

MILESTONE PROGRESS REPORT



FRDC PROJECT NUMBER:

2021-036: Management & delivery of the Oysters Australia RD&E Plan 2020-2025

DATE DUE: 31/05/2024

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Anne Stünzner

OVERALL PROJECT PROGRESS: On schedule

Milestone Status

Has this milestone been achieved (Yes/No)	Yes
Will the project be completed according to the current milestone schedule (Yes/No)	Yes

PROJECT PROGRESS AGAINST PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Objective 1) By June 2026, commission and manage a portfolio of RD&E projects which address the strategic outcomes outlined in the Oysters Australia Strategic Plan

Since the launch of the Oysters Australia Strategic Plan 2020-2025, sixteen projects have been approved for funding through the oysters IPA and have progressed to contract with the FRDC. The value of these investments is \$8,776,100.54, this is an increase of \$6,156,000 on the previous year.

Objective 2) Maintain a functional, cohesive Oysters Australia RD&E Group to build knowledge & guide strategic investment

OA maintains an RD&E Committee which has met fifteen times since launch of the Strategic Plan (three times in the 2023-24FY). In the last year, the RD&E Committee has taken numerous opportunities to invite thematic experts and project leads into meetings, to help build the knowledge of Committee members. In addition, the RD&E Committee and Board have held eight subject specific two-hour workshops during April and May 2024 covering the following topics:

- Circular Economy
- Climate Change
- Breeding & Hatchery Programs
- Marketing & Supply Chain
- Disease
- Farm technology
- Food Safety
- Regulation & legislation

Objective 3) By June 2026, ensure that all new R&D funded through the Oysters IPA is extended to industry, encompassing all development and maintenance of a hub of project resources and communication material on the Oysters Australia website

OA provides regular updates to state industry associations and research committees. It also maintains a website which includes details of projects and outputs. OA staff work with project

proponents during the planning and delivery phase to ensure that outcomes are extended to end users in an appropriate manner.

Objective 4) Over the life of the project, provide coordination and leadership on matters of national importance to the oyster industry

Oysters Australia has continued to provide coordination & leadership on numerous matters of national importance. This includes matters relating to the Aquaplan (National Disease Prioritisation List), Biosecurity Protection Levy, National Surveillance Strategy, aquaculture literacy and circular economy projects.

Oysters Australia are also members of Australian Aquaculture Council as well as sitting on the FRDC Workforce Development Committee and SIA Circular Economy Taskforce as well as participating in the FRDC translocation project.

In 2025, OA will be the case study peak industry for Ready Set Go National Disease Outbreak preparedness planning and simulation. OA will be observers on the same process with the prawn industry in 2024.

1. ORIGINAL MILESTONE DATE AND DETAIL:

26-05-2023 Management and delivery of Oysters Australia’s Strategic plan 2024-2025

2. PROGRESS AGAINST MILESTONE DETAIL (Achieved):

Objective 1) By June 2026, commission and manage a portfolio of RD&E projects which address the strategic outcomes outlined in the Oysters Australia Strategic Plan

Since the launch of the Oysters Australia Strategic Plan 2020-2025, sixteen projects have been approved for funding through the oysters IPA and have progressed to contract with the FRDC. The value of these investments is \$8,776,100.54, this is an increase of \$6,156,000 on the previous year. This total includes OA’s biggest investment to date of \$933,028.00 for 2023-113: Implement genomic selection within the National Pacific Oyster breeding program.

OA will be going to tender through the RD&E Committee to call for expressions of interest around themes of work identified through the 8 planning workshops held in April and May 2024. This will include consideration of the parity of funding required to accommodate NSW RD&E needs.

These projects broadly deliver on the five strategic areas identified for investment in the Oysters Australia RD&E Plan.

