

FISHING STORIES

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2009/04/12/18588082.php>

Senate Majority Leader Calls For Oversight Hearing on MLPA Process

by Dan Bacher

Sunday Apr 12th, 2009 10:46 AM

Dean Florez (D-Shafter), the California Senate Majority Leader, said he will conduct a Senate Oversight Hearing this year about conflict of interest and "mission creep" in the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process.

Senate Majority Leader Calls for Oversight Hearing on MLPA Process

by Dan Bacher

Dean Florez (D-Shafter), the California Senate Majority Leader, said he will conduct a Senate Oversight Hearing this year about conflict of interest and "mission creep" in the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process during his keynote address at the Coastside Fishing Club dinner in San Mateo on March 28.

Florez said that he and other Senators plan to ask some "very tough" questions of Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman and Mike Sutton, Fish and Game Commission member, about the MLPA process. These questions include why the MLPA has been expanded from a \$250,000 process to a \$35 million fiasco that is threatening the economy and fisheries on the North Central Coast.

"I've found that when you call a hearing, things get fixed really quickly," said Florez. "For example, when we announced a hearing in response to complaints about EDD's processing of unemployment claims, the department changed its operations, including opening on weekends. Imagine what will happen will happened when we hold a hearing on the MLPA process."

He emphasized that the Senators had a lot of questions for Mike Sutton including asking, "Who do you work for?"

Many recreational and commercial fishermen and grassroots environmentalists believe that it's wrong for Sutton to make decisions about the MLPA when Julie Packard's Monterey Bay Aquarium employs him. The Aquarium is funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, as is the MLPA process.

"We believe in transparency and the Legislature was told that science would guide the MPLA process," said Florez. "I believe that plain, old fashioned oversight will turn this situation around."

He said that the funding of the MLPA by a private entity, the Resource Legacy Foundation, "really has to be looked at."

"We have to look at all of the relationships," said Florez. "Nobody thought the MLPA would become a process where the coast is closed first and the science is done later. Politics, not policy, have led this issue. I believe that

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your cause is right."

He urged anglers to write letters about their concerns and to attend the hearings when they are announced. "If one-quarter of the people in this room went to the hearing, we would have every Senator there," Florez emphasized. "What changes policy are the people who show up. The people who show up win!"

He said that he would come to the dinner next year, get back on stage and inform Coastside membership how "far we got" in addressing the inequities in the MLPA. In the meantime, he urged anglers to send him letters about their concerns with the MLPA at [dflorez \[at\] yahoo.com](mailto:dflorez@yahoo.com).

"MPAs can have a place," said Gordon Robertson, vice-president of the American Sportfishing Association, who spoke after Florez, "but they must be steeped in science. The MLPA has to be a public process with no hidden agenda."

During the dinner, Coastside founder Bob Franko presented a \$14,000 check to the San Francisco Tyee Club, founded in 1938, for their years of work on behalf of restoring salmon. The group raises Chinook salmon in pens for release into San Francisco Bay.

"This is our best year ever, with 85,000 fish to be released," said Brook Halsey of the San Francisco Tyee Foundation. "Up until now we have released 60,000 fish in grow-out pens every year."

Note: Although Senator Florez' call for an investigation into the MLPA process is very good news, his recently introduced \$15 billion water bond bill, SB 301, must be opposed because it would fund "conveyance" - a peripheral canal - and more dams.

Grassroots Enviros, Fishermen Protest MLPA Greenwashing at Fisheries Forum

The MLPA greenwashing process was the most contentious issue during the Joint Legislative Committee on Fisheries & Aquaculture, chaired by State Senator Patricia Wiggins (D – Santa Rosa) on March 26 at the State Capitol.

The forum took place while California's fish populations are in their greatest crisis ever. Central Valley Chinook salmon, delta smelt, longfin smelt, green sturgeon and other fish populations have declined to record low population levels, largely due to policies pursued by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who portrays himself as the "Green Governor" and has promoted the peripheral canal and no fishing zones as the "solutions" to collapsing fisheries. It is no coincidence that the same guy, Phil Isenberg, was the chair of both Schwarzenegger's MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force and the Delta Vision Task Force.

Ken Wiseman, executive director of the MLPA Initiative, Cindy Gustafson, Chair of the Fish and Game Commission, and Kaitlin Gaffney of the Ocean Conservancy all gushed about Schwarzenegger's MLPA process as supposedly being "open and transparent."

However, the real environmentalists in the room – as opposed to some corporate-funded "environmental" groups that support massive fishery closures – ripped the process for being an out-of control process that lacked any form of accountability to the public and the Legislature.

Jim Martin, West Coast Regional Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance, in blistering testimony, slammed the MLPA process for causing disproportionate economic impacts to Point Arena, proposing regulations far exceeding the funding available and for using private funding has biased the process and circumvents the Legislature's oversight. He urged the Committee to restore the role of the Department of Fish and Game, abolish the Blue Ribbon Task Force and to amend the MLPA.

"The legislation you passed in 1999 was not supposed to be a financial disaster for coastal communities," Martin said. "It was not supposed to close 40% of the best fishing grounds. It was not supposed to threaten the \$1.3 billion dollar saltwater recreational fishery or the \$130 million commercial fishery. It was not supposed to cost California thousands of jobs."

"It was not supposed to cost \$400 million in the next ten years, and on into eternity," he continued. "It was not supposed to cut off so much shore-based access that it threatens to destroy the \$10 million abalone fishery. Finally, it was not supposed to be a biased process that ignores the social and financial losses to fishing communities, or assume that endless amounts of bag money will be available to fund this experiment."

John Lewallen, longtime North Coast environmentalist and sustainable seaweed harvester, and others testified how the proposed fishing closures would devastate a coastal economy already ripped apart by salmon and rockfish season closures. He also urged the Committee to investigate conflict of interest in the MLPA process. Lewallen described the whole MLPA process as a "divide and drill" strategy where the only winners are oil companies who want to drill for oil off Point Arena.

"Why is Catherine Reheis-Boyd, CEO and Chief of Staff for the Western States Petroleum Association, a key member of the five-member MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force that has decreed new zones where people can take no food from state waters?," asked Lewallen. "Is it coincidence that the Point Arena Basin offshore from Point Arena is the area of highest oil industry interest in Northern California, and the only tract here now open to Minerals Management Service offshore oil leasing process?"

