

## NSW DPI / Huon Yellowtail Kingfish Research Project - Stakeholder Update

March 2018

Recovery efforts from the January storm event have mostly been completed. Repairs have proceeded well supported by a new Huon vessel, "Bulldog", that has been specifically fitted for the Port Stephens operations. Additional staff were also brought up from Tasmanian operations to support recovery efforts.

### Key points:

- More than 5,000 farmed fish were recaptured by Huon, over a thousand by commercial fishers and an unknown quantity by recreational fishers
- A fishing closure within the lease area expired midnight 28th February 2018.
- Mariners are advised to stay clear of lease infrastructure for their safety, and are reminded that it is illegal to take farmed Yellowtail Kingfish from within the lease
- Culture and predator exclusion nets in sea pens 1601 and 1603 have been either secured or replaced and the culture net has been removed from the damaged sea pen 1602
- To support mooring grid maintenance, three empty sea pens will be returned to Newcastle leaving two on the lease
- A Fish Escape Investigation Report was submitted to NSW Planning and Environment 2nd February 2018. Huon and DPI will be providing an update on recovery actions and implementation of recommendations to Planning
- An Incident Investigation Summary was provided to stakeholders on the 9th February 2018 and was uploaded to the DPI website
- DPI and Huon have met on several occasions to review and implement recommendations arising from the incident investigation
- DPI has met with RMS and the Water Police to review the incident response

### Questions raised in the last few weeks:

- The value of lost stock is estimated to be \$1 million
- Chlorine is not used to clean nets on the lease
- Key factors that led to net failure on one sea pen (1602) were: barnacles compromising the integrity of ropes; and a delay in the maintenance schedule to ensure predator nets were cleaned regularly
- The sea pens are rated to 8.5 meter significant wave height which equates to a 17-meter maximum wave height. The conditions experienced on the research lease (11 meter waves) were similar to recent storms in Tasmania that tested the same sea pen design used by Huon. Huon operations were not significantly affected by the recent storms in Tasmania

- Huon is committed to continuing the trial, one of the stated objectives of the trial is to investigate the structural integrity and stability of sea pen infrastructure in coastal NSW
- DPI does not believe there will be a significant impact from the remaining escapees. The fish were from local parent stock and health checked regularly by a Veterinarian. The number of fish at large is not significant in terms of the total Yellowtail Kingfish wild population in the area. Research in Australia shows that farmed fish are conditioned to feed on pellets and their foraging and survival skills may be limited, particularly if reared to adulthood.

### Where to from here?

Key recommendations arising from the incident investigation relate to improving the existing management plans for structural integrity monitoring and emergency response/recapture procedures.

Huon will implement new technology-based systems relating to net cleaning, moorings inspection and maintenance schedules.

DPI and Huon will expand on the Emergency Protocol to address procedures and resources. Once complete, a simulation exercise will be held to prove and test procedures.

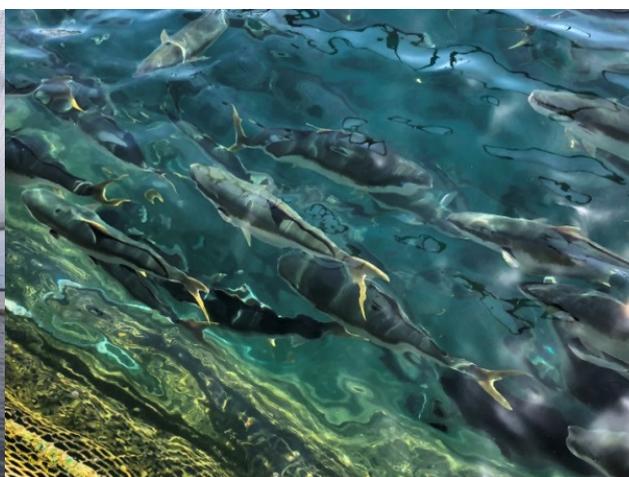
Huon is undertaking a WHS risk review following the behaviour of mariners within the lease area. This includes assessing the risk of navigating too close to mooring lines and infrastructure and leaving a legacy of hooks and lures on mooring lines that pose a risk to workers and divers working on the sea pens.

The new Huon work vessel Bulldog is fitted with a harvest unit to sort, stun and then store fish on ice for processing at land based facilities. All wastes associated with the harvest process at sea will be retained and disposed of at an approved land based facility.

The 2017 Annual Environmental Management Report for the research lease is available on the web. [https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/795645/MARL-Annual-Report-2017-pdf.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/795645/MARL-Annual-Report-2017-pdf.pdf)



Bulldog on the research lease



Market ready Yellowtail Kingfish

The emergency contact number for the Research Lease to be used for any incident involving the sea pens is **1300 920 987**.

### More information

<https://www.huonaqua.com.au/about/portstephens/>

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquaculture/starting-up/finfish-aquaculture-lease-modification-application> or contact [aquaculture.administration@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:aquaculture.administration@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

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