



# TASMANIAN ABALONE COUNCIL LTD

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## Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG)

Meeting1/2014

Monday April 14, 2014

IMAS, Nubeena Crescent Tarooma

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### DRAFT Minutes

#### 1. Present:

##### Members:

I Cartwright (Chair), G Woodham, J McKibben, P. Richardson, B Cobbing, J. Hoult, D Hansen, A Gray, D Tarbath, C Mundy (IMAS) M Bradshaw (DPIPWE), J Freeman (minutes),

##### Observers:

A Hansen, B Wilson, B Rex, G Moroney, B Wilson, B Rex, J Ramsden, G Moroney, M Lovett, J Huddlestone, B Richardson, G Hughes, J Evans, R King. H Jones & S Pyke (IMAS)

#### 2. Apologies:

R. Scanlon, A Brown, M Haddon, M Daft, M Webster, D Lisson, R Rex, S Anning

#### 3. Welcome and opening remarks:

The Chair opened the meeting. Observers were welcomed and reminded/informed about the FRAG processes and how members and observers can have input into the meeting. In setting the TAC the Minister receives advice from three sources: the AbFAC; the Tasmanian Abalone Council AGM; and DPIPWE the last-mentioned in the form of Departmental brief. The Minister looks across all the advice and then makes a decision. The FRAG is an industry body, funded and administered by the Abalone Council and was formed to allow in-depth discussion on the status of the resource, TAC settings, size limits and related issues. The FRAG provides advice to the AbFAC.

The AbFRAG membership consists of the Abalone Council Executive members, IMAS, DPIPWE and CSIRO representatives. Observers are always welcome and their input is valued and observers. At the FRAG, input from researchers (data and analysis), Council Members and observers are all relevant and are taken into consideration when formulating advice to present to AbFAC. The question of the relative 'weight' of views put forward by observers and members of the FRAG was raised. The Chair noted that past practice had been for final positions to be agreed by consensus by AbFRAG members, with observers free to provide input as those positions are developed. Where consensus

cannot be reached on a matter, the majority position is put forward and dissenting positions noted. After a lengthy debate it was agreed that the TAC would review and refresh the TORs for the FRAG.

**Action: Dean Lisson to work with the Chair and the TAC to review and refresh the AbFRAG TORs.**

### 3. Adoption of agenda:

The agenda was adopted with the addition of an item on the West Coast boundaries.

### 4. Minutes of the previous meeting:

Agreed to be an accurate record and accepted.

### 5. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting:

#### 1. Development of indicators, target and limit reference points

To be discussed under Agenda Item 7

#### 2. Follow up on funding with FRDC for Occupational Divers Course, based on FRDC People Development Funding

**Complete** – Decision taken to not use FRDC funding at this stage and TAC will be following up.

#### 3. Finalisation of Block 5 report and presentation of results to FRAG

**Complete**

#### 4. Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process –

To be discussed under Agenda Item 6

#### 5. Length frequency data

**Complete** – Agreed to using existing boards, of which two more will be placed in factories. Development and use of a new measuring board is not feasible in a realistic time frame.

#### 6. Report on landings by zone and month end for 3 years

**Complete** – Initially consideration was given to using market driven and other key events (e.g. times of high demand) to see understand the impact on catches and catch rates. On reflection, the FRAG noted that there is unlikely to be any meaningful management action that could be taken as a result of such knowledge and the work was therefore no longer relevant.

#### 7. Letter of thanks to Tony Johnston

**Complete**; Chair wrote letter, which was acknowledged

#### 8. Block 14B

**Ongoing** – this block was closed for 90 days in 2013 due to the possible existence of biotoxins. The area will remain closed until DoA has completed testing. DAFF are obtaining samples and there is the likelihood of piggybacking this work on SARDI testing results with the aim of reopening the blocks.

#### 9. King Island – review size limit

**Ongoing** – A review of black lip size limits is required for this area but the work is not a high priority relative to other calls for research. If there is an opportunity this will be undertaken.

#### 10. Central West Boundaries

Further in the agenda

## **11. Stock assessment**

**Complete** - the 2013 draft assessment is now available

## **6. Review of 2013 Fishery Performance**

### **Draft Abalone Fishery Assessment:**

Mechanics of the MCDA approach.

IMAS described progress with methods to make TAC setting more objective. One of the methods currently under consideration is Multi Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), which would be applied to spatial units (blocks or numbers of blocks) in the fishery. Under this approach, a range of criteria (e.g. CPUE, CPUE history, catch deviation and number of short dives) are weighted and summed to score, which is then applied to increase or decrease the TAC.