Assemblyman Wes Chesbro agreed with the concerns posed by Martin, Lewallen and others. "I'm skeptical of this process," he said. "I've spent my whole time defending the North Coast and the people who are most impacted by the marine protected areas do more to restore the environment than anybody. I worry what will happen when the people who do the most to protect our fisheries and environment are gone."

Chesbro said he had been part of earlier efforts directed by the Fish and Game Commission to set up the no-take zones required by the 1999 Marine Life Protection Act. Chesbro also stated that the marine science required to back the need for no-take zones was questionable or absent, so the process had been abandoned.

"Now you propose to close areas to seaweed harvest, affecting the livelihood of a seaweed harvesting couple," Assemblyman Chesbro told the advocates of the "Integrated Preferred Alternative." "All I'm saying is, show me the science."

People wishing to contact the Legislative Fisheries Committee with relevant information or your opinion can send your comments to:

Senator Patricia Wiggins, <http://dist02.casen.govoffice.com/> or write State Capitol, Room 4081 Sacramento, CA 95814 916-323-6958

Assemblyman Wes Chesbro at: <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a01/> or write State Capitol P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 94249-0001 916-319-2001

http://www.ypct.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4877&Itemid=69

Marine parks may not be the answer



WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL 2009

Professor Colin Buxton is a leading marine expert and Director of the Tasmanian Aquaculture & Fisheries Institute, University of Tasmania. He offers the following opinion piece on the topic of marine parks:



The South Australian Government is planning to turn almost half of the state's waters into marine parks which in time will incorporate "no take" sanctuary zones where commercial and recreational fishers will be banned from entering.

On the surface, the concept of marine park protection appears to have merit in preserving fish stocks and protecting the local marine environment.

However, research funded by the Australian Government's Fisheries Research and Development Corporation indicates that there can actually be side effects from the establishment of marine parks which can be potentially devastating to the very fish stocks they aim to nurture.

For example, studies on some marine protected areas established in Tasmania indicate that waters adjacent to "no take" sanctuary zones face considerable pressure because of increased use from displaced fishers. As a result, these adjacent areas are prone to serious damage through overuse, potentially leading to a collapse in fish stocks.

And while the SA Marine Parks Act provides for displaced commercial fishing to be bought out, this is not the case for recreational fishers, who will face extra fishing pressure and competition for spots from their fellow recreationalists who are displaced because of the marine parks.

If we are genuinely concerned for the environment we must be concerned about the effect of marine protected areas on the remainder of coastal waters.

The SA Government, commercial and recreational fishers have one thing in common — they have the best interests of the state's marine environment at heart.

Commonsense would dictate that the best way of tackling this concern is to first identify any problem. However, to date the Government has not detailed the existing threats to SA marine ecosystems.

If there are concerns with over-fishing, would it not be better to focus our energies and scientific research on tackling these problems head-on and across the whole state rather than to rely on a network of marine parks to do the job?

If we are genuinely concerned about our marine environment how can we argue that only 46% should be protected? To me this makes no sense and in fact implies that South Australia's fisheries management is not doing its job — despite being

independently accredited as best practice.

Commercial and recreational fishers have been vocal in their opposition to the excessive size of the marine park outer boundaries planned by the Government. Quite rightly, they argue that the marine parks are not based on addressing the real threats to marine ecosystems and habitats, and are demonstrably not the best way to manage fisheries.

The question also has to be asked as to why the Government would deliberately exclude Adelaide's metropolitan coastal area — which is so obviously in need of protection — from its contentious marine parks proposal? Is there an election coming up?

I believe that well-designed and managed marine parks can be a valuable tool in the protection of specific marine habitat and can contribute to the mitigation of properly identified threats. They are also especially valuable as a baseline reference point for scientific study.

But if the South Australian Government is serious about protecting the marine environment it should outline the specific threats to the marine species and ecosystems before it confines 46% of the state's coastal waters as marine parks. It should also articulate how marine parks are going to manage those threats.

After all, if we all know the threats we can all work together to solve the problems, which may or may not necessitate marine parks, and importantly, may not need to exclude fisheries. ♦

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/200904/s2544553.htm>

French fishers blockade ports over quotas

Thursday, 16/04/2009

French fishing boats are blocking traffic between Britain and France in a protest against cuts to fish catches.

The European Union has reduced quotas for cod because it says they're at risk of extinction.

The protesting fishermen are blocking the ferry run between the two countries and operators claim they're losing millions of dollars with each day of action.

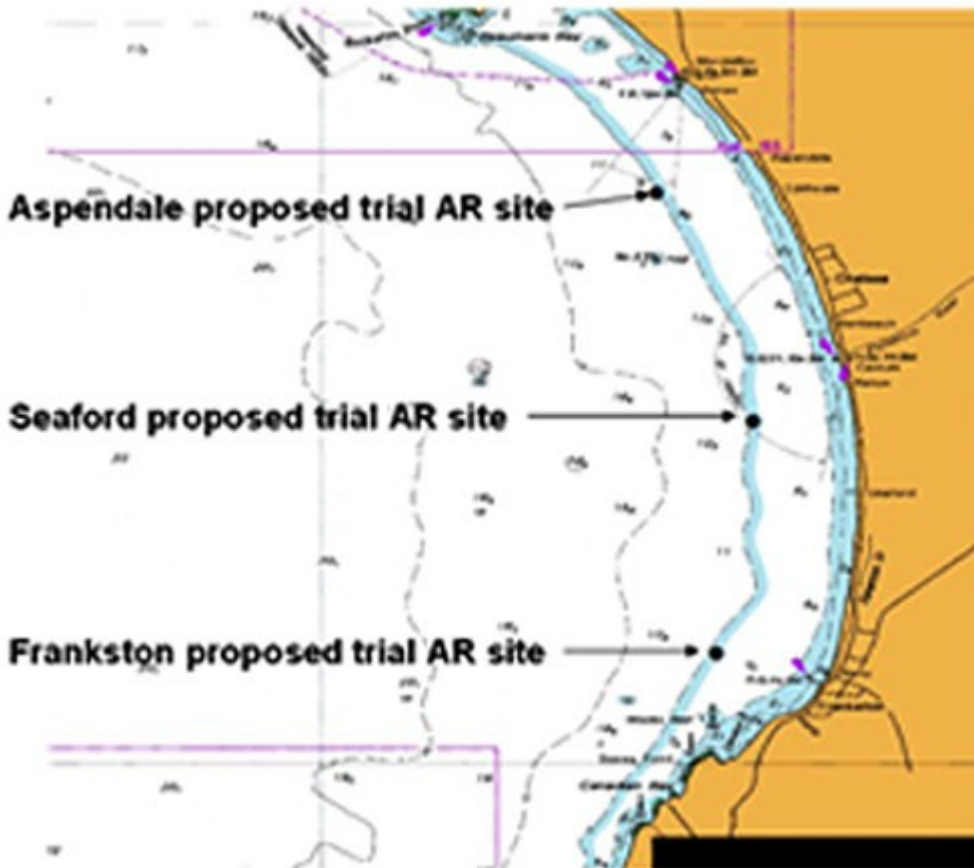
Similar demonstrations were held last year at ports in a response to rising fuel prices.

