

# Reflections and Learnings 2025 Salmon Mortality Event

## Progress Report

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Department of Natural Resource  
and Environment Tasmania



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# 1. About this report

The Reflections and Learnings 2025 Salmon Mortality Event Report (the Report) published in October 2025 was developed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) from a comprehensive reflection of the multi-agency government and industry response of the 2025 event and informed by a cross-government operational debrief and interviews with the three major salmon companies: HAC, Tassal and Petuna.

The Report commits to 10 continuous improvement actions. This Progress Report provides the status of each action and also includes other activities underway or completed. Any further improvements will be communicated via the dedicated information platform for salmon located on the NRE Tas website.

## 2. Progress on Actions

### Action 1: Finalise and release of a Marine Heatwave and Related Event Response Plan.

**Lead: Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania**

Marine heatwaves and events have significant negative effects on Tasmania's marine ecosystems, including loss of marine animal and plant life. They can also reduce the productivity, health and sustainability of Tasmania's industries and communities and they can be a major contributor to mortality events.

Marine heatwaves and events are forecast to increase in frequency, intensity and spatial extent in Tasmania in the face of climate change and rising sea temperatures. Tasmania's Government, industries and communities must be aware and fully prepared to respond to marine heatwaves and events to reduce their negative impacts as much as possible.

A [Tasmanian Marine Heatwave and Related Event Response Plan](#) will guide Tasmania's decision making and coordination in response to critical marine events.

#### Progress Up-date

This action has been completed.

- The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) has published the [Tasmanian Marine Heatwave and Related Event Response Plan](#).

## Action 2: Review of current regulation to identify and minimise duplication across regulators.

**Lead:** Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania and the Environment Protection Authority

The review will include identifying duplication and discrepancies across the Biosecurity and Environmental Standards and licences as well as identifying the opportunity to streamline data and information sharing.

This will also include revamping the Marine Farming Development Plan management controls (*marine farming's default regulations*), overhauling the marine farming licensing (and permitting) administrative processes and amending / remaking the marine farming regulations intended to reduce red tape, remove duplication, streamline planning and approval processes and improve compliance outcomes.

### Progress Up-date

This action has commenced.

- Biosecurity Tasmania and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) have aligned conditions related to mortality reporting through the introduction of a General Biosecurity Direction and new Environmental Licence conditions. Initial discussions between NRE Tas and the EPA regarding a data sharing agreement have commenced.

A number of marine farming reform initiatives intended to modernise and streamline the planning, management and legislative administration of marine farming in Tasmania are underway. The reforms largely focus on the administration, planning and regulatory aspects of the *Marine Farming Planning Act 1995* and the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995*.

Key workstreams currently underway include:

- Review and reform of all 14 state-wide Marine Farming Development Plans with a view to supporting compliance outcomes and removing regulatory duplication.
- Marine Farming Licence Program reforms including introducing 10-year licence periods and eliminating annual renewal processes/requirements; revamping licence condition assessment and approval processes and streamlining program administration and financial management.
- Piloting automation of licence invoicing.

- Examination of the regulatory and management framework is also within the scope of the Independent Study of the Tasmanian Salmon Industry.

### **Action 3: Examine a Combined Salmon Compliance and Audit Plan across regulators.**

**Lead: Environment Protection Authority and Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania**

Regulation activities would benefit from a shared approach to compliance audits and associated reporting. This would ensure that compliance activities are comprehensive and aligned across regulators, reduce duplication and improve regulatory efficiency.

#### **Progress Up-date**

Implementation of this action is well advanced.

- The EPA and NRE Tas are progressing a number of initiatives to better align regulatory compliance requirements.
- Work is underway to establish data and information sharing arrangements.
- A Memorandum of Understanding has been established for shared use of vessels and vehicles across agencies.
- Joint salmon compliance inspections are now standard practice across NRE Tas and the EPA.

