

Cuttlefish Update

Issue 2 – 26 June 2013

With the Giant Australian Cuttlefish breeding season upon us, the Cuttlefish Working Group has been meeting regularly to determine research and management priorities for the 2013 season.

Importantly, we are pleased to announce an additional \$50 000 in research funding, bringing the State Government's commitment to research into changes in Giant Cuttlefish populations to \$200 000 for this season. Details on these research initiatives are outlined below.

This State Government commitment is in addition to more than \$515 000 in research funding which has been sought and granted by the Australian Government through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and Department for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) to support further projects that will improve available knowledge on changes in and impacts on Giant Cuttlefish populations.

While the issues facing Cuttlefish populations in northern Spencer Gulf are complex, there is a commitment by all levels of government to address the decline in population abundance in northern Spencer Gulf. We are hopeful that research undertaken in 2013 and coming seasons will provide valuable insight that will assist the government in making informed decisions for the future protection and recovery of the iconic Giant Australian Cuttlefish.

*Scott Ashby
Cuttlefish Working Group Chair
Chief Executive, Primary Industries and Regions South Australia*

Research

Following consideration of a number of research opportunities, experts from the Cuttlefish Working Group have agreed on a number of research priorities to be undertaken in the current Cuttlefish breeding season. The various research initiatives planned for 2013 are:

- Continued monitoring of the breeding aggregation in northern Spencer Gulf to monitor population numbers, water quality and habitat condition.
- **NEW** Investigation and assessment of potential alternative Cuttlefish spawning areas within northern Spencer Gulf. Investigations have commenced around Spencer Gulf, with initial surveys occurring on the western side of the gulf.
- **NEW** Research to characterise habitat preferred by Cuttlefish when laying eggs, to inform future research into the scope for artificial habitat to be used to help promote population recovery and potential scope for stock enhancement. Research has already commenced this season to investigate the preferred characteristics of Cuttlefish dens.

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- **NEW** Investigation to determine if Cuttlefish tissue accumulates heavy metals. This project will commence in July.
- **NEW** Collaboration with the West Coast and Spencer Gulf Prawn Fisherman's Association to collect biological samples to assist research on Cuttlefish movement, distribution and abundance.

These State Government-funded projects are being undertaken in collaboration with the FRDC, who are also funding a two-year study into the movement patterns and the population structure of the Giant Cuttlefish in Upper Spencer Gulf, which will include the evaluation of any environmental and human impacts that could be causing the species decline.

University of Adelaide researchers have also been successful in gaining \$150 000 in funding from DSEWPaC as part of the Australian Government's Sustainable Regional Development program which aims to promote sustainable development in high growth regions across Australia. With an increase in shipping expected in the Spencer Gulf region to support the expansion of the local resource industry in coming years, the project will investigate the potential impacts of shipping on Giant Australian Cuttlefish (both eggs and adult) and consider future management and conservation implications for the species.

Redmap

As part of the FRDC project investigating movement patterns and population structure members of the public are being called on to assist in gaining a greater understanding of the movements of Giant Cuttlefish in Spencer Gulf. Fishers, SCUBA divers, boaters and other marine users are being asked to report any sightings of Cuttlefish aggregations (groups of more than 10 Cuttlefish) and their eggs via www.redmap.org.au

Redmap (Range Extension Database and Mapping Project) is a website that helps capture information that is helping to assess how our marine ecosystems might be changing with climate change.

Information from the public will help determine whether this iconic species is breeding elsewhere, which could help explain the decline in numbers off Point Lowly. Photos can also be uploaded to the site, enabling scientists to verify the sighting.

For more information [visit the Redmap website](http://www.redmap.org.au)

Sightings of Cuttlefish (or cuttlefish eggs) can also be reported online to the Conservation Council SA [Feral or in Peril Program](#)

You will need to register to use the system, then go through the Field Guide to make your report.



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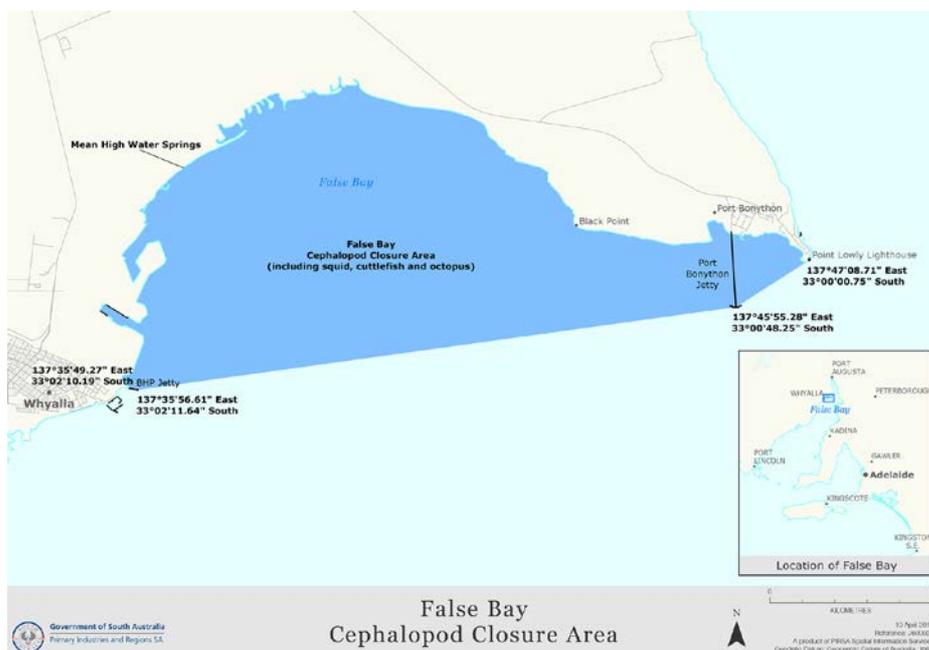
Management

In addition to the temporary closure to fishing for cuttlefish in northern Spencer Gulf introduced in March, PIRSA has also gained approval to amend the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulations 2007* to permanently prohibit the take of cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish and octopus) in the waters of False Bay.

The closure covers an area where 92-98% of the total state-wide catch of Giant Cuttlefish was historically taken and has been in place in False Bay since 1998 by notices issued under Section 79 of the *Fisheries Management Act*.

While the closure is not new, as there is no intention to remove the current arrangements in False Bay which protect spawning aggregations at the iconic Point Lowly site, the regulation change will provide long-term certainty about the commercial and recreational fishing restrictions in the area.

The permanent closure arrangements will commence in September 2013.



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