Using only catch rate and catch rate change as a criteria, predicted (proposed – red dots in the attachment) and actual catches (black dots) for the Eastern and Western zones. There was good agreement between these plots

It was noted that team diving is being recorded differently.

In addition to the MCDA analysis, IMAS presented i) a range of graphics based on the analysis of logger data, including plots of hectare cells vs cumulative catch show how the areas fished between two years (2012 and 2013) and showing the catch taken from each cell over 2012 and 2013. ii) % Incidences of big swims and small catches and iii) depth profiles. These graphics we used to illustrate how data could be analysed and presented to better inform management decisions. The utility of this analysis will grow as the time series of data increases.

Further workshops will be held to work the data and familiarise all divers with the results and to understand the process.

**See attachment to the minutes for slides presented by IMAS**

### **Executive Summary**

Total landings for the 2013 Tasmanian abalone fishery were 2,008.3 t of blacklip and 139.8 t of greenlip, a total of 2,148.1 t from a total allowable catch (TAC) of 2,149 t. The 2013 landings were 217 t lower than in 2012, attributable to TAC reductions in the Eastern Zone (21 t), Northern Zone (70 t) and Central Western/Western Zones (126 t).

The 2013 catch had a gross landed value of \$73.6 million, down by \$8.8 million from 2012. The reduced TAC played some part in the decline in value, but principally the decline was driven by weaker market demand for all product types. Beach prices fell steadily from relatively high levels following the Chinese New Year in February, and failed to recover over the course of the year. Towards the end of the year the market became oversupplied as fishing became driven by an increasing need to land allocated quota.

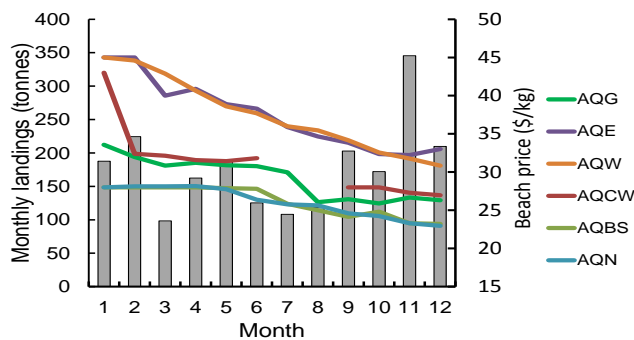
Royalties collected by the Tasmanian Government in 2013 totalled \$5.42 million, only slightly reduced (by \$0.3 million) from the previous year.

Zone	TAC	Landed
Greenlip	140.0	139.8
East	528.5	527.1
North	308.0	307.7
West	1001.0	1001.8
Central West	101.5	101.2
Bass Strait	70.0	70.5
	2149.0	2148.1

**Gross landed value \$73.6 million (↓ \$8.8 million)**

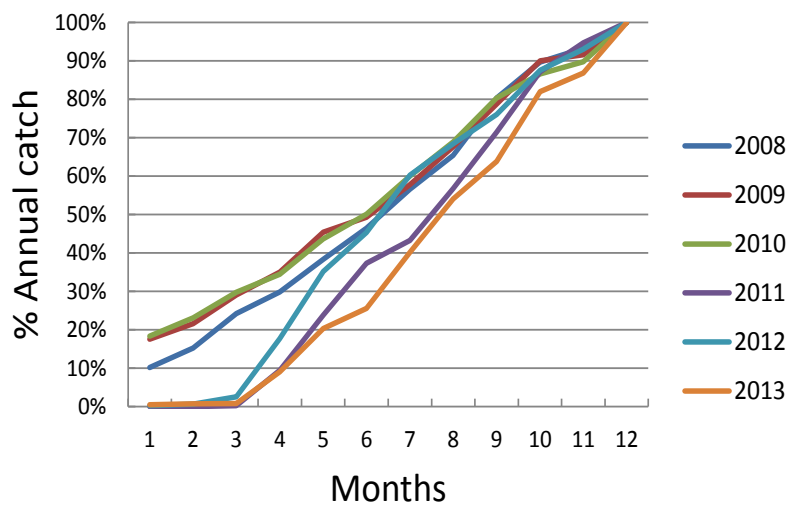
**Royalties \$5.42 million (↓ \$0.3 million)**

