



GERALDTON  
FISHERMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE

Rock Lobster Exporters

# the BROLOS Catcher

November 7, 2017

Issue No. 149

## From the Chair



In a recent edition of the Brolos Catcher, GFC announced a guaranteed minimum Loyalty Bonus payment of \$6/kg for catch supplied from July through to the end of September. Having now finalised our analysis of this period, I'm pleased to advise that the Loyalty Bonus has been increased by one dollar to a total of \$7/kg, to be paid after the completion of the season. This is inclusive of \$0.50/kg bonus shares, unless you have the full complement of 40,000 shares, in which case you will receive the entire payment as cash.

Basil Lenzo, Acting Chairman

## 2017 AGM

The 68<sup>th</sup> AGM was held last Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 at the Geraldton Universities Centre with a video link to the board room at our new facility in Welshpool. As always, the AGM was very well attended, with members from the north and south of the fishery taking the opportunity to hear about the Co-op's latest developments.

This year's AGM was the final one to be presided over by our longstanding, retiring Chairman, John Ritchie. John was a member of GFC's board of directors for 26 years, serving as Chairman for the last eight years. John's contribution the Co-op over the past quarter-century is immeasurable, with accomplishments too many to list here, and these will be the subject of a future Catcher article. John's tenure on the board coincided with a period in GFC's history that saw tremendous value created for all GFC members and which has flowed through to the rest of our industry. We thank John for his great service and leadership and wish him the very best for his retirement.

During the AGM John announced that David Moroney, one of our two independent directors, will also be retiring. David has contributed enormously to GFC over the past five years, most notably in the areas of governance and finance. David will remain on the board until a replacement is found, a process which is currently underway.



*Above: Stephen Sipila, Debbie Frater, Jim Philipps & Perry Minissale.*

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Throughout October, Co-op members voted to fill two open positions on the board; the first created by John's retirement and the second because Basil Lenzo's position on the board came up for mandatory re-election. It was fantastic to see the interest in these vacancies from our member base, with five candidates vying for the open positions. We congratulate and welcome Terry Lissiman to the GFC board. Terry and Basil were both elected for a term of 3 years.

We would also like to take the opportunity to thank the unsuccessful candidates Justin Pirrottina, Darren McTaggart, and Gavin Lovedee and encourage them to consider nominating in the future.

Our AGMs commence with a formal overview of the independently audited, and therefore official, financial records for the previous financial year. This is followed by an informal meeting with presentations from our executives on our strategic projects and



*Above: Sandra Brown & Denis Ritchie.*

*Below: Murray Butcher, Michael Butcher & Robin Judd.*



*Above: Darren Bailey & Jeff Cockman.*

*Below: Warren Kalajzich, Greg and Linda Cole & John Cole.*



major developments. Members are encouraged to ask questions of the board and management throughout.

Unlike a "normal" corporation, GFC's members are far more than just shareholders. They are also customers, suppliers, lessees, lessors, all with various expectations of the company. This can lead to some robust discussions, but GFC's role is to balance their interests and maximise returns to all members in the short, medium and long term. Members should be assured that the elected board, together with two independent directors, is empowered to govern, incorporating good governance principles, having overview of all systems and processes, policies and procedures, and delegating authority to the management team to allow them to manage the company effectively.

This approach has been, and will continue to be, the recipe that ensures the underlying success of our co-op over the long term.

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## Market Update

The market remains much the same as last report; prices remain under pressure due to a combination of patchy demand, higher than average supply from WA, and supply pressure from other origins.

We are currently entering the last half of the 9<sup>th</sup> lunar month on the lunar calendar. Even numbered months on the Chinese lunar calendar tend to be considered luckier and are therefore more popular for celebrations like weddings (which mean more lobster consumption). Uneven months (like the current 9<sup>th</sup> month) on the other hand tend to be less popular for celebrations and therefore are characterised by less consistent and patchy demand.

Some buyers have indicated that the 10<sup>th</sup> Lunar Month, which starts on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, may be a slightly higher demand month than the current 9<sup>th</sup> Lunar month. Of course, this coincides with our higher volume whites period so how prices react over the next few weeks will depend, as always, on the balance of supply versus demand.

## Live lobsters, not sardines...

Fishermen's grading results for this season have been the best yet: thanks to all those who have made changes to their handling practices to help improve our lobster quality. There is still room for improvement, and one of the issues we still occasionally see is over-filled baskets.

There may be some advantage in just filling a basket, so that the lobsters find it hard to kick legs off, but a few fishermen are still jamming in way too much product. Any good work done by washing down cakka boxes, carefully handling lobsters, and



*Above: An example of a very over-packed basket.*

meshing baskets can be quickly undone by over packing baskets. The lobsters struggle to get adequate oxygen in your tanks and water on our trucks and, if they have to be held over, they can really suffer. Lobsters that are jammed in sideways or even upside down, with no room to move or adjust, seem to fare poorly and can eventually die.

So please don't overfill your baskets. As a guide, we recommend it's best to fill baskets to an inch below the lid, but no more.

If you would like any assistance optimising storage and transport conditions contact GFC Continuous Improvement Manager, Brad Armstrong (0437 513 837) or GFC Research and Development Officer, Joel Durell (0407 135 712).

## Low Catch Anomaly Research

Motorists driving to Perth along the Indian Ocean drive may have noticed less commercial lobster boats working the shallows waters from Cliff Head to Leeman. Before the turn of the century more than 60 commercial lobster boats seasonally worked this previously very productive ground. Currently very little of the catch comes from these shallows but instead now comes from deeper water.

John Fitzhardinge of Dongara Marine has had a close involvement with the fishery in the region for over 50

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years. He and other fishers have noticed increasingly low rock lobster numbers since the mid 1990's in this shallow near-shore area.

In partnership with Dr Tim Langlois of UWA's Oceans Institute and School of Biological Sciences and Drs Simon de Lestang and Jason How of the Fisheries Division of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and the Western Rock Lobster Council, John Fitzhardinge was successful in obtaining funding for a 3 year project to investigate the low-lobster catches in these previously very productive fishing grounds.

Dr Langlois has previously worked on the ecology of Southern Rock Lobster in New Zealand and in Western Australia and has investigated the feeding preferences and fertilization rates of Western Rock Lobster.

The project aims to quantify whether a decline in lobsters has occurred in this region and if so to investigate what could be the cause(s).

The project will use a range of methods to collect various life stages of lobsters from post-larvae to adults. This includes lobster pots, demersal and pelagic post-larval collectors, juvenile hides, diver-operated surveys and habitat mapping.

The project will also utilise historical information to long term trends in lobster abundance, including commercial catch data, private catch logs and photos.

The project team are keen to hear from anyone who has experience in these waters and any information on changes in habitat or local rock lobster population. If you do please contact Dr Tim Langlois ([timothy.langlois@uwa.edu.au](mailto:timothy.langlois@uwa.edu.au)).

People are asked to respect the gear that will be set in the shallows just to the North of Cliff Head out to Big Horseshoe Reef, and inside Beagle Islands, which will be clearly marked on the top floats: FWA Research.

The project is jointly funded by the Western Rock Lobster Council and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and will be led by Dr Tim Langlois from the University of Western Australia's Oceans Institute and School of Biological Sciences, John Fitzhardinge of Dongara Marine and Drs Simon de Lestang and Jason How of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Fisheries Division and the Western Rock Lobster Council.



*Above: John Fitzhardinge (Dongara Marine) and Dr Tim Langlois (UWA) with two of the experimental pots, a demersal post-larval collector on the left and a juvenile collector on the right.*

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Greg Gundlach Marine Store Manager

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