

# Eastern King Prawn Research Communication Plan

November 2014



Department of  
Primary Industries

## Background

The Eastern King Prawn (EKP) fishery is one of the most valuable fisheries in NSW. Despite this, little is known of the ecology of EKP during their estuarine juvenile stages in NSW or about how habitat change has affected productivity.

Our current research project was developed to improve the understanding of both the critical habitat factors affecting prawn recruitment in NSW estuaries, and the nursery habitats that support the EKP fishery. Understanding habitat use and the impact of habitat change is important for the future of the EKP fishery and it is critical that both commercial fishers and coastal land managers are well aware of this information. Such information will also assist with targeting restoration and rehabilitation activities to maximise fishery benefits.

This Communication Plan has been developed to assist in delivering key messages to EKP fishery stakeholders and the broader community. It is evidence-based, drawing from both the literature and a survey of EKP fishers conducted in 2014. It is designed to be a living document and retains sufficient flexibility to ensure that emerging information is provided in a timely and appropriate manner.

## EKP fisher survey

A survey of all NSW EKP fishers was undertaken in early 2014 through a combination of mail-out / return envelope surveys and face-to-face interviews. It was designed to establish some basic demographics about the respondents and determine their understanding of the role played by estuarine habitat in EKP production. Its other intent was to find out how those fishers preferred to access their information about EKP and what types of information were of particular interest. The results of the survey have directly informed the development of this Communication Plan.

## Results

In total, 174 fishers were provided with the opportunity to complete the survey process. The response rate was 14%. The chief findings include:

### Demographics

- Fishers were predominantly male (96%) with an average age of 57 (range 42 to 77 years).
- Collectively, they had 678 years of hands-on fishing experience (an average of 29 years each).
- Their home ports were spread fairly evenly between Tweed Heads and Shoalhaven Heads.

### Fishers understanding of EKP / estuarine habitat links

- Fishers recognised the importance of seagrass, mangrove and wetlands for EKP production.
- Fishers attributed less value to saltmarsh and bare sediment habitat types.
- Since they first started fishing, estuarine habitats were perceived to have declined (particularly wetlands, then seagrass, then mangrove, then saltmarsh).

- They thought that the most important factors for EKP production (in order from most to least important) were wetlands, water quality, seagrass, mangrove, water temperature, saltmarsh, flood timing, flood level, harvest management and bare sediment.
- Most fishers (83%) believed that more could be done to rehabilitate estuarine habitats.

### **Information needs**

- Other fishers are clearly their most trusted source of information. In order from most to least, the trusted sources of information were other fishers (58%), scientists (18%), government (12%), newspapers/magazines (6%), internet (3%) and TV/radio (3%).
- Future information would preferably be received by (in the following order): face-to-face (23%), addressed letter (21%), industry conferences (13%), website (11.5%), email (11.5%), brochures (10%), scientific journals (6%) and the local paper (4%).
- EKP fishers would like to receive more information about EKP relationships with estuarine habitats and more detail about new research findings about EKP ecology and migrations.
- While some Hunter-based fishers were aware of estuarine rehabilitation works underway in Hexham swamp, most fishers in other locations remained unaware of any similar rehabilitation works that had been or are being undertaken in their area.
- In terms of participating in future rehabilitation projects, over half of the fishers would be prepared to be involved, either through letters of support (33%) or hands-on help (25%).

## **Communication Plan Objectives**

This Communications Plan provides a framework to assist researchers and managers to effectively target communications in relation to habitat use and ecosystem requirements of EKP.

Specifically, the objectives of the plan are to:

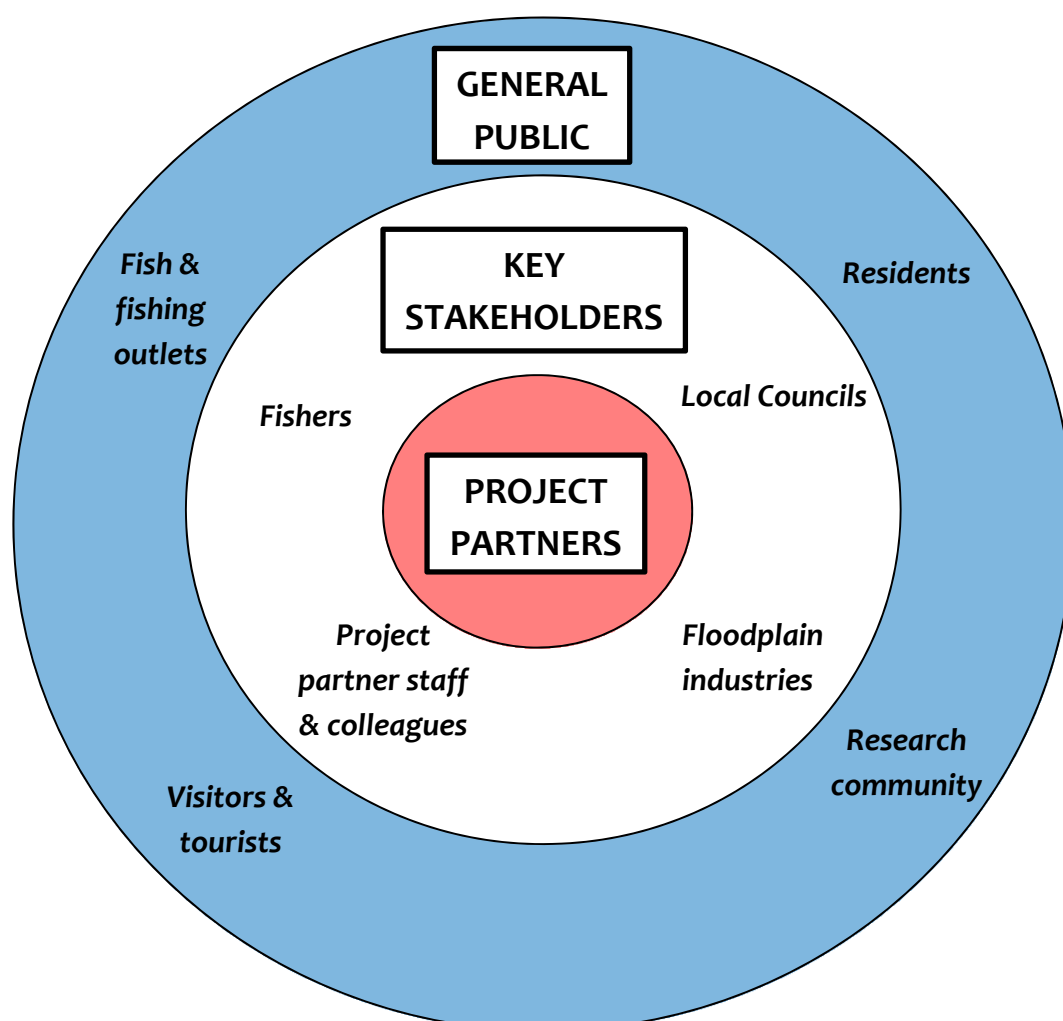
- Facilitate the development and promotion of consistent messages.
- Develop messages addressing specific information gaps.
- Identify the key target audiences in relation to specific messages and/or information.
- Improve the awareness of existing rehabilitation projects and what they are achieving.
- Identify specific roles and responsibilities and timelines for actions.
- Build and enhance communications between project partners, stakeholder groups and the general community.
- Enable adaptive communication approaches in response to new information, opportunities, and/or requests from stakeholders

## Key messages

- NSW estuarine habitats provide critical nurseries for larval and juvenile EKP.
- Much of the important estuarine habitat has been historically degraded.
- Better EKP fishery production can be achieved with targeted habitat rehabilitation.
- Our understanding of the linkages between estuarine habitat and juvenile EKP are continually improving and these findings are important for the future of the EKP fishery.
- Research is helping target future rehabilitation works to the estuarine sites, habitats and activities that are best placed to enhance fishery production.
- Engaging all stakeholders in the rehabilitation of habitats important for EKP productivity is critical.

## Target Audience

The following diagram identifies and prioritises our target audiences. The inner circle identifies the project partners as the priority and the areas where this communication strategy will initially concentrate its efforts. As achievements are made and objectives achieved, the strategy can then be increasingly implemented for the audiences identified in the outer circles. The diagram aims to assist in visualising the strategy's realm of influence and focus.



The messages and findings of the EKP project first need to be understood and digested by the project partners themselves. Once these are understood, the members are then responsible for communicating to their immediate stakeholder groups. For example, a Local Land Services (LLS) member would need to communicate findings to other LLS staff through their existing networks, meetings, phone calls and other communications media. These immediate stakeholders are then encouraged in turn, to communicate findings more widely amongst the broader community.