**Total monthly landings and average beach prices - 2013**



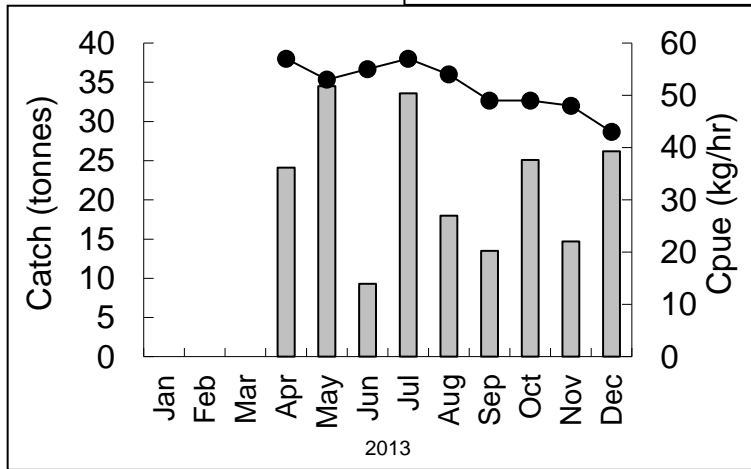
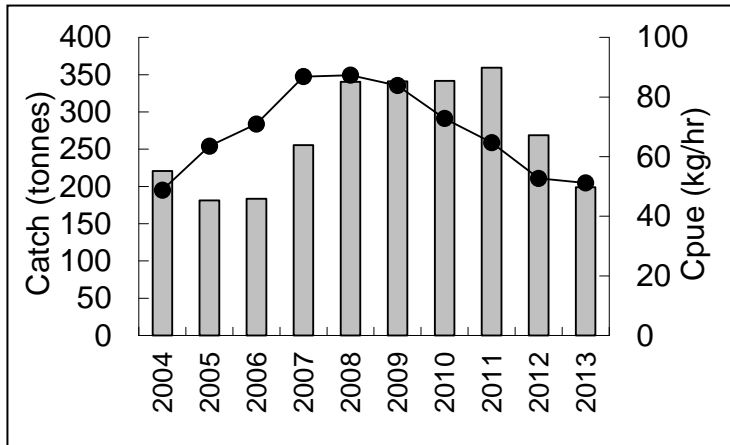
Chinese Austerity Measures have resulted in lower value of landed fish.

**Cumulative rate of landings – Eastern Zone**



**Actaeons, (Sub-blocks 13C, 13D, 13E)**

Catch and catch rates by YEAR

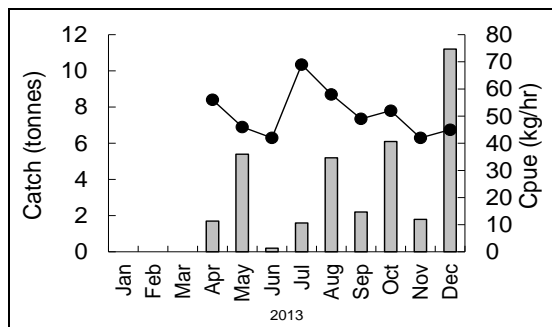
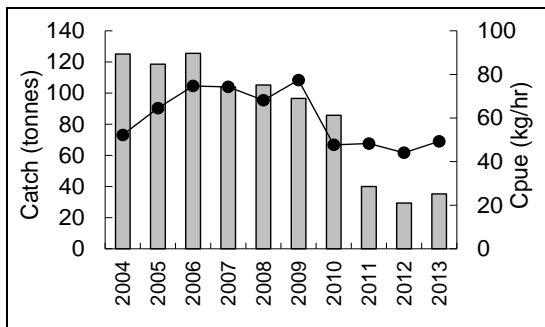


Catch and catch rates by MONTH (2013)

**FRAG comments;**

Price drops in 2013 were due to market forces, where timing of the catch reflects on the pricing. Concerns are raised on the size of fish and the mortality due to each fish being measured and handled several times, the fish are not recovering. Divers are self-regulating by moving north when the catch is low.

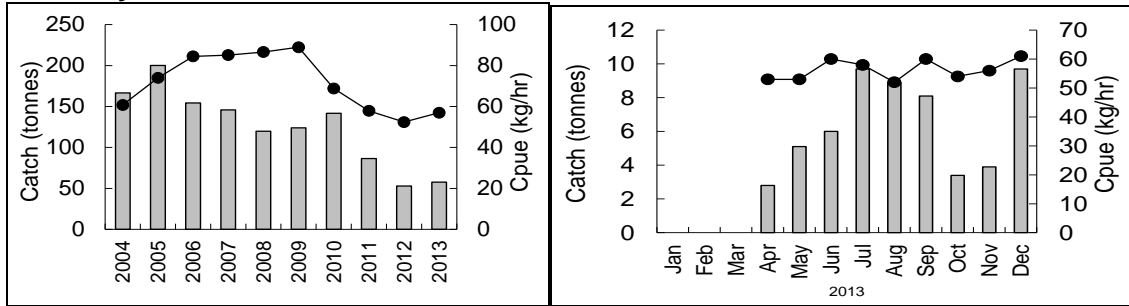
**Bruny Island;**



**FRAG comments;**

Catch rates are low; divers could be using this area to finish off quota. Three motherboats fished the area in the latter part of 2013 and found the area fished better than expectations.

