

Oysters Tasmania 2024 Shellfish RAG Project Priorities

Priority 1: Pipe Clay Lagoon

There is an urgent need for in-depth investigation into potential causes for stagnation and mortalities in Pipe Clay Lagoon. The growing area traditionally produced more than 10 per cent of the state's oysters, but has experienced sharply declining production volumes since 2022. In addition to seeking to identify causes, research should inform actions to either wait-out, eliminate, or adapt to the identified causes, so that oyster farming can continue. Marine Solutions' application for FRDC public interest funding for work in Pipe Clay Lagoon is supported and covers relevant investigations, but there is no assurance that this application will succeed.

Priority 2: Unlocking potential of subtidal waters

OT's 2023 RAG priorities encompassed a range of suggested projects that have been compiled into a single EOI for the Blue Economy CRC. Four work packages would address the following priorities: measurement of environmental characteristics; trialling of subtidal farming equipment; assessment of this environmental and equipment trial data; and assessment of administrative and planning barriers to industry growth.

Project 3. Better understanding relationships between waters subject to climate change and oyster-farming productivity and risks

SIT and NRM South's bid for federal funding through the Climate Smart Agriculture Grants Program includes provision for additional measurement, such as of chlorophyll and dissolved oxygen, in oyster-growing areas using the sensor network as a backbone. This could enhance productivity, including by allowing the identification of correlations with climate change, marine heat waves, and bacteria/virus/disease outbreaks.

Project 4. Review of specific areas with intermediate POMS classification

Reviews are warranted re the status of intermediate areas like Hastings Bay and Eaglehawk Bay, which had no evidence of POMS in 2016 or since and which are more than 5 nautical miles from an infected area. OT was unsuccessful in gaining state or federal funding to test prior to the recent marine heatwave. Subsequently, following the detection of POMS in St Helens in January 2024, industry footed the bill for testing in Eaglehawk Neck and Smithton (all results were negative).

Project 5. Cost-effective Vibrio management and food safety compliance

Recent Vibrio research has recommended changes to the current Vibrio Control Plan. Any such changes need to be accompanied by refrigeration support for growers, a rationalisation of the current cumbersome and largely unused food safety program guidance, and support for online rather than paper-based compliance.

Project 6. Ongoing delivery of Research Services to ShellMAP

The project to June 2025 includes ongoing faecal source tracking and assessment of salinity-based regulation using data from autosamplers, despite no further funding from the Tas Farm Innovation Hub.

Other project concepts raised in 2023 of continuing industry interest

- Pooled efforts across industry to address concerns such the need to recycle waste plastic and use shell waste.
- Post-harvest issues including market research needs and efforts to counter co-mingling on the mainland.
- Attracting people to the industry, training, and fostering career pathway development and succession plans.