasmania has the world’s largest wild abalone fishery and there are many people whose livelihoods depend on it.

“There are also around 12,500 recreational abalone fishers who very highly value their pursuit.”

The processing premises where AVG was detected has been cleaned and decontaminated. Sentinel abalone placed on site have been tested with no evidence of disease and all restrictions on the premises have now been lifted.

“The management and staff at that plant have been very helpful throughout what has been a very tough period for them,” Mr Llewellyn said.

“And I particularly want to record my appreciation of the work of the officers of the Department of Primary Industries and Water for their hard work and professionalism at the State Disease Control Headquarters, the laboratories and in the field.”

<http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20081014055428501>



Lengthy trial for perlemoen syndicate suspects

Published in: Legalbrief Today
Date: Tue 14 October 2008
Category: In Court
Issue No: 2174

A long and complex trial may lie ahead in the Cape High Court for 19 suspected members of a syndicate facing a total of 116 charges related to perlemoen smuggling, which involve operating an enterprise through a pattern of racketeering, operating a fish processing plant, fraud and collecting, keeping, controlling or possessing perlemoen for commercial purposes.

A Cape Times report says the prosecuting authorities are still negotiating a plea bargain with nine of the men, who are believed

to have been hired to do menial work such as packing crates in warehouses. The trial of the other 10 accused is scheduled to start tomorrow (Wednesday).

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/10/2388122.htm>

 ABC News

Authorities relax abalone restrictions

Posted Fri Oct 10, 2008 6:45pm AEDT



While authorities have relaxed some of the conditions, the emergency response will remain until the end of this month. (ABC News)

Authorities have lifted restrictions on the movement of abalone on Tasmania's East Coast.

The ban was imposed after three fish at a southern processing plant in early September tested positive for the Ganglioneuritis virus.

The President of the Abalone Council, Greg Woodham, says while authorities have relaxed some of the conditions, the emergency response will remain until the end of this month after several other areas have been tested.

"The intention is, that if all the tests come back negative, and that there isn't any evidence of AVG being present in any of the specimens then the Emergency Response Permit will be rescinded," he said.

<http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=24988>



Department of Primary Industries and Water

Friday, 10 October 2008

Abalone Disease Update - Some Easing Of Restrictions

There has been some relaxing of movement restrictions in relation to the movement of abalone from the east coast into the south. Sufficient surveillance and sampling of the east coast has taken place to conclude that it is highly unlikely there is active disease in that area.

Unfortunately, weather and sea conditions have prevented adequate sampling of some other areas. This is particularly so for the west coast, which hasn't been fished since the AVGH was first detected just over a month ago.

We are hopeful that further surveillance over the next week or two will enable further easing of movement restrictions. The weather and sea conditions for surveillance diving out there will determine how soon that can happen.

The number of lab test results that have come back is now around 1,000 and we still have just the one PCR positive from the wild.

The previously infected processing facility at Mornington has now been given the formal all clear. The restrictions on that facility have been lifted and they can now operate normally.

It is great news that they are now back in business. The abalone industry and all those who care about our marine environment owe these people their thanks for being so prompt in reporting the disease and for their cooperation in managing the problem.



Media release

The Place To Be From the Minister Responsible for Fisheries

Friday, 3 October, 2008

ABALONE THIEF NETS RECORD JAIL SENTENCE FOR TRAFFICKING

A New South Wales abalone poacher who relocated his illegal abalone syndicate to Victoria has been sentenced to two and a half years jail in Melbourne today, the longest jail sentence in history for abalone trafficking.

Minister Responsible for Fisheries Joe Helper congratulated the dedicated staff from Fisheries Victoria, Victoria Police, NSW Fisheries, NSW Police and Western Australia police on the success of Operation Algebra.

County Court Judge Ross imposed a two and a half year jail sentence with a 15 month non-parole period, for trafficking abalone during a closed season.

“Operation Algebra concluded at Williamstown in July 2007, when the repeat abalone offender, was arrested and charged by Fisheries Officers for trafficking abalone on five separate occasions during a period of 17 months,” Mr Helper said.

Mr Helper said the offender trafficked about one tonne of abalone meat worth over \$40,000.

“Operation Algebra involved an investigation targeting an organised group of abalone thieves and has resulted in seven other people being charged and vehicles and dive equipment being seized,” Mr Helper said.

“This should send a clear warning to would-be abalone thieves. If they attempt to steal abalone, they will be caught and subjected to the full extent of the law.