### **Action 4: Development of a Critical Event Preparedness, Communication and Co-ordination Management Framework.**

**Lead: Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania**

- 4.1 The framework will establish a central point of leadership to enable rapid clarification of regulator roles, reduce operational duplication, and provide a single government framework to the public and stakeholders and will be applied to critical marine related events. This framework will have regard to the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (TEMA).
- 4.2 The framework will include public communication facilitated via the NRE Tas website. A dedicated information platform will be established to provide a single point of reference for all

communication. The platform will include links to other relevant websites such as the EPA, DoH's Public Health and Fishing Tasmania websites.

- 4.3 In the Tasmanian Fisheries White Paper, the Government committed to improving consultation and engagement across fisheries and aquaculture, by implementing a new consultation framework and directing the development of a [Marine Resources Public Engagement and Consultation Policy](#). Salmon Aquaculture engagement has previously been separate to this policy and Marine Resources consultation framework. Improvements in engagement and coordination could be achieved by bringing salmon aquaculture into the existing processes.

#### Progress Up-date

The NRE Tas Marine team continue to prioritise preparedness for marine stressors. This action is being implemented through the establishment of a Marine Stressors Working Group.

- The NRE website has been updated and has established a single point of reference for all salmon related communication and Frequently Asked Questions. The platform includes links to the EPA, DoH's Public Health and Fishing Tasmania websites.

### Action 5: Examine best practice regulatory reporting information requirements.

**Lead: Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania**

- 5.1 Completion of an independent Literature Review on *P.salmonis*;
- 5.2 Detailed examination of the Chilean official *P.salmonis* disease regulatory control program considering the environmental similarities and differences between the Chilean and Tasmanian contexts; and
- 5.3 Consideration of General Biosecurity Direction under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* and whether any further refinements of the Salmonid Biosecurity Program are warranted.

### Progress Up-date

Implementation for this action is well advanced.

- Other related priorities have delayed the commencement of the independent Literature Review on *P.salmonis*.
- A General Biosecurity Direction under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* has been issued and took effect from the 10 February 2026.
- Scoping for a review of the *Biosecurity Program: Tasmanian Salmonid Industry* has commenced.
- A detailed examination of the Chilean official *P.salmonis* disease regulatory control program is yet to be completed.

## Action 6: Industry Waste Management Plans

**Lead: Salmon Tasmania and individual companies**

Companies to develop and submit Waste Management Plans to the EPA Director as required under Environmental Licenses to ensure a more coordinated approach to waste management by the producers of waste, including mortality waste. Waste Management Plans are important to demonstrate to the EPA and the community that plans, procedures and resources are in place to manage waste arising from marine farms. Waste Management Plans will determine waste management volumes and pathways for disposal across varying mortality scenarios.

### Progress Up-date

This action is completed.

- Industry has developed comprehensive individual Waste Management Plans for operations across the State. The three waste management plans have been approved by the EPA.

The Waste Management Plans:

- identify the specified waste streams generated by industry;
- introduce staged response levels for mortality events; and
- identify waste transfer and disposal infrastructure that will be utilised to manage all waste streams that are generated by the industry. Completed plans are published on EPA Website.

## Action 7: Develop specific diagnostic assays for *Piscirickettsia* species.

**Lead:** Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

While the development of vaccines and selective breeding are medium to long-term propositions, other measures to minimise risks associated with *P.salmonis* to the Tasmanian salmonid aquaculture industry are the development of specific diagnostic assays for *Piscirickettsia* species in Tasmania and to ensure that there is sufficient capability and capacity at the Animal Health Laboratory (AHL) for regular MIC testing.

### Progress Up-date

This action has been completed.

