

GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday April 11, 2018
Rydges Hobart

~~~~~

**Minutes**

The Chair – Joey McKibben opened the meeting and welcomed Members,

**Present:**

J McKibben, P Richardson, B Cobbing, B Ransom, A Gray, A Brown, P Richardson, T Bush, S Crocker, J Huddleston, B Amos, B Allen, V Angel, S Anning, S Anthony, R Baillie, J Bock, M Bock, G Bull, K Bush, T Chadwick, J Clark, H Cutts, R Daft, J Dale, S Dale, J Escott, M Florence, S Forward, C Forward, J Gasparinatos, H Gasparinatos, R Gunn, B Hall, D Hansen, N Harris, A Hitchens, B Hogan, G Hughes, B Hite, A Jaworski, F Ledwell, B Lesser, T Lesser, N Manahan, S McKibben, S McRae, R Menadue, L Norris, B Polanowski, M Porteus, P Pyke, M Reed, B Rex, R Rex, B Richardson, R Royle, P Seabourne, R Searle, S Sharp, L Siemek, M Steane, D Tory, M Walch, N Wallace, G Woodham, M Webster, D Lisson, J Freeman (Minutes) M Bradshaw (DPIPWE), C Mundy (IMAS)

**Apologies:**

R Scanlon, K Hoskin, M Hursey, D Boxall, T Brady, J Brooks, J Buckpitt, M Doerner, A Field, W Frankiewicz, C Gunn, L Hault, M Hault, J Hault, J Jones, L Joyce, G Langley, G Lovell, M MacMichael, A Marriott, M Marriott, D Morlock, R Pinfold, A Ransom, C Royle, M Royle, G Royle, B Russell, R Schwanke, B Sinclair, R Skipworth, T Steinhardt, J Varney, B Williams, B Williams, P Wright, T Wurf, J Xie, Q Zheng, R Caccavo

**Opening Remarks from the Chair:**

Joey welcomed members to the first General meeting of the year, and drew attention to the Minutes of the AGM Motion for the AIRF, and the Diver Motion.

**Minutes of the last AGM:**

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on October 2017 were agreed as a true record.

**President's Report:**

President Joey McKibben brought Members up to date with recent events, with the key items focusing on:

Changes for 2018;

- There is a reverse cap for the greenlip zone. The allocation of 8t to the Central North Zone and when this is caught it will trigger the opening of the North East and North West greenlip zone, which is allocated 70t. Previously the 8t allocation has not been caught, and if not caught in 2018 there is a chance it will be deleted from the quota. Greenlip are fetching a good price.
- West Coast – some blocks are fishing well north of Strahan. The industry is asked to fish the coast evenly as the Department is looking to reinstate the Central West Zone. Processors are picking up fish from Granville harbour.
- Catch update – The Actaeons are fishing well, there are low catches in the Northern Zone, the West Coast has fished well with several good weather patterns. The Department

regularly sends out a catch update, block caps are not listed as this information can create pulse fishing.

- During hot weather, there is a higher mortality rate if the fish are not looked after.
- Six weeks prior to the 2018 AGM a nomination form will be sent to financial members asking for expressions of interest and credentials for election to the Board for 2018-2020.
- FRAG #1 was held on Monday April 9 and thank you to the members who gave up a full day to attend and discuss current issues.

### **Chief Executive's Report:**

Dean gave an overview of the main issues the Board has been dealing with in recent months;

1. Market conditions
2. Current production figures Australia/NZ
3. Election commitments – AIRF establishment plus royalty reduction to 5%
4. Managing impacts of *Centrostephanus rodgersii*
5. Larval Seeding as a means of stock enhancement
6. EMP for Lower Channel/Actaeons
7. New Boat and Dive loggers
8. New ACA IPA
9. ACA Strategic RDE Plan
10. Trans Tasman Abalone Convention

There has been a steady improvement in the Beach Price since 2013 from \$30/\$36 p/kg to record high prices in late 2017/early 2018 of \$65 p/kg.

The AAA meeting in March reported a strong demand for Tasmanian live abalone during 2017 to March 2018. Due to quota reductions there is limited stock realising good prices for canned abalone.