<http://www.powerboat-world.com/Name-a-reef-prize-in-Victorian-fishing-competition/55738/arc>



'Name a reef' prize in Victorian fishing competition

Proposed positions for trial artificial reefs



'Proposed positions for new reefs'

All Victorians are invited to make their mark in history by entering a competition to name the first of three new reefs to be deployed into Port Phillip Bay.

By entering the competition Victorians will not only be able to win great fishing prizes but will also have the honour of officially naming one of the state's newest attractions.

More than \$1 million has been invested into the reefs which will be installed in 11 metres of water off Seaford, Frankston and Aspendale and weather permitting they will be built during the next three months.

Each reef will comprise 96 specially shaped concrete balls of different sizes, with a total combined weight of almost 30 tonnes. The reefs promise to be an important addition to enhance marine life in Port Phillip Bay so all Victorians are encouraged to think of a worthy name to attach to the first reef.

The reefs will be situated on barren areas of the seabed which had been selected to minimise interaction with other recreational users such as sailing and jet skiing enthusiasts and commercial fishing operators.

Anglers can expect to see fishing improve for snapper at the reefs each season as the reef habitats progressively establish.



Snapper and leather jacket expected to enjoy new reefs -

Snapper are expected to be the primary fish species that will call these reefs home but other fish including leatherjacket, wrasse, pike, flathead, whiting, yellow tail scad and possibly kingfish may also seek residence on the reefs.

This project is one of a range of initiatives to improve opportunities and facilities under the Enhanced Recreational Fishing Program.

A scientific monitoring program will be conducted to assess ecological changes, fish habitation and recreational fishing catch rates and angler satisfaction.

The competition to name the first reef officially opened on Saturday 4 April and closes at 5pm on Monday, 13 April. To find out more information about the initiative and rules for the competition, visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing.

by Victorian DPI 10:45 PM Fri 10 Apr 2009 GMT

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/200904/s2541499.htm>

Barramundi ban angers NT fishing industry

Monday, 13/04/2009

The Northern Territory Government's decision to ban commercial barramundi fishing in areas south-west of Darwin has been met with anger from commercial fishers.

A 90-day ban was placed on the regions after photographs showing a mass kill of sawfish was linked to the actions of one commercial operator.

Barramundi fisher Peter Manning says the Government's action punishes the industry as a whole rather than the individual responsible.

"I was pretty well appalled. It's a knee jerk reaction," he says.

"We would at least like to have had some consultation with the minister and some idea of what he was thinking before he decided to close the area for 90 days."

<http://www.powerboat-world.com/WA-Fisheries-Easter-patrols-boosted-to-catch-crab-crooks/55666/arc>



WA Fisheries Easter patrols boosted to catch crab crooks



'Blue swimmer crabs'

Patrols by WA Fisheries and Marine Officers will be boosted over Easter, to catch fishers involved in illegal activities on Cockburn Sound or at Mandurah.

South Metropolitan Region Compliance Manager John Breeden said too many fishers had recently been ignoring the current ban on crab fishing in Cockburn Sound.

'We launched prosecutions against 46 people, during February and March, for offences in the Sound, so we need to remind others the area is a no go zone for crab fishers,' Mr Breeden said.

'Cockburn Sound has been closed to crab fishing since December 2006, to allow time for the stocks to recover from poor recruitment and low stock numbers and, until it is decided to reopen the crab fishery there, we need to enforce the ban.'

Mr Breeden said that Fisheries and Marine Officers would be focusing on Cockburn Sound and Mandurah with extra

patrols through this Easter weekend.

'While the waterways around Mandurah are open to crab fishing, we will be targeting fishers who take undersize crabs or more than the rules allow for,' he said.

'The majority of recreational fishers do the right thing, but there are some crooks who try to exploit this community resource.

'For example, last month four men were fined a total of \$7375, for between them illegally taking 246 undersize crabs from an estuary near Mandurah.'

Mr Breeden said the magistrate's decision to issue the penalties against the fishers was a warning to crab fishing crooks that this was unacceptable and greedy behaviour.

'This sort of illegal fishing activity is increasing the cost of monitoring recreational fishing in Mandurah's waterways and robbing the public of their resources,' he said.

When apprehended, at 9.20pm on Wednesday 14 January this year, the men were in a car that was stopped by Fisheries and Marine Officers and each of the men had various containers, in which they had stored undersize crabs for themselves.

The minimum legal size limit for blue swimmer crabs is 127mm across the widest part of the shell. There is a bag limit of 10 blue swimmer crabs per fisher per day and a daily boat limit of 20 per boat when two or more people are on the vessel.

More details of all the rules that apply for crab fishing and other WA fisheries are available on the Department of Fisheries website at www.fish.wa.gov.au.

by WA Department of Fisheries 2:12 AM Fri 10 Apr 2009 GMT

<http://moora.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/fisheries-surveillance/1483450.aspx>



Fisheries surveillance

9/04/2009 11:13:00 AM

A GREENHEAD man could face charges after a recent Fisheries operation.

Fisheries officers seized the 39 year old's dinghy from the main jetty at Greenhead on Sunday afternoon and, with support from local police, searched his residence.

Department of Fisheries manager of central support services Ian Jones said staff had conducted a two-month surveillance operation.

