

DIVER SUB-COUNCIL
Friday August 25, 2015
The Old Woolstore, Hobart

Minutes

Welcome:

“Welcome, but there are 13 divers out of a total of 121, we can be in this room and still be shafted by the rest of the dive community. More divers can sign a petition but not turn up to a meeting. The TACL has taken the issue of dive economics front and centre but the dive sector are letting themselves down, the TACL is the only organisation to take notice and provide any support for the divers.”

Suggest a moratorium on all FLADs until a solution is found....

Attendance:

P Richardson, B Cobbing, L Heather, J Huddleston, G Hughes, D Lisson, J McKibben, P Pyke, B Ransom, B Rex, S Sharp, M Steane, G Woodham,

R Clark, S Anthony (observers) Matt Bradshaw, Craig Mundy (observers)

Apologies:

Mathew Florence, N Forsyth, B Richardson, B Wilson, S Fraser,

Minutes of previous meeting:

Resolve to accept the minutes of the Sub-Council meeting held on February 20, 2015.
Moved Greg Woodham seconded Joey McKibben

Business arising from previous meeting:

Diver economics – to be discussed further as agenda items.

IMAS stock assessment;

Craig Mundy gave an update of the 2015 catch to date with an emphasis on the Western Zone. Additional processes of reporting are being developed to show the catch rate target. The FRAG looked at a 16% reduction in TACC in 2016, and discussed the strategy of making one larger change in 2016 or smaller reductions over 2 years.

Previous reductions on the East Coast in 2103/14 should be making a difference in 2015/16. If a larger reduction is made for the West Coast in 2016 the recovery should be noticed in 2018/19. Other abalone producing states advocate one year only to see a recovery, this is not the advice of our IMAS scientists.

The current 2015 TACC is 840t; a single reduction would be down to 700t in 2016, with a size limit of 140mm

FRAG #3 - 2 options were discussed, with a decision to be agreed at FRAG #4 and a recommendation be given to AbFAC, and the AGM.

- 10% per year for 2 years
- 140t reduction in 2016

It is recognised there is a risk profile to business and any reduction needs to be a rebuilding strategy and be defensible.

Eastern Zone

13	Better than expected CPUE data in all SubBlocks. Catch is low compared to previous years
14	Q3 CPUE slightly lower than Q2 but still positive on previous years to 2010. Q3 Catch similar to other years from 2010 onwards.
16	Similar trend in CPUE to Blocks 13, 14 with increase in year to date CPUE. Three year trend of better CPUE, with catch at similar levels across years from 2011.
17	CPUE down, few fish caught
20	CPUE stable against 2013-14 data, still a long way down from high CPUE of mid 2000s.
21	Q3 CPUE down on Q2 but year to date CPUE better than 2014. SubBlocks C has been main SubBlock for Catch with good CPUE.
22	Low Q3 catch across the Block but at good CPUE in 22A and 22B
23	Q3 CPUE increased against Q2 but low Q3 catch.
24	Stable year to date Block CPUE with slight increase in Q3. Quarterly catch is slightly down on previous years.
27	Minimal Q3 catch here due to closure
28	Low catch
29	Block CPUE year to date is lower than 2014, with SubBlock 29D falling. Q3 CPUE across all SubBlocks is similar to Q2 but large Q3 Catch in 2013 and 2014 not repeated.
30	minor Catch
31	CPUE is declining for Block year to date but Q3 represents increased CPUE compared to Q1 and Q2.

FRAG #3 recommends the Eastern Zone remain the same TACC for 2016; if the re-building strategy is not forthcoming a further reduction will be necessary in 2017. External departments will examine all reports from 2015.