The full range of potential audience groups has been identified, and the following table lists those:

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EKP Project Partners</b> | NSW Department of Primary Industries<br>Fisheries Research & Development Corporation<br>Hunter Water<br>North Coast Local Land Services<br>Hunter Local Land Services<br>Griffith University<br>Newcastle Ports Corporation<br>Origin Energy<br>Professional Fishermen's Association<br>OceanWatch Australia |
| <b>Stakeholders</b>         | NSW Fishermen's Co-operatives<br>Ocean Prawn Trawl fishers<br>Estuary Prawn Trawl fishers<br>Project partners' staff<br>Local Councils<br>Floodplain industries (e.g. cane farmers, graziers, dairy etc)                                                                                                     |
| <b>General Community</b>    | Residents<br>Visitors & tourists<br>Fishing & Boating industries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Communications Activities, Timing and Responsibilities

Achieving the objectives of the communication strategy is the collective responsibility of the EKP team (NSW DPI) and the project partners. The table below details the desired communication actions, timing and responsibilities for each of the three identified target audiences – project partners, key stakeholders and the wider community.

### Target audience: Project partners

| Aim                                                                                       | Actions / activities            | Responsibility                                  | Timing / frequency                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Effective information exchange and understanding of the project progress and key findings | Project partner update meetings | All project partners physically attend meetings | Annual project update meetings at Newcastle Fishermen's Cooperative                                                                   |
|                                                                                           | Review website updates          | All project partners                            | Check website updates every 6 months following notification from NSW DPI staff. Respond with any queries on the information provided. |

### Target audience: Key stakeholders

| Aim                                                              | Actions / activities                                       | Responsibility                     | Timing / frequency                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Effective understanding of the project progress and key findings | Develop EKP Communication Plan                             | NSW DPI                            | Complete by 2014                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                  | Reports from project partners to their in-house colleagues | All project partners               | Immediately after each 6 monthly update and annual meeting                                                                               |
|                                                                  | Update partner websites                                    | All project partners with websites | Link to 6 monthly web-based update summaries                                                                                             |
|                                                                  | Addressed letters to Coops and EKP fishers                 | NSW DPI                            | At the project outset, detailing the aims and intent of the research program.                                                            |
|                                                                  | Face to face discussions with EKP commercial fishers       | NSW DPI                            | Minimum one visit to each participating Coop (including Ballina, Maclean, Coffs Harbour, South West Rocks, Port Macquarie and Newcastle) |
|                                                                  | Survey of EKP commercial fishers                           | NSW DPI                            | Commence at the project outset. Completed by 2014                                                                                        |

| <b>Aim</b> | <b>Actions / activities</b>                           | <b>Responsibility</b>                | <b>Timing / frequency</b>                                                                                                    |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | Deliver 2 - 3 workshops                               | NSW DPI with project partner support | Towards end of project in 2015/16, targeting coastal land managers and planners                                              |
|            | Industry media articles in newsletters magazines etc. | NSW DPI and project partners         | One article per annum minimum. Examples include FRDC FISH magazine, The Land, PFA Professional Fishing Association News etc. |
|            | Electronic information products (e.g. Brochures)      | NSW DPI                              | Two delivered based on research findings towards project completion in 2016                                                  |

### Target audience: Wider community

| <b>Aim</b>                    | <b>Actions / activities</b>                | <b>Responsibility</b> | <b>Timing / frequency</b>                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communicate the key messages. | Develop and update the EKP project website | NSW DPI               | 6 monthly updates with plain English summaries of the research results, extension activities and key findings |
|                               | Media outputs (TV, radio & print)          | NSW DPI               | Minimum 4 media articles (print or electronic) and one radio interview, completed by 2016                     |
|                               | Publish scientific papers                  | NSW DPI               | Journal articles published by 2016, number dependent upon results                                             |
|                               | Conference presentations                   | NSW DPI               | Three Conferences targeted by 2016                                                                            |

## Risk management

This communication plan helps to address some project risks associated with stakeholder engagement.

| <b>Risk</b>                                                            | <b>Management</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project partners not contributing to communication project information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing regular project updates to partners</li><li>• Single point of call for project information</li><li>• Meeting face-to-face to address issues – e.g. information not in a form that partners can use; timing in relation to partner publications</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| EKP fishers not engaged                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letters about the project and about the survey sent to all relevant Coops and individual fishers</li><li>• Information provided in ways consistent with the trusted and preferred sources of information identified in the survey</li><li>• Open access to contact primary project manager</li><li>• DPI EKP Industry Manager well informed on project progress and results, and able to discuss it during routine interactions with industry</li><li>• Information available to all via website</li></ul> |
| Research information not communicated in a timely manner               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plain English results not held up by formal refereed publication process</li><li>• DPI EKP Industry Manager well informed on project progress and results, and able to discuss it during routine interactions with industry</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |