

3rd International Rock Lobster Congress

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C O R P O R A T I O N



FINAL REPORT

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

98/341 3rd International Rock Lobster Congress

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:

The 3rd International Lobster Congress was hosted by the South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council, in conjunction with Primary Industries and Resources South Australia. The Congress received its funding from the major sponsor, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, registrations and sponsorship. It was held over 3 days, Wednesday, September 22 to Friday, September 24, 1999 (with a welcoming 'Icebreaker Reception' on Tuesday evening of September 21) in Adelaide, South Australia.

The purpose of the 3rd International Lobster Congress was to provide a forum for diverse interest groups to voice their opinions on the future direction for lobster industries. Fishers, scientists, environmentalists, managers, processors and politicians participated in discussions and comparisons of lobster fishing on a global level. Over the course of this 3 day Congress, more than 300 participants were in attendance to discuss some of the key issues affecting lobster fisheries around the world. Delegates were primarily from around Australia, but others travelled from New Zealand, the USA, South Africa, Norway and Canada.

The Congress theme was 'Manage Your Destiny' and the program mix was specifically designed to raise industry awareness levels about key issues that require managing both now and in the future. Thirty-five speakers from around the world presented information on a broad range of topics, from aquaculture and puerulus growout to indigenous issues, resource sharing, access security, marine protected areas and markets. The key areas that emerged for industry involvement in future management were in three broad areas: (1) environment, (2) resource sharing and (3) marketing.

Emerging issues/concepts raised in relation to the environment which industry need to address include: ecosystem interactions, ecological sustainable development and marine parks, with the overriding message being that industry must participate in the debate and also invest in the necessary research to effectively promote its position.

In the area of access security new information was presented about measuring the value of a fish for competing uses and provided direction for the initiatives to establish more defined and secure rights. Further effort in developing property rights was a key resolution from the Congress.

The Congress also encouraged upgraded effort in the area of marketing and profile. A concept floated towards an Australian/New Zealand cooperative effort and a commitment made to a national group to investigate the potential for cooperative action in the market place. The need to promote the value of the industry to the public and government was highlighted.

Along with the intense discussion, time was taken to enjoy South Australia's hospitality, with the 'Fishermen's Frenzy' on Wednesday evening, held at Fishing Industry House. The seafood was superb, the setting by the dock at Port Adelaide was idealic, with a number of boats on display at the port. The mood was positive and alive.

The Congress resolutions reflect the commitment of the participants to working towards a common goal of sustainably, well managed fisheries world-wide, while building the value of the resource.

Background:

The International Lobster Congress, originally a US/Canadian conference, expanded to involve representatives from lobstering countries around the world. The purpose of the Congress is sharing information, exploring new technologies, discussing common problems and examining possible solutions to critical issues affecting the industry. Over 500 industry members attended the 2nd Congress in 1994, held in Portland, Maine. The South Australian rock lobster industry secured the rights to host the 3^d International Lobster Congress in 1999, after negotiations with the University of Maine Lobster Institute.

Given the size and value of the industry in Australia, information exchange is emerging as a key impediment to development and value adding. The geographical spread of the industry has meant communication between fisheries has been poor and the International Congress was seen as a potential launching pad for the upgrading of the Tri-State Lobster Conference to a regular national lobster industry conference.

Need:

The changing marketplace and production profile of rock lobster internationally dictates that the Australian rock lobster industry applies state of the art technology in management, research and development, if we are to maintain a competitive position and grow the value of the limited resource.

At present no vehicle exists to allow industry an effective interchange of ideas or to consider leading edge research and development from around the globe. Essentially the Australian lobster industries operate in isolation, disjointed by distance and State borders.

An outcome of the most recent Tri-State Conference was a call for a National Lobster Conference including all States and species not covered, to establish a forum for industry Australia-wide to make a start at building a national focus on management, marketing, development and problem solving.

Objectives:

The objectives of the project were to:

1. provide an international class lobster industry Congress, and
2. ensure a financially viable event.

Methods:

A Congress steering committee, comprising representatives of industry (SARLAC Directors) and Primary Industries & Resources SA (including SARDI) was established to oversee the planning and implementation of the Congress. A project work team comprising the event manager, industry project officer, marketing consultant and administrator were appointed to undertake the day to day operations to deliver the event.

A world-wide electronic network of contacts with interest in such a Congress was established as a first step, along with 6 key persons with responsibility for designing the program. The network was used as a vehicle for:-

- gathering ideas and assessing program areas and topics,
- building awareness,
- developing the program,
- securing international sponsorship,
- communications with participants,
- communications with potential speakers, and
- administering the registrations.

A detailed event delivery program and schedule was drawn up by the work team and approved by the Congress Steering Committee immediately upon formal commencement of the project. The plan detailed roles and responsibilities, time lines, financial targets and budget constraints.

Once the plan was established and agreed, the event manager co-ordinated the work team consultants and project personnel to deliver each segment of the event. The event manager and project officer reported regularly to the Steering Committee.

A preliminary Congress notice was produced and distributed globally, followed by the registration brochure, including preliminary Congress and social program (see Appendix 3). Sponsorship and trade display packages were developed and marketed to potential corporate supporters. Support from the SA lobster industry was committed well beyond expectations. Registrations were made by phone, post and the internet, and a database was established to track registrations.

The official program was produced and distributed to participants when they arrived (see Appendix 4).

Notification of the event generated widespread interest and unexpected requests from the scientific community to be involved. This interest converted into a number of workshops and meetings being convened in conjunction with the Congress. The Congress administration and event management resources were used to assist in delivering the following:

- International Lobster Health Symposium,
- Sampling Workshop,
- AGM of the SA Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association Inc, and
- Rock Lobster Aquaculture Seminar and Workshop.