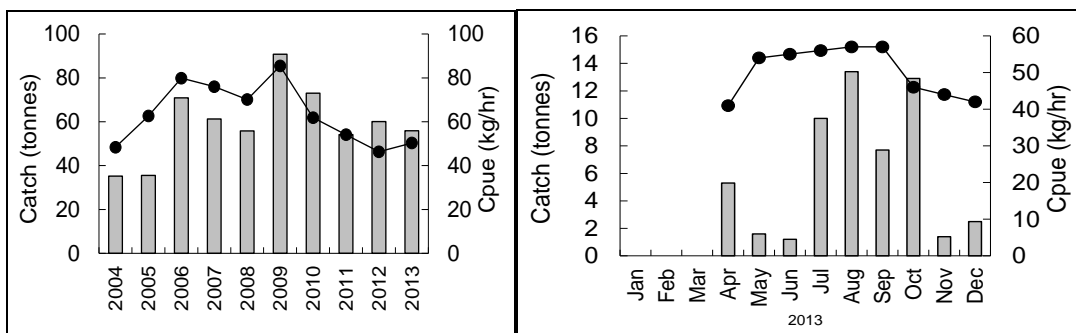
**Storm Bay:**



**FRAG comments;**

Optimistic from IMAS point of view.

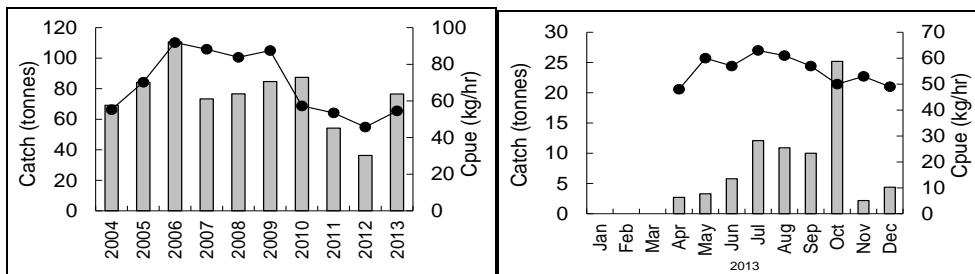
**Block 22;**



**FRAG comments;**

Catch rates improved and not going deeper. Stock levels moderate

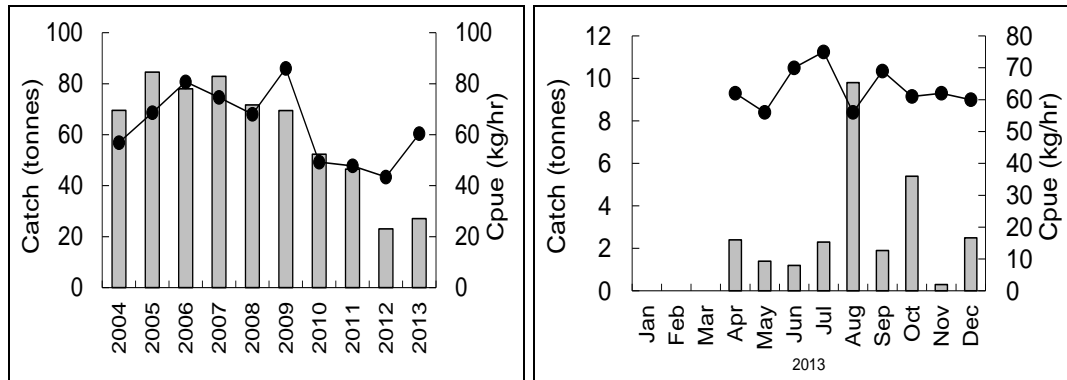
**Blocks 23, 24:**



**FRAG comments;**

Catch rates fell in the latter part of the year

**Freycinet:**



Catch rates improved up to 60kg/ph

**FRAG comments;**

There was discussion as to whether or not a cap should have been placed on this area. It was noted that *Centrostephanus* has made inroads into this area and stock levels are heavily depleted. Divers voiced various opinions based on their individual experiences, with some of the view that the area had recovered, while others held ongoing concerns.

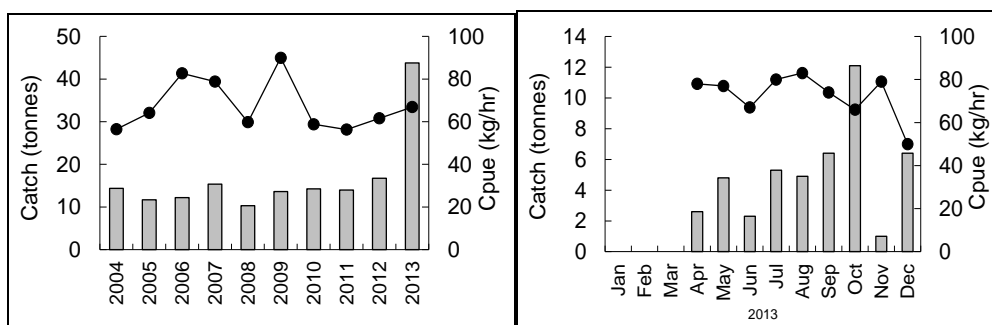
In previous discussions if an area is closed it is felt that it is much harder to re-open the area. A compromise is to set a lower TAC to protect an area. There is a 5t cap and a size limit. On feedback received the area is better but not fully recovered. There was an overrun last year of 100%.

IMAS are cautious on lifting the cap along with DPIPWE who don't feel it can be left to the next FRAG as the fishery can overrun easily.

**Action: Matt to contact divers for advice to report to the AbFAC meeting scheduled for 12 May 2104.**

The majority agreed to a watching brief until reviewed at the next FRAG.

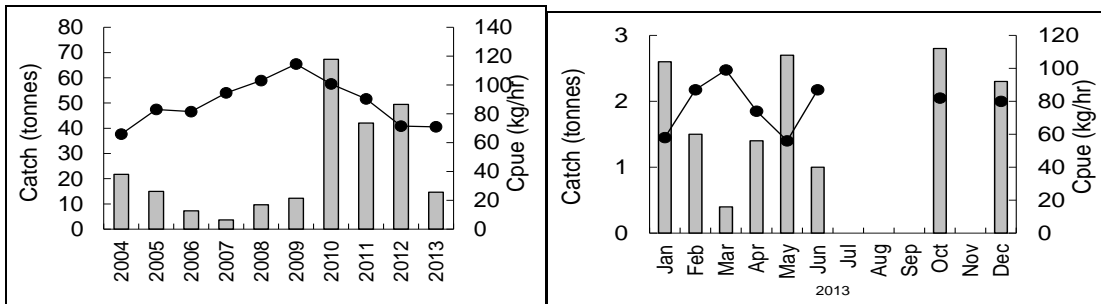
**North East:**



**FRAG comments;**

Catch rates buoyant with divers fishing this area

**Block 31:**



**FRAG comments;**

Catch rates are stable with moderate stock levels. The processors are reluctant to take fish from this area as they are poorer quality with two grades of fish.

Should north of Georges Rock (31A) go into the Northern Zone?

**Action: Joey to consult with divers and other interested parties and develop and put forward a proposal on Block 31 for the next FRAG**

If any changes are made the proposal should be let run as a consistent model for several years. This area has been used as a buffer when other areas are down.

'The Gardens' will be opened after the research has been completed.

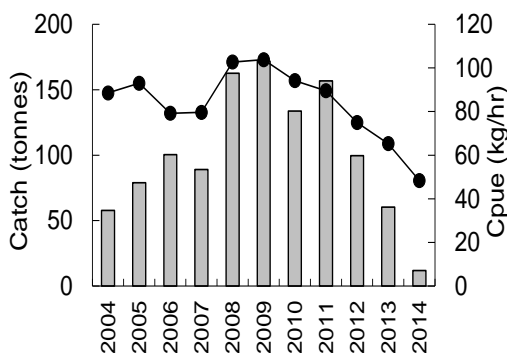
**Eastern Zone – conclusions**

- Catch rates not improved in the Actaeons, Bruny, Storm Bay  
⇒ low stock levels
- Catch rates have improved on the East Coast, larger catch  
⇒ moderate stock levels
- Block 31: high stock levels ????. How to use these abalone?

**FRAG comments;**

When there are no caps what is the trigger for the management group to make further decisions. Some areas can be fished harder before the divers move to another area.