Mr Jones said Fisheries officers recovered 10 foam eskies containing rock lobsters from a Perth hotel where the man was taken into custody.

He said the hotel is also being investigated and could face charges, related to a delivery of more than 220 rock lobsters made at the weekend.

The man could face charges of selling recreationally caught rock lobsters under the Fish Resources Management Act.

"It will be alleged that the rock lobsters were caught recreationally, so the man also faces the likelihood of a charge of being in possession of excess lobsters," Mr Jones said.

Mr Jones said recreational fishers should be aware that fishing laws allowed for seizure of vessels, vehicles and equipment that may have been used in alleged offences.

"Formal charges are yet to be laid in this case," he said.

"However, the potential fines related to these offences are significant.

'The maximum fine for selling rock lobster that is fished recreationally is \$25,000 and, through section 222 of the FRMA, there is also a mandatory penalty of 10 times the value (\$15) of each of the rock lobsters that is included in any proven offence.

"Excess possession of recreationally caught rock lobster can attract a fine of up to \$5,000, plus a mandatory penalty of 10 times the value of the rock lobsters in excess of the possession limit."

Mr Jones said both the man and hotel staff had co-operated with Fisheries officers during the apprehension and inspection.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/09/2539774.htm>

Sawfish slaughter: minister closes fishing spot

Posted Thu Apr 9, 2009 2:07pm AEST

Updated Thu Apr 9, 2009 2:12pm AEST



Snapped ... hundreds of dead sawfish in the Finness River area. (Geoff Corry)

- [Map: Darwin 0800](#)

The Territory Government will close Fogg Bay and the Finness River area to all commercial barramundi fishing for 90 days while the Department of Fisheries investigates a mass sawfish killing.

Pictures and video have emerged of dozens of sawfish that have been killed by commercial fishermen near the area, south-west of Darwin.

It is believed the fish were snapped in half and dumped to prevent them from getting caught in nets.

Primary Industry Minister, Kon Vatskalis, says it is a disgusting act that breaks the code of conduct.

"These fishermen, so called fishermen, took the fish out of the water and broke their back and threw them back in the water dead," he said.

"Well, I don't think that is really playing by the rules."

He said: "I have instructed the department to have a look if these people have broken the law [and to] throw the book at them."

Mr Vatskalis says he has fast tracked the closure of the area to next Wednesday.

It is a fair decision that sends a strong message to commercial fishing operators, he says.

"My role is to protect the resource for all Territorians.

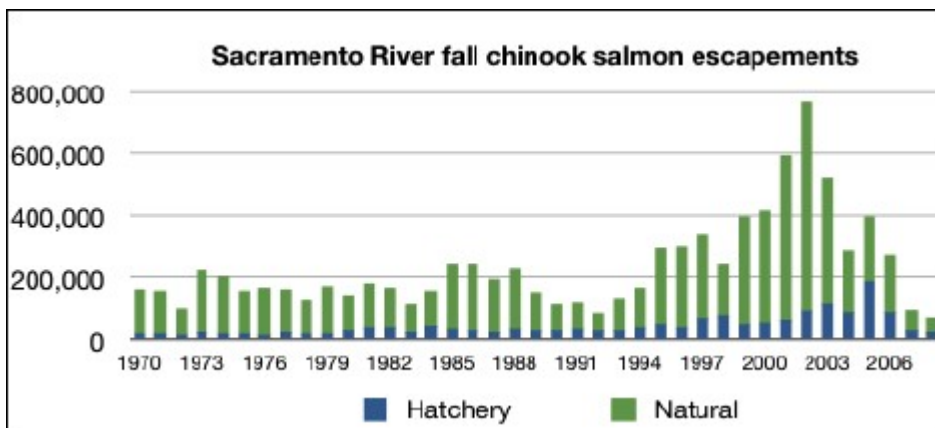
"I'm not going to tolerate people acting in that way, not even abiding by their code of conduct that [they] themselves have developed in order to continue fishing in those areas."

http://coastsider.com/index.php/site/news/fishery_council_closes_commercial_most_sport_salmon_fishing/090408/

Coastsider

Fishery council closes commercial, most sport salmon fishing

Breaking news posted by [Barry Parr](#) on Apr 8, 2009 at 05:07 pm in [Business](#) [Environment](#)
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Pacific Fisheries Management Council, chart by Barry Parr

For the second year in a row, the Pacific Fishery Management Council today closed commercial and most recreational salmon fisheries off the coast of California in response to the collapse of Sacramento River fall Chinook.

The Mercury News carried the story yesterday from Julia Scott on [Tuesday's tentative vote to close the fishery](#).

Half Moon Bay fisherman and salmon advisory council member Duncan MacLean said the closure was necessary given the numbers, but he is worried about the survival of the industry and his livelihood.

"I fear for my future in fishing," MacLean said. "I just hope I get to do it again in my lifetime."

MacLean is leading an effort to get another round of federal subsidies for small fishermen hard-hit by the closure. About \$48 million may be left over in last year's fund.

Full press release after the jump.

This is an edited version of the press release from the PFMC.

For the second year in a row, the Pacific Fishery Management Council today closed commercial and most recreational salmon fisheries off the coast of California in response to the collapse of Sacramento River fall Chinook. The recommendation will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service for approval by May 1.

A very limited 10 day recreational season will be permitted in California north of Cape Mendocino.

The closures south of Cape Falcon, Oregon, are due to a continued decline in the number of Sacramento River fall Chinook returning to the river this year. The stock is the driver of commercial and recreational salmon fisheries off California and most of Oregon.

The minimum conservation goal for Sacramento fall Chinook is 122,000 – 180,000 spawning adult salmon (this is the number of salmon needed to return to the river to maintain the health of the run). As recently as 2002, 775,000 adults returned to spawn.

Last year, 66,200 fall run Chinook returned to the Sacramento. This year, about 122,100 fish are forecast to return—twice last year's returns but still not enough to support commercial and recreational Chinook fisheries.

A second year of fishery closures in California and southern Oregon will be devastating to many small fishing communities. Fisheries off California and southern Oregon have been poor since 2005.

Economic impact

In California and Oregon south of Cape Falcon, where Sacramento fish stocks have the biggest impact, the commercial and recreational salmon fishery had an average economic value of \$103 million per year between 1979 and 2004. From 2001 to 2005, average economic impact to communities was \$61 million (\$40 million in the commercial fishery and \$21 million in the recreational fishery).