“This type of theft threatens the resource, legitimate business and recreational diving opportunities.

“Abalone is a lucrative industry and one of Victoria's most precious fishing resources.

“This co-ordinated operation across the state shows the professionalism and commitment of fisheries staff to prevent this illegal activity.

“Potential offenders should be aware of the severe penalties now available under the Victorian Fisheries Act. Indictable offences are now available under the fisheries act, and if convicted offenders could be facing a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years.”

Victorians are reminded to use the 24 hour DPI fisheries offence reporting line 13 FISH (13 3474) if they suspect illegal fishing activity anywhere in Victoria.



Media Release

From the Department of Primary Industries

Friday 10 October 2008

FISHERIES VICTORIA CLOSE ILLEGAL ABALONE PROCESSING OPERATION

A 60 year old Braybrook man is facing a number of charges after search warrants were executed by Fisheries officers on five premises in Geelong and Melbourne, uncovering an alleged illegal abalone processing operation.

The searches were conducted by 20 Fisheries Officers, supported by Victoria Police.

Fisheries Victoria’s Chief Investigator, Murray Donaldson, said the evidence gathered pointed to large scale processing and trafficking of abalone.

“The primary alleged offender will be facing charges including unlicensed processing, receiving and consigning a priority species and exceeding possession and bag limits,” Mr Donaldson said.

“We found abalone in various forms including 100 boxes of processed cans, 50 boxes of vacuum sealed pouches and frozen abalone.

“There was also substantial evidence of other types of fish processing including sea urchins and shark fins.

“We have yet to tally and weigh the seized material but there is a lot of it and it seems it was destined for export or for the illegal domestic market.”

The man is to be charged on summons.

Since 2004 possession or trafficking of commercial quantities of priority species are indictable offences, attracting penalties up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The licensed abalone fishery is highly regulated with strict audit trails that require "real time" reporting of all abalone entering or leaving premises. This electronic audit system is complemented with a paper trail from the diver to the consumer.

The Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Dr Peter Appleford, commended Fisheries staff and indicated that Fisheries Victoria, with interagency assistance when required, will continue to dismantle this type of organised criminal activity that threatens the sustainability of the abalone fishery.

Members of the public who observe illegal fishing activity are urged to call the 24 hour reporting line, 13-FISH 13 3474 and leave details.

Please note images are available on request.





HELP Stop the Spread



HELP Stop the Spread



**Protect Victoria from
Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG)**



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What is Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG)?

- Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) is a virus that affects the nervous tissue of abalone and rapidly causes death.
- Abalone with the virus can appear to be weak and not holding onto the rocks strongly.
- The Virus can be spread through direct contact, the water column or something in the water such as mucus produced by the abalone.
- The virus only affects abalone.
- [There are no known or likely public health or food safety implications associated with this virus.](#)

Further information : www.vada.com.au

If you find sick abalone?

Please call

**Disease Watch Hotline
(1800 675 888)**

Or the

**Fish Reporting Line
13FISH (133474)**

What you can do?

- » **Buoys, where possible will be placed to mark areas warning of active virus.**
- » **Placement of buoys is subject to the weather conditions.**
- » **Not all areas of active virus will be marked**
- » **Don't dive or fish in Areas known to have the virus present**
- » **For up to date known virus locations:**
www.vada.com.au
- » Ensure that you wash your fishing boats and all equipment, wet suits, etc between dive sites.
- » Don't accidentally spread the virus along the coast.

Decontamination:

Boats should be washed using soapy water. All organic matter from inside and outside the vessel should be removed

Wetsuits and Dive Equipment:

- » Wash wetsuits with neoprene wash (available from dive and surf shops) you can use a mild liquid soap or shampoo.
- » Pay particular attention to Equipment that **has come into contact** with abalone, eg. catch bags, gloves, knives and measuring devices, should be soaked in soapy freshwater for 30 minutes and rinsed.

People and clothing:

People who come into contact with abalone should:

- » Wash their hands with soapy water.
- » Wash any clothing with soapy freshwater and rinse.

Disposal

Abalone shell, viscera (meat and gut) should not be:

- » shucked (taken from the shell) at sea, or used as bait
- » dumped into the sea,.

“Take your abalone catch home and dispose of the waste with your household rubbish.”

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Sustainable Fishing - Healthy Seafood
Seafood Industry Victoria Inc.

WADA
Western Abalone Divers Association

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