Central West and West Zones

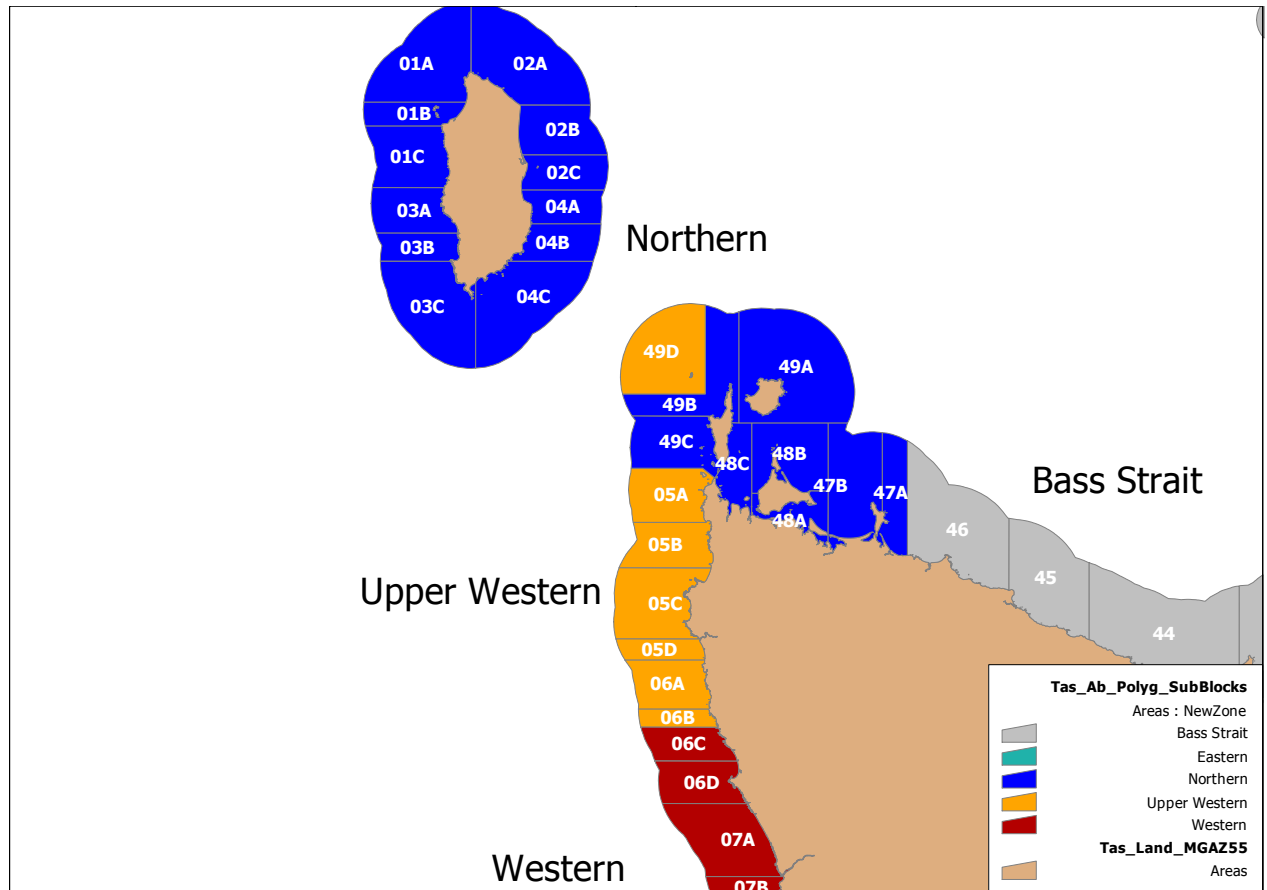
Block	
6CW	<i>Minor Catch at low quarterly CPUE. No Sub-Block showing any improvement in CPUE.</i>
6W	<i>Slightly better Q3 CPUE than Q1, and Q2 but catch is less than previous 2 quarters. Year to date CPUE lower than all previous years to 2000.</i>
7	<i>No Q3 catch in this Block. The following is a repeat analysis provided in FRAG #2 - Steady CPUE in both Q's of 2015 at around 100 kg/hr has provided a slight lift in CPUE data against 2014 data First quarter catch is higher than the previous 2 years. 2015 is the highest two Q catch since 2012, mainly driven by effort in SubBlocks B and C. CPUE rise has been driven by SubBlock B with both other Sub Blocks declining on previous years. Weak evidence of improvement in B should be cautiously monitored through 2nd half of the year.</i>
8	<i>No Q3 catch in this Block. The following is a repeat analysis provided in FRAG #2 - Almost no catch in Q2. CPUE stable against 2014 data but very low compared to all previous years. In 2014, weather was blamed for low catch rates here?</i>
9	<i>No Q3 catch in this Block. The following is a repeat analysis provided in FRAG #2 - Very little Q2 catch in this Block. Decline in 2015 CPUE against previous years is a result of poor CPUE in 9C, this is in contrast to improvement in CPUE in 9B where Q1 catch was higher than 2014 and with a higher CPUE. Overall CPUE for this block is still declining.</i>
10	<i>No Q3 catch in this Block. The following is a repeat analysis provided in FRAG #2 - Lower catch in 2015 with lower CPUE to 70 kg/hr for the year to date. Poor Q1 CPUE when most catch was taken, low catch in Q2 has higher CPUE. Only SubBlock C appears stable for CPUE, and the most productive SubBlock (D) is continuing to decline rapidly.</i>
11	<i>Low level of catch in Q3 at CPUE lower than previous Q's levels, yet CPUE continues to decline.</i>
12	<i>Q3 catch is lower than previous years back to 2000, with Block level Q3 CPUE stable compared to previous 2015 Q data. 12A declining more quickly than other areas and 12C stable CPUE may have peaked.</i>
13	<i>Q3 catch is minimal, but CPUE is similar to Q1 and Q2.</i>

Upper Western Zone (new) –Blocks 6A, B, and Blocks 5A, B, C, D, size limit 140mm with a recommended 2016 TACC 87.5t (25kg/unit).