Table1. Strategic themes the Oysters Australia RD&E Plan & the desired outcome

Program theme	Desired Outcome
1. Production & Innovation	Increase the sustainable, efficient production of oysters and their management on farm
2. Risk Management	Minimise the impact of disease, waterway contamination, climate change and other risks
3. People & Knowledge	Knowledge, skills & networks are developed, increasing the industry’s human & data resources
4. Post Harvest & Market Development	Build consumer demand for oysters and increase profitability through the supply chain

5. Industry Profile & Regulation	The oyster industry is recognised as a legitimate and responsible user of public resources, and operates under constructive regulation
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Given the run of disasters faced by the industry in recent years, investment has been weighted towards breeding programs for risk mitigation and people / knowledge, with less focus on market development.

Table 2. Project alignment with OA Strategic Themes

Project	Alignment with OA Strategic Themes				
	Prg. 1	Prg. 2	Prg. 3	Prg. 4	Prg. 5
2023-113: Implement genomic selection within the National Pacific Oyster breeding program	X	X	X		
2023-103: Detecting paralytic shellfish toxins in oysters - initial assessment of AquaBC rapid test kit		X	X	X	
2023-070: The feasibility of a financial safety-net: Investigating financial mechanisms to protect oyster growers from disease outbreaks					X
2023-035: Precision Oyster Farming with Artificial Intelligence: Oyster Metrics			X	X	X
2022-191: Safeguarding our Sydney Rock Oyster industry against QX disease	X	X	X		
2022-023: Reduction of oyster waste: Establishing best practices for controlling wild spat under commercial production	X		X		
2021-122: Assessment of the utility of genomics for Sydney rocks oyster breeding (~\$620k)	X	X	X		
2021-083: Developing the tools and articulating the value proposition for genomic selection in Pacific Oyster selective breeding (~\$371k)	X	X	X		
2021-075: Understanding water quality risk for the sustainable and efficient production of Pacific and Sydney rock oysters (~\$86k)		X	X		
2021-097: Environmental risk factors that may contribute to vibrio outbreaks – A South Australian case study (~\$59k)		X	X	X	
2021-053: Building capability in food safety in Australian shellfish (~\$316k)		X	X	X	
2021-036: Management and delivery of the Oysters Australia RD&E Plan 2020-2025 (~\$332k)	X	X	X	X	X
2021-032: Provision of strategic advice to Oysters Australia – identifying opportunities and associated value for the Australian oyster industry in carbon neutral accreditation and Environmental Accounts (~\$17k)	X		X	X	X
2021-018: SafeFish 2021 – 2025 (~\$111k)		X	X		

2020-096: National Pacific Oyster breeding Program: Completing POMS resistance in spat and transition to selection for traditional commercial traits (~\$178k)	X	X			
2020-064: South Australian Pacific oyster mortality trials (~\$332k)	X	X	X		

Objective 2) Maintain a functional, cohesive Oysters Australia RD&E Group to build knowledge & guide strategic investment

Since the launch of the OA Strategic Plan in late 2020, Oysters Australia has convened fifteen RD&E meetings, three of which have occurred in the 2023-24FY. Dates of meetings this year: 18th Aug. 2023; 20th Oct. 2023, and 16th February 2024.

The RD&E Committee operate under a Terms of Reference, and observers are very welcome.

In the last year, the Committee has taken numerous opportunities to invite thematic experts and project leads into meetings, to help build the knowledge of members. Guest presenters have included:

- Richard Whittington: Immunisation of Pacific oysters against POMS.
- Andrew Trotter & Henry Hewish: Implementation of the genomic selection within the National Pacific Oyster breeding program
- Cristina Lesueur: bivalve risk register
- Alison Turnbull: Detecting paralytic shellfish toxins in oysters - initial assessment of AquaBC rapid test kit
- Peter Kube: Oyster biometrics with AI and Genomics project meeting

The FRDC has been present at all RD&E Committee meetings, and OA has been encouraging a greater involvement from WA, NT and QLD, who currently don't contribute to the Oysters IPA.