Causes

In March, the National Marine Fisheries Service released a draft report, developed by over 20 scientists, on the collapse of Sacramento River fall Chinook in 2007-2008. The report identified several factors leading to the recent collapse, including poor ocean conditions, habitat degradation and water withdrawals, and changes in hatchery operations. The report concluded that while unfavorable ocean conditions likely led to poor survival of juvenile salmon as they entered the ocean environment in 2005 and 2006, the stock was more susceptible to those conditions because decades of freshwater habitat degradation and hatchery production have reduced the stock's fitness and resiliency. The report also noted that the hatchery net-pen acclimation program was suspended in 2006, which contributed to poor survival of fish returning in 2008. In addition, while ocean conditions off Central California improved somewhat in 2007 the drought that year resulted in low numbers of juvenile salmon leaving the freshwater environment, and expectations for 2009 returns were not optimistic.

Seasons North of Cape Falcon

North of Cape Falcon, seasons are generally similar in structure to recent years, although coho quotas are substantially higher than in 2008, reflecting the increased abundance of both hatchery and natural coho stocks. Chinook quotas are similar to 2008.

Process

The Council reached this decision after several weeks spent reviewing three season options. The review process included input by federal and state fishery scientists, fishing industry members, public testimony, and three public hearings in coastal communities. The Council received additional scientific information and took public testimony before taking final action. The decision will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service for approval and implementation into federal regulations.

In addition, the coastal states will decide on compatible freshwater fishery regulations at their respective Commission hearings.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 for the purpose of managing fisheries 3-200 miles offshore of the United States of America coastline. The Pacific Council recommends management measures for fisheries off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

On the Web

Pacific Fishery Management Council: <http://www.pcouncil.org>

Council-adopted 2009 ocean salmon management measures: <http://www.pcouncil.org/salmon/salcurr.html#saloptions09>

Geographical points used in salmon management: <http://www.pcouncil.org/facts/geosalmon.pdf>

Definition of terms used in salmon management: http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/salmon_packet/Common_Terms.pdf

Online press packet: http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/sal_presspacket2009.html

<http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/news/local/news/general/murray-on-toxic-alert/1482535.aspx>



Murray on toxic alert

9/04/2009 4:00:00 AM

A POTENTIALLY toxic blue-green algae bloom has spread more than 800km along the Murray River, ahead of one of the busiest holiday weekends of the year.

And the NSW Government has warned there could be more outbreaks.

A red alert has been issued for a huge stretch of the river, warning people not to swim in it, eat mussels or crayfish caught in it, or drink the water.

Results of sampling results showed the presence of high numbers of potentially toxic blue-green algae west of Swan Hill, the chairman of the Murray Regional Algal Co-ordinating Committees, Richard Scott, said yesterday.

But NSW Water Minister Philip Costa has urged people heading to the Murray for an Easter holiday not to alter their plans.

"People shouldn't be cancelling their holidays," he said.

"It's a case of being alert, but not alarmed."

It was expected the bloom would dissipate with the onset of cooler autumn weather, Mr Costa said, but in the meantime there could be further outbreaks.

Sunraysia Regional Algal Co-ordinating Committee chairman Owen Russell said the results indicated that the bloom was moving downstream and, given the continued warm clear weather, there was little chance of it dispersing during the Easter holidays.

The red alert was issued last week when routine monitoring by both Victorian and NSW authorities detected very high numbers of blue-green algae in a large section of the Murray.

Thousands of campers, anglers and boating enthusiasts are expected to converge on the river this weekend, but visitors have been warned the species of blue-green algae identified is potentially toxic.

If people swallow it, it might cause gastroenteritis, or skin and eye irritations on contact with skin. Boiling the water does not kill the algal toxins.

People are advised not to come into contact with the water.

They have also been warned not to eat mussels or crayfish from red alert warning areas. Any fish caught should be cleaned and washed thoroughly in uncontaminated water. Internal organs of fish should be disposed of.

Livestock owners are reminded to continue to check stock water for blue-green algae and to remove stock from foreshores where surface scum is visible or blue-green algae is suspected.

Rains wash away easter prawn catch

Erin Brady | 7th April 2009



[flickr.com/Gaetan Lee](https://www.flickr.com/photos/GaetanLee/)

UNLESS by some miracle the sea falls calm over the next few days, fresh prawns could be off the menu for Easter.

Manager of the Clarence River Fishermen's Co-Operative Russell Creighton said last week's floods flushed most of the prawns out to sea and since the conditions have been too rough, trawlers haven't been able to get out there to catch them.

"The outside guys are having a real rough time with the weather," Mr Creighton said.

As the swell eased back a little yesterday two trawlers headed outside in the morning in search of king prawns and schoolies, but Mr Creighton said the weather forecast wasn't looking too good for more boats to join them.

"We're sweating on them being able to go out actually," he said.

With strong southerlies forecast today, Mr Creighton said it looked like Easter prawns could be far and few between this year.

"The weather's not helping us for Easter," he said.

But on a positive note, river fishing was going well.

"The floods haven't affected the river too badly," Mr Creighton said.

"There's a nice lot of bream, flathead and mullet coming in at the moment."

The river trawlers have been pulling in small catches of school prawns but nothing like the amount the co-op would have liked to have had in stock for the Easter holidays.

The NSW opposition spokesperson for Industry Duncan Gay toured the Clarence River's fishing centres yesterday and met with the co-op to discuss issues affecting the fishing industry.

<http://portaugusta.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/extension-granted-for-marine-park-committee-nominations/1481020.aspx>



Extension granted for marine park committee nominations

7/04/2009 3:44:00 PM

An extension has been granted to submit nominations for local advisory group members for the proposed marine parks.

Nominations for the Local Advisory Groups were due to close last week.

The advisory groups have been established to work with the State Government on the issues that concern locals with the parks.

The public consultation period for the proposed marine parks closed last week.

The consultation period covered the outer boundaries of the proposed parks, which has raised concerns in the past month over its size.

The next stage of the process is to develop the zones within the parks, which will begin later in the year.

Local fisherman Robin Sharp said the extension for nominations was a good time for people to put their hands up and get on the committee.

"I understand that people are worn down with this process, however if we truly want to be involved and have a say, then we must at least try," he said.

The Department of Environment and Heritage has received more than 2000 submissions about the marine park outer boundaries.

Nominations for the group close at the end of July this year.

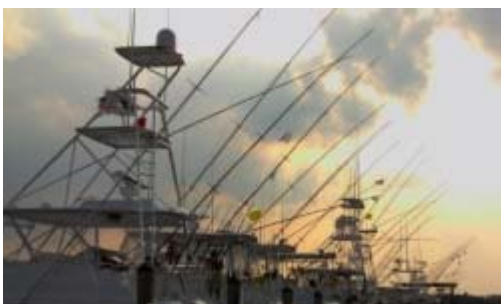
<http://www.sciencealert.com.au/news/20090804-19006.html>



Illegal fishing still a problem

Wednesday, 08 April 2009

Australian Institute of Marine Science



Legal fishing boats take ecosystems into account with quotas, protected species, and

other mechanisms - but illegal fishing
is uncontrolled by definition.
Image: iStockphoto

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which is devastating delicate ecosystems and fish breeding grounds in waters to Australia's north, can no longer be managed effectively by individual nations and now requires an urgent regional solution if food security into the future is to be maintained, according to a new scientific report.

AIMS fish ecologist Dr Mark Meekan, with Charles Darwin University ecologist Dr Iain Field, Dr Corey Bradshaw from the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Research & Development Institute, and Northern Territory fisheries scientist, Dr Rik Buckworth, have published a paper in the journal *Fish and Fisheries** that advocates a multi-lateral response to a problem that has grown out of control in recent decades. Worldwide the value of IUU fishing is estimated between \$US9 and \$US23 billion each year.

The paper is the first big-picture account of the problem from Australia's perspective. Although there had been a decline in IUU fishing in Australian waters over the past two years, possibly linked to large Australian government expenditure on enforcement and rising fuel prices, the forces driving illegal fishing have not gone away and are likely to resurface in our waters.

Dr Meekan expects that the small-scale illegal fishers will be back to prey on other species such as snapper, trochus and trepang as soon as it is economically viable for them to do so. To date, these IUU fishers have focused mostly on high-value sharks mainly for the fin trade, to the extent that the abundance of some shark species has dropped precipitously.

He said that IUU fishing, which has devastated fish resources and their associated ecosystems throughout Southeast Asian waters, was driven by deep economic and societal forces. For example, the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s drove a large number of people out of cities and into illegal fishing.

It was not enough to maintain just a national response as the problem crossed national maritime zones, he said, and posed one of the biggest threats known to marine ecosystems throughout the region.

"These IUU fishers are mining protein," Dr Meekan said. "There is no regard to sustainability or factoring in fish breeding or ecosystem protection."

"Illegal fishing in Australian waters started increasing steeply about 10 years ago, largely because of over-exploitation of waters further north, peaking in 2005-06 then falling away just as steeply," Dr Bradshaw said.

Dr Field said there were three factors behind the recent downturn: Australian government enforcement measures estimated to have cost at least \$240 million since 2006; the high price of fuel for the fishing boats; and, most importantly, the fact that the high-value species may have been fished out.

The \$240 million has funded surveillance, apprehension, transportation, processing and accommodation of the several thousand illegal foreign fishermen detained each year since 2006. "These activities have been successful, but we doubt that they can hold back the IUU tide indefinitely, since the benefits to the illegal fishers of their activities far outweigh the penalties if caught," Dr Field said.

"With increasing human populations in the region, the pressure to fish illegally is likely to increase," according to

the authors of the paper.

"Regional responses are required to deter and monitor the illegal over-exploitation of fisheries resources, which is critical to secure ecosystem stability as climate change and other destructive human activities threaten food security."

**The Fish and Fisheries paper, written by Iain Field, Mark Meekan, Rik Buckworth and Corey Bradshaw, is titled "Protein mining the world's oceans: Australasia as an example of illegal expansion-and-displacement fishing". Go to <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-2979.2009.00325.x>*

<http://victorharbor.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/commercial-cockle-season-shortened/1481662.aspx?storypage=0>

Fairfax Digital

Commercial cockle season shortened

BY MICHAEL SIMMONS
8/04/2009 9:50:00 AM



RIGHT SIZE ... Second generation cockle harvester Darren Hoad believes that shortening the season will keep the industry vibrant and sustainable for the future.

REGION?- An unprecedented number of undersize cockles on Goolwa beaches has prompted commercial fishers to voluntarily cut short their harvesting season to ensure a bumper yield next year.

The Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association (GPHA), which represents the majority of active cockle (or 'pipi') licences in the region, has instigated the early season closure that will take effect from today (Thursday). The season normally runs until May 31.

While recreational fishers and commercial fishers not aligned to the GPHA are free to continue cockle fishing until the end of May, GPHA members have unanimously agreed to the radical move despite jeopardising their capacity to catch their full quota this season.

"Never before has the industry seen such a massive influx of baby cockles to the point where about 95-percent of all cockles on Goolwa beaches are currently undersize," said Roger Edwards, the executive officer of GPHA.

"Our members are respectful of the size restrictions and are dedicated to the long-term viability of the cockle industry, so in good faith have agreed to voluntarily shorten the current season to ensure full-sized cockles are available in abundance next season and for many years to come.

"Unfortunately, this will result in the full quota not being caught this season, but we strongly believe that the short-term pain is worth the long-term gain," Mr Edwards said.

Darren Hoad, a second-generation cockle harvester from Hoad Fisheries on Hindmarsh Island, agrees with the premature closure and says the industry must remain vigilant when unique situations like this occur.

"In 30 years of cockle harvesting, we've never seen so many baby cockles along the coastline, which, while disappointing for this season's catch, augurs well for next season and beyond," Mr Hoad said.

"It is important though that we all make sure we tread carefully in years to come to help sustain the long-term viability of the industry.

"To that end, all operators must employ efficient harvesting techniques so as not to excessively unsettle developing cockles.

"It is also important that we avoid heavy traffic on our beaches which can make cockles skittish and therefore harder to catch," he added.

The GPHA, in conjunction with the wider commercial cockle industry is working closely with the SA Research and Development Institute as part of a research program to further improve the understanding of the Goolwa cockle fishery and to help determine the outlook for next season's cockle harvest.