The work plan was followed through to the conclusion of the event. The proceedings have been produced and distributed to key participation groups, and are available on the SARLAC web page <http://www.rocklobster.org.au>.

Results:

Participants

The hosting of the Congress attracted 320 full and part time participants, primarily from Australia and New Zealand, but with representatives from South Africa, Norway, USA, and Canada. Other workshops/meetings conducted as part of the week included:

- International Lobster Health Symposium – 80 participants,
- Sampling Workshop – 25 participants,
- AGM SA Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association Inc – 25 participants, and
- Rock Lobster Aquaculture Seminar and Workshop – 15 participants.

Program

The program was broken into five key areas. They were:

- Water to Waiter – Processing and Lobster Culture,
- Resource Sharing,
- Industry Management,
- Marine Conservation, and
- Markets and Trade.

A range of national and international speakers participated and the feedback from participants was that the overwhelming majority of presentations were of a high standard, and provided useful information. Interestingly, all sessions were highly attended.

The program areas touched on key topics impacting on the lobster industry, nationally and globally, and provided specific guidance for future activity in each area. The program was specifically structured with short presentations and long discussion panels at the end of each session, with the program concluding at 3pm each day. Feedback from industry leading up to the Congress indicated that full day programs are not appropriate. It appears that the structure of the program was successful.

Venue

The venue was the Stamford Grand Hotel, Glenelg, and all feedback received was that the venue and their staff were outstanding, and provided top class support for the event. Amazingly, there was not a problem with the audio visual equipment over the 3 days.

Social Program

Apart from the official Dinner and Icebreaker Reception, the main social event was tagged the 'Fishermen's Frenzy', which incorporated the lobster season launch. This was launched the Deputy Premier. We continue to receive feedback from participants about the success of this event.

Industry Participation

A key feature of the event was the level of input by the lobster industry. Support in developing the program was provided from Western Australia, New Zealand and Tasmanian industries in particular. An industry team put together the program which was believed to be appropriate for the lobster industry. Lobster fishermen were active throughout the delivery of the event in partnering all international guests and speakers. Each guest/speaker was allocated an individual fisherman to show them around and introduce them to industry members and ensure that, at all times, they were actively involved in the event.

Industry members also participated in chairing sessions as well as assisting with panel sessions. In particular, Lionel and Elaine Carrison managed a full audio taping of the conference throughout, as well as undertaking photography duties. Overall, it was a great team effort.

Trade Displays

Fifteen exhibitors participated in the trade displays, which provided a blend of service provider information, latest technology and industry information. This was complemented with aquaria, holding 5 species of Australian lobsters, live. These lobster were the subject of a Species Taste-Off, held as a precursor to the Congress Dinner on the final evening. The live lobster provided tremendous interest to participants.

Public Relations

The event generated considerable media coverage, both written and primarily radio, with a range of interviews throughout the week of keynote speakers and industry personnel.

Resolutions

The following were the Congress Resolutions:

1. The Congress reaffirms the commitment to sustainability of the world's lobster resources and their environment.
 - The sustained utilisation of lobster resources.
 - The goal of a secure rights-based framework that incorporates all extractive and non-extractive stakeholders.
 - The goal of genuine co-management of fisheries.
2. The Congress encourages the free exchange of information and ideas to achieve these aims.
3. The Congress is committed to promoting the social and economic value of lobster fisheries:
 - By encouraging sustainability.
 - By advocating the removal of barriers to trade.
 - By promoting the social and economic benefits derived from lobster resources to nations, regions and local communities.
4. The Congress confirms lobster as the premium seafood choice of a discerning world market.

Benefit:

The direct benefits of the Congress are not measurable, but can be described. The nature of the program saw delivery and consideration of information from around the globe in a number of key areas. These included:

- harvesting and post-harvest handling,
- lobster culture,
- markets and marketing,
- resource sharing, and
- lobster fishery management.

The trade area saw direct exposure to new technology and services from a range of commercial and government service providers.

The second area of benefits has come in the form of two initiatives from the Congress. The first is the agreement to host a regular national lobster industry conference, probably in line with the national fishing industry conference. The second outcome was a commitment to consider the appropriateness of a co-ordinated activity on marketing and trade issues. Follow up from the Congress has occurred in this area.

Finally, the other area of direct benefit in hosting the Congress has been a clear demonstration by the industry that, when well resourced, it is mature enough to manage major projects on the national and international stage, in a professional manner.

The Congress has provided a leadership example for the industry.

Further Development:

Industry leaders met during the Congress to discuss future activities. It was agreed that a national conference should be held probably biennially, and in conjunction with the national fishing industry conference. It was recommended that this initiative be supported.

Conclusion:

The key desired outcomes of the project were a world-class and financially viable event. Defining a world-class event is difficult, but some judgements can be made against a number of criteria, relevant to the hosting of such events.

The event is assessed as follows:

- **number of participants** – adequate, and should have been more,
- **relevance of program** – feedback positive,
- **participation in social program** – high and feedback very positive,
- **venue suitability** – extremely professional and ideal setting,
- **event management team** – feedback very professional and no problems during the event,
- **meals** – all food well received and no negative feedback, and
- **quality of written material** – high and was an area where the budget was blown out – feedback positive.

With regard to the financial viability of the event, the budgeted income was \$198,825. Actual income received, including standing pledges was \$179,535. Budgeted expenditure was \$198,825. Actual expenditure was \$182,438, including an allowance of \$1000 for production and distribution of proceedings. A shortfall of \$2903 has been incurred by SARLAC.

The areas where large variations from budget occurred were as follows:

- registration fees were down on budget,
- sponsorship was up on budget,
- printing and design was 3 times budget, and
- event project management fee – reduced to meet budget.