The RD&E Committee will hold a face-to-face meeting in September 2024 in Tasmania (TAS), prior to the Shellfish Futures Conference and OT Board Meeting. Committee members are encouraged to participate in the Shellfish Futures Conference and will have the opportunity to get out on farm and learn more about the Tasmanian industry as hosted by new OA Board Member and Tasmanian Oyster Company CEO Patrick Taskunas.



In November 2024, Oysters Australia are convening a Breeding and Hatchery Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to:

- Bring hatcheries & industry together to exchange knowledge and insights.
- Work through a benchmarking exercise between the New Zealand Industry and the Australian hatchery industry.
- Presentations (pre-recorded) from international speakers on alternate ways to fund hatchery programs.

Objective 3) By June 2026, ensure that all new R&D funded through the Oysters IPA is extended to industry, encompassing all development and maintenance of a hub of project resources and communication material on the Oysters Australia website

Oysters Australia maintain a hub of project information and resources on the Oysters Australia website. This includes the latest information about:

- Vibrio <https://www.oystersaustralia.org/vibrio>
- Production figures: <https://www.oystersaustralia.org/productionhistory>
- Export & Import: <https://www.oystersaustralia.org/exportimport>

The website is currently being updated and streamlined, so that all projects involving OA are consolidated into a single list regardless of funding source (eg. Oyster IPA, CRC-P). Individual project pages are being hyperlinked from this list.

It's been recognised that project outputs are not easily accessible through the Oysters Australia website, or from the FRDC website. Meetings are scheduled to be held with the FRDC to improve the identification of these useable assets, and to ensure that these are extended in an appropriate way to the end user.

Oysters Australia take opportunities to update the industry on the progress of RD&E investments. Examples of these include:

- Written updates via the SAOGA newsletter
- Meetings with SAOGA members and hatcheries at Coffin Bay, Cowell, Streaky Bay and Ceduna.
- Presentation to ARAC (first time they have met in a year)
- Site visits to Oysters Tasmania Pipe Clay Lagoon, Bruny Island.
- Quarterly meetings with NT, WA, QLD, SA, NSW and Tas Oysters growers to feed into AAC meetings.



Objective 4) Over the life of the project, provide coordination and leadership on matters of national importance to the oyster industry

Over the course of the project, Oysters Australia has provided national coordination and leadership on a number of important matters including: (new matters during the 23-24 FY highlighted in red).

- ABARES commodity forecasts and accurate IPA contributions
- Anti-microbial usage (CSIRO project)
- Plastics audits
- Review of NAC
- Centre of Excellence for Aquaculture Futures
- Biosecurity preparedness & response (DAWE project)
- Circular Economy (FRDC funded project)
- Market Transparency workshops
- Aquaplan
- SafeFish
- Fish Names Committee (change to Pacific oysters)
- Provenance (ANSTO workshops)
- National Surveillance Strategy
- SIA's Aquaculture Advisory Committee
- Participation in FRDC Stakeholder Workshop (Nov. 2022)
- Participation at Seafood Directions (Sept. 2022)
- AgVet Chemical Usage – Minor Use Permits.
- National Seafood Safety Project (SIA)
- Chemical & pesticide contamination
- Aquaculture Literacy Project (SIA)

- National disease prioritisation list (AquaPlan – DAFF)
- Biosecurity Protection Levy
- Participation in Tropical Rock Oyster Workshop
- **FRDC Workshop 2023**
- **Shellfish Futures 2023**
- **Biosecurity Protection Levy Submission**
- **FRDC Workforce Development Committee**
- **FRDC Translocation Workshop and ongoing support**
- **Ready Set Go Oyster Planning Process**
- **Blue Economy CRC & SIA Circular Economy Working Group**

PUBLICATIONS/PRODUCTS

- Progress & final reports available from projects funded through the IPA.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

1. Acknowledgement – Projects are required to acknowledge the FRDC under their individual project agreements with the FRDC. Oysters Australia made one acknowledgement of the FRDC, when presenting at the SAOGA seminar in Feb. 2023.