**Block 5**



- Size limit reduced in 2008
- CPUE falling below pre- 2008 levels
- Stocks have been reduced
- No evidence for improved quality
- 2014 catch to date 12 t: no improvement in CPUE



### Northern Zone Summary:

- TAC has been reduced by 28t
- Catch rates, stocks have fallen to low levels in block 5.
- Block 49 has had rapid stock reduction, catch cap overruns, stocks best described as moderate.
- King Island CPUE, catch stable

### FRAG comments;

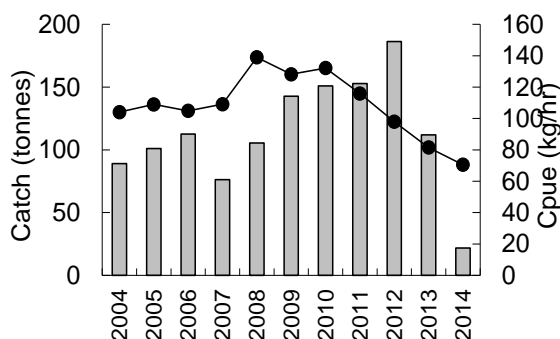
Allen Hansen noted that 37% of the fish measured in his shell study were old abalone within 5mm of the size limit (127mm) and 70% are old fish. The size was decreased to harvest the fish to look at the quality and quantity of saleable fish, with the hope that younger, more productive and value abalone would then occupy the area. The experiment may not have been implemented successfully.

Matt has had many discussions with divers to understand how best to fish an area containing both fast (larger, more valuable) and slow growing (smaller, stunted and less valuable) abalone. One size limit clearly does not suit these two classes of abalone – if set too large, effort is focused on faster growing populations leaving the slow growing fish inaccessible to the fishery, while a smaller size limit is no always a guaranteed that the stunted abalone will be targeted, placing the faster growing fish under pressure. There was a view by some that the stunted abalone are best left unfished and left to provide a source of juveniles for the adjacent faster growing areas..

### Northern Zone Summary:

- TAC has been reduced by 28 t
- Catch rates, stocks have fallen to low levels in Block 5
- Block 49 has had a rapid stock reduction, catch cap overruns, stocks best described as moderate
- King Island CPUE, catch stable
- North East CPUE, catch stable

### Central West Zone Summary:

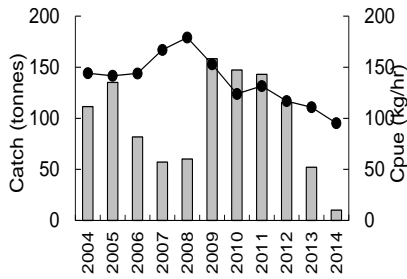


Block 6 (couta Rocks) is fully fished,  
CPUE falling  
TAC is reduced to 73.5t in 2014

### FRAG comments;

Discussion on the quantity of fish available and the Shell Study on mixed populations

**Western Zone; Sandy Cape to Strahan**



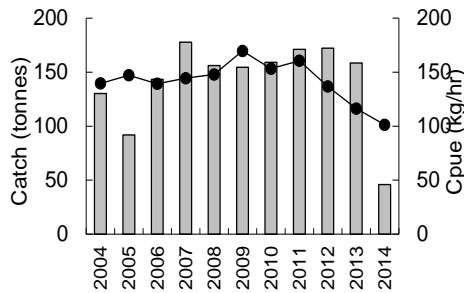
Catch rates fall following 4 years of large catches.  
 Catch reduction via Western Zone TAC reduction in 2014

**FRAG comments;**

Discussion on changing the Central West boundary back in 2015, as the changes have not been successful.

Management of the fishery is under the ‘Deed’ to run at ‘maximum sustainable yield’; the management committee is tasked with achieving this.

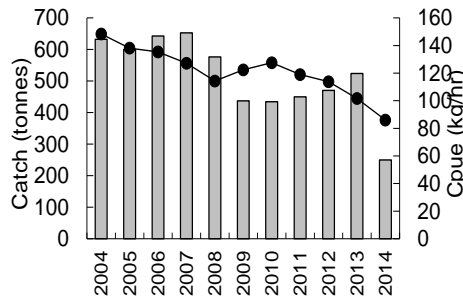
**Western Zone: Block 9**



- Catch rates fall steadily after 8 years of high catch

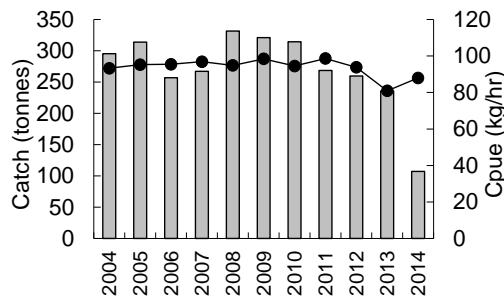
**South West: (Blocks 10,11,12A)**

- South West has falling catch



rates

**South Coast:**



- South Coast has lower catch rates
- In 2014, catch rates propped up by catch from islands. Inshore catch rates ~70 kg/hr

**FRAG comments;**

The figures could be distorted by a fertile patch found by a few divers. When the data from the loggers over 3 years is recorded the statistics will even out.