Western Zone - will be a single zone at 132mm.

Greenlip – propose a 4 month closure January to April to be discussed further with processors.

Proposed Upper Western Zone boundary changes;



SILEX – data logger update:

Craig Mundy and Gerald Verdow have worked with Silex to build the current GPS data loggers and electronic measuring boards. Gerald is an electronic engineer and is updating the hardware to be more reliable have more battery life from 100 hours to 150 hours before recharge, along with an automatic data transfer for a reliable update of information.

The cost for the current unit is approximately \$800 and is being borne by IMAS and the Department; unfortunately some divers are not looking after the equipment. The solution is for the equipment to be hard wired to the vessel, but only if it is wired professionally for optimum results. The data will show compliance to the diver and the Department.

Divers are asked to give input into the design of the new unit with cost sharing for the new unit to be discussed.

Compliance:

From the AbFAC meeting

The Department will be fining divers on forms that are continually being filled out inaccurately. Paperwork is constantly being following up and resources at the Department are low. Marine police will be looking more closely at undersize fish.

Discussion by the Chair – the checking of undersize fish could be better managed either at the beach with the diver present, or the truck be locked and met at the factory. A processor has been found guilty and fined for having undersize fish in the factory. It is recommended that divers leave a margin of error in the size of fish harvested.

Compliance officers are experienced, they understand and use discretion in all cases, Matt Bradshaw gave the Department's policy and the process undertaken by compliance officers.

Codes of Practise: Dean

The QCoP along with the DCoP training will be undertaken by the TACL for all divers, process workers, drivers and deckhands.

Andrew tabor has reviewed the Dive Code and mapped against the national code, the Code has been updated to include Nitrox and the new Workplace Safe laws uniform across Australia. There is an Appendix with a 'dive safety management plan' proforma with tick boxes to be filled out.

First Aid – to comply with the DCoP a yearly refresher is required.

Air Test – divers are asked to have their compressors tested either with Southern Tasmanian Divers or a registered tester.

Medicals – divers are required to have a medical every year.

Mixed gas diving – there will be a speaker at the AGM (nitrox)

Membership:

For the Dive Sub-Council – current membership of the TACL is voluntary for Lease Divers (Supervisors) the cost is \$186.00 inc. GST per calendar year; this entitles the diver to attend Dive Sub-Council meetings, the General and Annual General meeting. Voluntary membership entitles the diver to (2) votes and can carry the proxy votes of (3) full financial members.

At the recent diver/deckhand forum, deckhands asked if they could be 'Associate Members'. Associate membership '14.1 any person who has an interest (but no ownership as outlined in 11.1) in the Tasmanian wild abalone fishery may be admitted as an associate member'.

Associate members are eligible to attend the Tasmanian Abalone Council Ltd Annual General Meetings and General Meetings, but are not entitled to vote. They may carry (3) proxy votes of full financial members. The Membership subscription for the calendar year is \$186.00 (GST inclusive) and is *subject to approval by the Executive Committee of the TAC Ltd.*

The meeting was asked if deckhands could be considered and apply for Associate membership – the vote was unanimous.

Diver Economics:

Discussion on Dive rate –

There are various methods of allocating quota to divers from processors and quota holders. Most quota holders will follow the price given by the larger processors, divers are asked to have the conversations with their processors, although

Dean has been in discussions with processors to lift the dive rate incrementally, which is promising.

Results from the letter to stakeholders by President Joey McKibben, dated May 15, 2015 has resulted in some divers being paid a higher rate, with some negative feedback from quotaholders.

The 2009 Felmingham report was instigated by the TACL and paid for out of the TACL budget, this report was therefore paid for by all financial members of the Council, divers, processors and quotaholders.

Outcomes from the Diver/Deckhand forum July 17, 2015

1. Write to Quota holders – Joey has drafted a positive letter to quota holders.
2. Find a way to implement a buyback scheme;
 - o Dean has had several discussions with Rob Gott to use the Furneaux Unit monies. Five dive entitlements have changed hands each year over the last 5 years; the Minister has declined this option.

- Suggest – a 2 for 1 buyback, impose a moratorium on the sale of entitlements.
- Noted - a few divers still undercutting the dive fee.
- Noted - a group of divers looking to start a new Diver Forum.

Eastern Closure:

No change in 2016, remain closed from January 1, 2016 to March 30, 2016

Election of TACL Diver Sub-Council Chairman for 2015/16

Paul Richardson was nominated by Ben Rex and seconded by Greg Woodham

Paul accepted the nomination and was duly elected.

General Business:

None

Meeting closed at 11.40am