The cockle season usually commences on November 1 each year and runs for seven months before closing on May 31.

Commercial fishers are only allowed to take cockles from the Coorong Beach, from the Murray Mouth to Kingston, with the minimum legal length for cockles set at 3.5cm.

<http://victorharbor.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/commercial-fishers-ask-where-are-all-the-cockles/1467875.aspx?storypage=0>



Commercial fishers ask: Where are all the cockles?

BY CAROLINE HORN

24/03/2009 10:54:00 AM

REGION - Despite a massive decrease to the overall quota of cockles in the past year, large commercial fishers are unlikely to be able to find enough cockles to take their maximum allowable catch for the season.

In the 2007/08 season commercial fishers were legally able to take a combined harvest of 1150 tonnes but were only physically able to catch 600 tonnes.

This year the overall legal quota was revised down to 600 tonnes but a spokesperson for the Department of Primary Industries has confirmed some operators are unlikely to reach their upper limits because of another drop in the number of legal-sized cockles found.

Gary Hera-Singh of the Southern Fishermen's Association said February and March were always difficult months as there was not a great deal of water movement, due to the changing seasons.

"The commercial catch rates, traditionally in February and March always dip downwards," he said.

Mr Hera-Singh said that while licence holders with small to medium quotas would probably take their maximum catches for the year, the larger holders might find it difficult to do so.

"We are travelling in unknown territory; there have been no river flows for years and what impact that will have on cockle abundance we are yet to see but there is definitely a trend downwards," he said.

Two recreational fishers contacted The Times last week to register their concern about the lack of larger cockles on Goolwa Beach.

Mr Hera-Singh said that if recreational fishers were noticing a decline then perhaps Goolwa Beach was getting "a bit of a hammering".

Bob Vanderkamp of South Coast Marine in Goolwa said that although things had been "a bit patchier" for recreational fishers this year, cocklers had still had "a fantastic year".

"If you persist you tend to be able to get a reasonable catch," he said.

Mr Vanderkamp said the number of young cockles on the beach seemed to be a good sign of breeding.

"Another 12, 18 months they're right on legal size," he said.

The cockle season commenced on the 1st of November and closes at the end of May.

Commercial fishers are only allowed to take cockles from the Coorong Beach, from the Murray Mouth to Kingston SE. Recreational fishers are only permitted to take cockles from the Sir Richard Peninsula (the Goolwa Beach side of the Murray Mouth).

The minimum legal length for every cockle is 3.5 cm.

Currently recreational fishers have a daily bag limit of 600 but are asked to voluntarily adhere to a limit of 300 until the regulations are changed in the future.

The number of cockles taken and the way in which the quotas are determined between commercial fishers has been the source of controversy in recent years.

A Select Committee on the conduct of Primary Industries in relation to the cockle fisheries is due to report to State Parliament on June 9.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/07/2537364.htm?section=business>

 ABC News

Dredge returns to Port Phillip Bay

Posted Tue Apr 7, 2009 2:51pm AEST

Updated Tue Apr 7, 2009 3:10pm AEST



Vessel Queen of the Netherlands has returned to Melbourne to resume dredging (Port of Melbourne Corporation)

- [Map: Melbourne 3000](#)

The dredge vessel Queen of the Netherlands has returned to Melbourne to continue work on the channel deepening project.

The ship left Melbourne last October and has been in Singapore where it has been refitted with a new mid-ship section.

The vessel's length was extended from 173 metres to 230 metres, and its carrying capacity is now 35,500 cubic metres, up from 23,300.

It will recommence dredging activities in the south of Port Phillip Bay later this week.

The Port of Melbourne Corporation says the dredge's larger capacity means greater efficiency in the dredging process.

The corporation expects the majority of dredging in Port Phillip Bay will be completed by August 31.

Fishermen receive death threats as supply dries up

7 April 2009 *Crikey naturalist Lionel Elmore writes:*

Commercial fishermen in Lakes Entrance Victoria have had their boats vandalised and have now been subjected to [death threats](#). These fishermen belong to a fleet of 10 open boats with hand hauled nets of an original 50. They are now blamed for the poor catches by government, scientists, locals and especially recreational fishfolk.

This is not new -- as long as unsuccessful amateurs could watch commercial nets hauled "full of fish" there has been conflict. In the past, successive governments of all persuasions have recognised that the commercial fishery is the sole source of fresh fish for the majority of the public that own them. Management was designed to reduce conflict. Commercial fishing in sheltered waters was banned on weekends etc.

Fisheries economics became increasingly influential with State government managers of these sheltered waters and since the "economic value" of recreational fisheries [was highlighted](#).

Research that assumed that fish not caught by commercial fishing would be caught by recreational fishfolk 'showed' that this would provide a "greater economic return". Around the same time marine biology changed too as funding was loaded into "stock assessments" -- counts of fish that assume that commercial fishing is the prime or only cause of variation in fish populations.

Recreational fishing was extremely popular and by the early 1990s "I fish and I vote" stickers became increasingly common. To better control fisheries State governments "assisted" commercial and recreational fishing groups to organise themselves to be 'better represented' by organisations with appointed executives that were in part government funded -- and controlled.

Over the last 30 years Lakes Entrance has attracted new residents as holiday homes have become retirement homes around its vast shoreline. Denied of any information regarding the link between habitat, water quality and fish catch, they invest their savings in moving to their fishing spot. Many clear the shoreline fish habitat for a view of the water from their home, run septic overflow onto the shoreline they fish and rage against the commercial fishermen that "caught them all". It is classic case of both the residents and the poor government management killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

Bushfires, droughts and water diversions from major streams that fed these estuarine systems reduced streamflow needed to dilute increasing pollution as the holiday homes became estates along the shorelines of these former fishing "hotspots".

As recreational fishing got worse recreational fishermen were made to pay for licences to catch their own fish and the funds raised used to buyout commercial fishermen. At each successive election targeted fisheries closures were announced to generate votes for strategic coastal seats for elections.

Of course each state is "running out of" sheltered water commercial fishermen. As the fresh fish supply declines its price and the price of bait "sky rockets" beyond the reach of most people and makes successive buyouts more expensive.