**Greenlip;**

In 2011 a new fishing region with a cap of 10 t was developed on the Central North coast (Blocks 41 to 47) following the reduction of the size limit there in 2010 to 132mm. No significant quantities of catch have been landed from there.

The 2013 greenlip TAC was 140 t. It was distributed between six regions (note sum of region caps is 148.5 t):

King Island	25.0t
North West	18.5t
Perkins Bay	25.0t
Central North	10.0t
North East	23.0t
Furieux Group	47.0t

Year	King Island	North West	North East	Furieux Group	Perkins Bay	Central North	Total
2000	9.6	41.0	38.9	42.5	8.1	0.1	140.2
2001	18.6	28.9	30.4	44.2	17.8	0	139.9
2002	25.0	29.9	31.3	43.3	10.0		139.5
2003	32.6	30.3	35.3	37.6	4.0	0	139.8
2004	31.0	25.3	31.4	36.8	4.0	0.1	128.6
2005	28.8	25.2	19.4	42.4	7.2	0.1	123.1
2006	27.9	22.9	16.2	39.6	16.1	0.4	123.1
2007	25.6	22.9	33.5	31.1	10.5		123.6
2008	20.0	19.1	24.4	34.9	22.1	0.2	120.7
2009	25.3	13.7	35.0	27.3	20.2	1.1	122.6
2010	33.1	22.4	24.6	33.6	20.1		133.8
2011	28.3	21.1	23.7	44.3	21.0	1.6	140.0
2012	16.1	18.5	32.7	45.4	26.2	0.2	139.1
2013	20.1	22.6	24.5	55.1	17.1	0.3	140.4

- Catch rates are down at King Island
- Furieux Group – catch rates are going down.

**FRAG comments;**

There is still weed on the bottom which could be why catch rates are down. 20% of fishing trips are mixed with blacklip and greenlip being fished together.

Suggest the greenlip fishery would be better as a winter fishery to protect and stabilise the fishery as during the summer the fish are a poor quality and weight. Economically it is unviable to catch the fish at this time. Boundaries are a better method of management rather than caps.

**Action: Matt to draw up a proposal on Caps and Zone boundaries for FRAG#2**

***Proposal – The mainland of Tasmania be closed for Greenlip for three months from January 1st. Leaving King, Flinders and Perkins Islands open for Greenlip.***

Decision on Greenlip to be taken at the next FRAG

Summary:

- Eastern Zone
  - Stocks are low in south, moderate in east, showed signs of improvement. Effective use of Block 31 remains a problem
- Northern Zone
  - TAC reduced to accommodate low stock levels in Block 5
- Central West
  - Stocks reduced, TAC reduced
- Western Zone
  - Stocks reduced, TAC reduced
- Bass Strait
  - blacklip stocks appear stable
- Greenlip
  - Catches appear excessive, catch rates falling: find new fish or reduce the TAC

**7. IMAS report**

FRDC Reports are being finalised;

- ‘Greenlip Genetics’ report is being wound up and printed.
- ‘Telomeres DNA project’ - aged based process, waiting for go-ahead.
- ‘Hunter Island Shell Study’: There is one final ground study to be done to collect the last round of abalone in May; studies have been done around the size and age of the shell.
- ‘Juvenile Study’ - plate collectors have been placed and data is being collected from juvenile abalone that has been found under steel plates.
- ‘Data loggers and GPS’ - the two year results be available this year and will be valuable in the next FRAG meetings.

**10. Other business**

- The Overcatch Rule – has been discussed at DPIPWE and can be covered by quota under Rule 48A. The TACL Board has agreed to contact DPIPWE to change.
- DPIPWE – there is a new Minister and a change of Government. Matt will be putting to the new Minister the Caps as agreed at the TACL AGM
- TASSAL expansion – level of nutrient discharge detrimental to the fishery. Suggest for TACL members provide submissions to the Government.

Catch Update as at  
14-Mar-14

Zone	2014 TAC kgs	Total Caught	Total Uncaught	% of TAC taken
Bass Strait Blacklip	70,000	6781	63,219	9.7
Central Western Blacklip	73,500	7283	66,217	9.9
Eastern Blacklip	528,500	516	527,984	0.1
Greenlip	140,000	42,262	97,738	30.2
Northern Blacklip	280,000	30,140	249,860	10.8
Western Blacklip	840,000	369,200	470,800	44.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,932,000</b>	<b>456,182</b>	<b>1,475,818</b>	<b>23.6</b>

Meeting closed at 3.10pm

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**New actions:**

- 1 Freycinet - Matt to contact divers for advice to report to AbFAC #1
- 2 Block 31 - Joey to put forward a proposal with discussion from divers
- 3 FRAG #2 – Matt to draw up a proposal on caps and zone boundaries

**Action Items FRAG #1 2014**

|   | Action                                             | Responsibility                                                                                                                 |
|---|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Development of target and limit reference points   | IMAS: Malcolm Haddon, Craig Mundy and Dave Tarbath<br><br>FRDC contact has been signed for new project; awaiting commencement. |
| 2 | Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process      | IMAS: Craig Mundy<br><br>Craig & Joey to convene a meeting to discuss criteria, prenotation of analysis etc                    |
| 3 | Application to AOTF – ‘Occupational Divers Course’ | Dean Lisson:                                                                                                                   |
| 4 | Block 14B closure - DAFF                           | Dean Lisson:<br><br>Check SARDI testing                                                                                        |
| 5 | Central Western Zone boundaries                    | DPIPWE: FRAG #1 2014 ongoing                                                                                                   |
| 6 | Freycinet catch caps                               | DPIPWE: Matt to contact divers for advice to report to the AbFAC meeting scheduled for 12 may                                  |

|   |                                               |                                                                                                                                              |
|---|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |                                               | 2104.                                                                                                                                        |
| 7 | Block 31 – Zone changes north of Georges Rock | Joey McKibben: Joey to consult with divers and other interested parties and develop and put forward a proposal on Block 31 for the next FRAG |
| 8 | Caps & Zone Boundaries – draw up proposal     | DPIPWE: Matt Bradshaw to draw up proposal                                                                                                    |

## TAC for 2014

| <b>Blocks - Area</b>                                                                   | <b>TAC 2014</b>    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Eastern Zone</b>                                                                    |                    |
| Blocks 13C, -14 E. Actaeons                                                            |                    |
| Blocks 14A and 14B. Lower Huon Channel, Huon to Southport Island, inc Dover, Southport |                    |
| Blocks 14C-16 Bruny Island                                                             |                    |
| Blocks 17-21 Hobart to Tasman Island inc Nubeena                                       |                    |
| Block 22                                                                               |                    |
| Blocks 23 and 24 Deep Glen Bay to Triabunna, including Maria                           |                    |
| Blocks 25-29A Freycinet and Bicheno                                                    |                    |
| Blocks 29B, 29C, 29D and 30A North East                                                |                    |
| <b>Total Eastern Zone TAC</b>                                                          | <b>530</b>         |
| <b>Northern Zone</b>                                                                   |                    |
| Blocks 5A-5C                                                                           | 50                 |
| Blocks 47-48 NW not Block 5                                                            | 100                |
| Blocks 1-4 King Island                                                                 | 100                |
| Blocks 31B, 39 and 40 North East                                                       | 30                 |
| <b>Total Northern Zone TAC</b>                                                         | <b>280</b>         |
| <b>Central Western Zone</b>                                                            |                    |
| Blocks 6A-6C Couta Rocks                                                               | 75                 |
| <b>Total Central Western Zone TAC</b>                                                  | <b>75</b>          |
| <b>Western Zone</b>                                                                    |                    |
| Blocks 6D, 7 and 8. Granville Harbour, Sandy Cape                                      | 100                |
| Block 9 South of Strachan                                                              | 125                |
| Blocks 10, 11 and 12A. South West                                                      | 350                |
| Blocks 12B-13B South Coast                                                             | 265                |
| <b>Total Western Zone TAC</b>                                                          | <b>840</b>         |
| <b>Bass Strait</b>                                                                     |                    |
| Blocks 32-38 Furneaux Group                                                            |                    |
| Blocks 50-56 Bass Strait Islands                                                       |                    |
| Blocks 42-46 Central North                                                             |                    |
| <b>Total Bass Strait TAC</b>                                                           | <b>70</b>          |
| <b>Greenlip</b>                                                                        |                    |
| Blocks 32-38 Furneaux                                                                  | 47                 |
| Blocks 1-4 King Island                                                                 | 20                 |
| North West not Perkins Bay                                                             | 21                 |
| Block 48A Perkins Bay                                                                  | 25                 |
| Blocks 31,39,40 North East                                                             | 25.5               |
| <b>Total Greenlip TAC</b>                                                              | <b>138.5 (140)</b> |

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>TAC TOTAL</b> | <b>1935t</b> |
|------------------|--------------|