- The CAAHV, with funding from Fisheries Research and Development Corporation has developed a multiplex, real-time PCR that detects and differentiates *P. salmonis* and Tasmanian *Rickettsia*-like organisms. The new assay confirms clinical cases of piscirickettsiosis and Tasmanian salmonid rickettsiosis.
- The Animal Health Laboratory molecular diagnostic team has completed in-house analytical validation (to stage 1 of international guidelines). The assay is available on a fee-for-service basis, replacing an existing test that did not differentiate between *Piscirickettsia* species.

## Action 8: Expansion of the CAAHV Facility

**Lead:** CAAHV Steering Committee

Prioritise expansion of the CAAHV facility to fast-track research and development capacity of the Centre.

### Progress Up-date

A working group including industry has also been established to progress the expansion of the CAAHV facility.

## Action 9: Development of an Industry Code of Practice

**Lead:** Salmon Tasmania and individual companies

Salmon Tasmania to consider the development of a Code of Practice for managing mortality events, aimed at providing a consistent and coordinated approach across industry. The Code could outline clear operational procedures for timely response and safe removal of mortalities, reinforce measures for preventing further spread of disease, and set standards for environmentally responsible waste management and beneficial reuse options.

### Progress Up-date

Each company has developed and implemented a Waste Management Plan which has been endorsed by the EPA and are publicly available on the EPA website. The Plans outline operational procedures for timely response and safe removal of mortalities, contain measures for preventing further spread of disease, and set standards for environmentally responsible waste management and beneficial reuse options. The implementation of regulated Plans also satisfies the need for a Code of Practice.

## Action 10: Literature Review and Risk Assessment Framework for Florfenicol

**Lead:** Salmon Tasmania and individual companies

Salmon Tasmania will coordinate a comprehensive literature review on the use of the antibiotic Florfenicol to treat *P. salmonis* infections in salmon. The review will look at international evidence from laboratory trials and real farm treatments from across the world.

The review will include a risk assessment framework for the use of florfenicol in the Tasmanian environment based on international studies and experience.

### Progress Up-date

A comprehensive scientific review 'A Review of Florfenicol Use in Global Salmon Farming with a Case Study on the Treatment of Piscirickettsiosis' has been submitted to the journal *Aquaculture*.

### 3. Other Activities

In addition to the 10 continuous improvement actions, NRE Tas and the EPA have progressed and/or are progressing a number of additional actions.

#### NRE Tas additional actions

Other actions NRE Tas has undertaken during the 25/26 year to date include: -

- Harmful Algae Blooms Capabilities Gap Assessment.
- Enhancing the current marine biosecurity capability through the employment of a Senior aquatic-specific veterinarian and two additional Senior Biosecurity Inspectors with aquatic biosecurity, audit and investigation capability
- Implementation of the Salmonid Biosecurity Quality Certification program has progressed.
- Planning and implementation for the 2025/26 biosecurity compliance audit program and Marine Aquaculture compliance strategy.
- Multi regulator land and water-based compliance patrols have increased with NRE Tas – Aquaculture, Biosecurity Tasmania and Wildlife officers and the Environment Protection Agency.
- Integrating drone capability into compliance inspections.
- Developing stakeholder communications for Florfenicol treatments.
- Developing and implementing a Florfenicol Compliance Audit Schedule.
- Establishing and implementing a Market Access Monitoring Program for Non-Salmon Species.
- The Chief Veterinary officer has commenced the development of a partnership with Norway and Ireland to discuss and develop best practice for managing *P.salmonis*.

#### EPA additional actions

Other actions the EPA have undertaken during the 25/26 year to date include: -

- Varying marine Environmental Licences to add new conditions around detection, containment and removal of dead fish within a specified timeframe and record-keeping to demonstrate compliance.
- Florfenicol Residue Monitoring Program to ensure environmental safeguards are in place has been deployed for each use of this veterinary treatment within the industry.
- Reviewed reporting templates used by industry, including for mortality weight reporting, to ensure that all relevant data is provided in a consistent manner by the companies.
- Increased surveillance of marine farms and shore based infrastructure receiving mortality waste.