Environmental management of stream flows and pollution has been replaced by endless reports that usually blame dairy farmers -- but never forestry, bushfires, industrial waste or sewerage. The Lakes Entrance system has suffered from successive algal blooms, seagrass loss and retreat of estuarine waters due to lack of streamflow more than most. The management of this complex system by the Victorian Government is reduced to meaningless statements on their "health".

It is no small matter to sell up from the city and move to your favourite holiday spot with reduced super payments in these grim economic times. The opportunities to move again are limited -- thus the rage as the golden goose stops laying.

Send your tips to boss@crikey.com.au, submit them anonymously [here](#) or SMS tips and photos to 0427 TIP OFF.

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Pipi battle continues

By Bert van Breda

VENUS Bay residents and local holiday home owners are marshalling forces to push the pipi raiders off the five local beaches.

During the recent summer, large commercial operations are believed to have been ravaging beaches. Video cameras have been supplied to *The Star*, supervising mass harvesting on Venus Bay beaches.

It is widely known that Venus Bay pipis sell at Melbourne markets for \$18 a kilo. The collectors are so brazen, they openly brag about their exploits on internet blogs.

For example, Steven went to Venus Bay and writes that, "A convoy of four 4WDs and a Holden Commodore formed somewhat of a road train for what was to become a 2.5 hour trip to Venus Bay.

"Once there, we made our way down the steep stairs to the beach front and walked down a good 500 meters along the beach to where we spent two hours searching for pipis beneath the sand.

"Scraping the sand with a spoon is how you would find these pipis. As you scrape, you can feel the shells then you just pick them out of the sand. After the searching, we gathered about 500 dollars worth of pipis within our large group of 'pipi farmers'.

Members of the Tarwin Lower and Venus Bay Association and other community groups have mounted a campaign under the banner, "Where have all the pipis gone?"

"Pipi harvesting at Venus Bay has increased rapidly over the past few years and in the summer of 2008/09 it reached an alarming extent," the Association's pamphlet claimed.

"Organised convoys of large ve-

hicles are now arriving with short wave radio and mobile phone contact between them. The harvesting limit is 15kg per vehicle or 5kg per person is no longer adequate to manage the large number of vehicles and people harvesting pipis from the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, including Venus Bay.

"The pipi harvesters are setting up watch in organised groups along the beach to avoid detection by authorities. Spades, shovels and metal hand tools are being used, which is illegal for pipi collection. The harvesting limit is often not respected, unless supervised by Parks Victoria or Fisheries Victoria rangers. Rangers are only occasionally present and rarely present out of office hours.

"Concern and anger within resident and visiting communities at Venus Bay are escalating as the pipi harvesting continues unabated. Several violent incidents have already occurred between concerned citizens and the pipi harvesters. The sandy beaches have resembled a mining site from Boxing Day onwards. At times the entire stretch of beach, more than five kilometres long, has been dug up in a continuous line by pipi harvesters.

In a joint operation, Fisheries Victoria and Parks Victoria officers were active on Venus Bay beaches during Australia Day long weekend, on January 24-26, to ensure pickers had a current Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL) when collecting pipis.

Fisheries operation manager Peter Courtney said the agencies wanted to ensure everyone who went to Venus Bay understood the rules governing the collection of pipis.

"More than 5000 personal contacts were made over the three days and our officers issued a total of 28 infringement notices," Mr Courtney said.

"People collecting pipis were given brochures describing the fisheries regulations, the need to hold a Recreational Fishing Licence and highlighting the fact no digging or other tools can be used.

"Most importantly we emphasised that none of the pipis taken can be legally sold to anyone else. People collecting pipis must understand that the daily bag limit is five litres per person. We encourage people to only collect what they need for themselves, and fish responsibly."

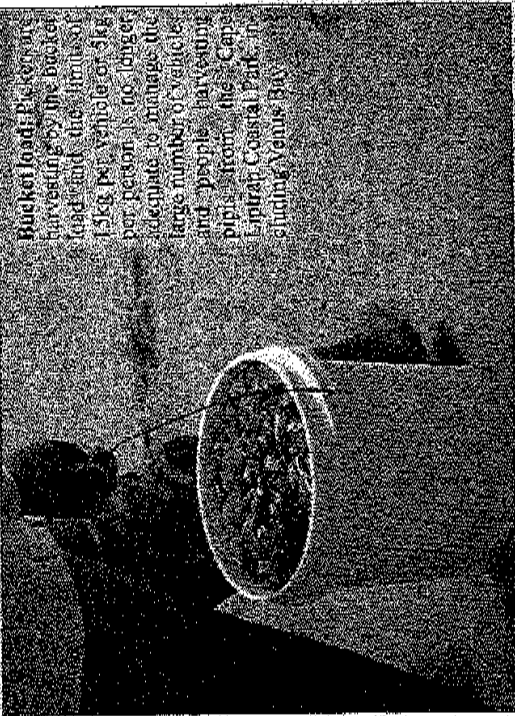
South Gippsland shire councillor Kieran Kennedy has received many phone calls, emails and photos relating to the removal of pipis from Venus Bay beaches.

"I am a citizen in and regular visitor to Venus Bay. I write this as an expression of concern in relation to the pillage of pipis by casual visitors to the region, particularly on Beach No. 1," a holiday home owner from Melbourne wrote to Cr Kennedy and informed *The Star*.

Cr Kennedy, who was in Venus Bay, replied to the "The best advice I can give is to contact the office of Peter Ryan, leader of the National Party (in Victoria). I have been advised that this is the best way to raise your concerns. Otherwise I do hope you enjoyed your few weeks in Venus Bay. Kindest regards Cr Kieran Kennedy."

Cr Kennedy confirmed to *The Star*, "I am referring people to Fisheries Victoria and I've asked for a regulation review. The community is rightly concerned about the number of pipi gatherers from a sustainable viewpoint."

Mr Ryan, the Member for Gippsland South, said he had taken up the matter with the State Government and expected a reply soon.



Buckdiving Enterprises are harvesting pipis from the beaches of Venus Bay. The limit is 15kg per vehicle or 5kg per person. It is no longer adequate to manage the large number of vehicles and people harvesting pipis from the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, including Venus Bay.



Mass harvest group harvesting pipis at Venus Bay beaches in Victoria. The large proportion and commercial activities are undesirable.