Opening & closing slides from OA presentation at SAOGA seminar

2. Minimum requirements for Research Provider Publications - Oysters Australia haven't made public announcements regarding this project. Projects are required to acknowledge the FRDC under their individual project agreements with the FRDC.
3. Notify FRDC immediately if you consider that there is potential for the project to result in the production of intellectual property – Individual projects sign agreements with the FRDC and are required to report this directly.
5. Media - Oysters Australia haven't made public announcements regarding this project.
6. PI provide updates of R&D portfolio development and progress at OA Executive & RD&E Committee meetings – The PI (also the Executive Officer of Oysters Australia) provides updates at every Directors meeting, and also at every RD&E Committee meeting.
7. Acknowledge that the FRDC will review the effectiveness of the project based upon the level of commitment of IPA funds to undertake R&D priorities – Due to the slippage of a couple of projects, our current RD&E project portfolio will result in IPA surplus of \$441,030.32, this is a \$142,000 improvement on the prediction of \$592,000 from the previous year.
8. There have been five significant project investments in 2023/24 which will reduce the surplus to \$178,000 by 2025/25. This funding provides the opportunity to ensure there is parity in RD&E investment between jurisdictions in coming years.

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9. OA Review their strategic plan and provide annual advice to FRDC on research priorities for the coming year – Oysters Australia has provided advise to FRDC on industry RD&E priorities for the 2021/22 FY, 2022/23 FY as well as the 2023/24 FY.
10. Due to significant rises in the cost of living, it was decided not to hold a face-to-face RD&E meeting in this financial year. Instead, a series of additional workshops (8 in total) of two hours duration were held to look at alignment in the RD&E space.
11. Oysters Australia will also be seeking an increase in the project 2021-036: Management and delivery of the Oysters Australia RD&E Plan 2020-2025

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES ARISING:

N/A

CONTACT WITH BENEFICIARIES:

N/A

PROGRESS AGAINST COMMUNICATION & EXTENSION PLAN:

Communication about oyster R&D projects and outputs has been very good over the last few years. The RD&E Committee meet mostly every quarter and includes representatives from OA member organisations in SA, Tasmania & New South Wales. The Committee has also extended an invitation to WA and QLD and NT to participate in discussions, and this invite has been accepted on a number of occasions. Oysters Australia now also includes a communication clause in all projects to put the emphasis on RD&E providers to deliver effective communication as a reportable requirement for funding.

OA also takes an active role in planning projects and reviewing applications to ensure that extension and communication is appropriate to the end users. The use of webinars and video summaries are encouraged and have been taken up by several project PI’s.

Of note this year, Oysters Tasmania and South Australia Oyster Growers have increased their GVP contributions to reflect the increased and growing production of oysters post several years of disease impacts. Tasmania will increase from \$49,600 in 2022/23 to \$82,000 in 2023/24 and have committed to \$97,500 per annum going forward from 2024/25 financial year. South Australia Oyster Growers have increased their contributions from \$60,000 in 2022/23 to \$85,000, \$110,000 in consecutive years and \$150,000.00 going forward after that. This will increase the total of matched contributions from \$498,155.00 in 2022/23 to \$572,300.00 in 2025/26.

Oysters Australia has also had some considerable flux in respect to both staff, Board and RD&E Committee members. Two Oysters Australia Directors have resigned due to work commitments. One in NSW and one in Tasmania. A new Executive Officer in Anne Stunzner was appointed in August to replace Andy Myers who is returning to his substantive role with NSW Farmers Association. The RD&E Committee also saw two new members, again one each for Tasmania and NSW.

VARIATIONS TO PROJECT:

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N/A

Original due date	Original Detail	Original Cost	Status	Requested due date	Requested Detail	Requested new Cost