#### *Summary;*

Generally Improved Market conditions

- Strong demand in China for large Tasmanian Blacklip abalone
- Strong demand for greenlip abalone in all markets
- Increasing demand for processed products -
- Japan and China FTA's assisting
- China import tariff reduced to zero by January 2019

#### *Quota levels;*

Total Australia: 4,450 t in 2011/2012 - 2,989 t in 2017/2018 (33% reduction)

NZ: 706.7 t in 2018 (23% reduction)

Tasmania: 1333.5t in 2018 (44% of national catch)

SA: 717.5t in 2017/18 (24%)

WA: 143.3 t in 2017/18 (5%)

NSW: 100t in 2017/18 (3%)

Victoria: 695.3t in 2017/18 (23%)

#### *2018 State Election Commitments;*

Liberal and Labor have confirmed in writing support for the following outcomes:

Establishment of the Abalone Industry Re-investment fund (AIRF)

- 1% of industry GVP redirected from royalty to the AIRF during 2018/2019 (\$750,000)
- 1.5% of industry GVP into AIRF during 2019/2020 (\$1.1 million)

- 2% of industry GVP into AIRF during 2020/2021 and 2021/2022
- (\$1.5 million)
- About \$5 million over next 4 years
- Review of AIRF in 2022 prior to permanently reducing royalty to 5% .
- The royalty reduction will be legislated before the end of the next parliamentary term.
- Maintain AIDF for a further 4 years at \$200,000 per annum

#### *Centrostephanus Mitigation Program sponsored by the TACL 2016/2017/2018*

##### Main Objectives and outcomes to date:

- To remove Centro from productive abalone harvesting areas to 20m depth where incipient barrens may transition to extensive barrens if not “cleared”
- Where possible, collaborate with the “emerging” Tasmanian Urchin industry to build a long-term strategic approach to restoring and maintaining the ecological balance between abalone and urchin populations on the East Coast
- As of early April 2018, the total weight of *C. rodgersii* harvested under the TACL Centro Subsidy Program is 126,466 kgs which amounts to about 380,000 urchins removed from between St Helens/Bay of Fires region south to Maria Island. The TACL has so far invested \$94,079.25 (126,466 kgs at \$0.75 cents/kg).

#### *Accelerated Centro Harvesting Program:*

- A new AIRF Project - accelerated harvesting program from block 30c in the north and block 22a in the south.
- The project will be funded by retained royalty payments and will commence in August/September 2018 subject to new AIRF Trust Deed
- The objectives are as follows:
- Implement an accelerated CENTRO harvesting Program along Tasmania’s east coast while simultaneously...
- Assisting in establishing a sustainable and commercially viable industry in Tasmania based on the long term harvest of CENTRO
- Subsidies to divers and processors
- 2 subsidy systems: during roe season and non-roo season
- RDE opportunities leveraged by FRDC and ARC
- Fertiliser, bio-active chemicals etc

#### **Larval Seeding:**

Funded from retained royalties - AIRF

- Lower risk stock enhancement option
- Mobile Tanking system mounted on board a vessel
- Harvest male and female abalones and place in tank and induce spawning
- Wait about a week then carefully pump larvae from boat down to suitable habitat
- Enhances natural recruitment processes

#### **Environmental Monitoring of the Lower Channel and Actaeons reef systems;**

- Funded by AIDF and IMAS
- Joint initiative TACL and IMAS
- Scotts Point, Lippies Pt, Sisters Bay, Partridge Island, Tower Bay, Lady Bay, Southport, Actaeons island, George III Reef

- Abalone recruitment profiles (juvenile collector strings)
- Sediment quantity and composition profiles (suspended trap collectors)
- Rapid assessment reef health surveys (weed type and cover, substrate cover, sediment/dust, filamentous/green algae)
- Water and sediment quality data
- Abalone abundance surveys
- Joint management committee TACL/IMAS
- Meets twice per year to review datasets
- Early detection of changes/ anomalies/ emerging trends
- Where possible, abalone divers may be used for data collection
- Trigger for regulatory response from Government/salmon industry
- Template for inclusion within salmon EMP

#### **New Dive Loggers;**

- Specs .. - Data logger sampling pressure and water temperature - Internal LiPo battery with capacity for approx. 5 months of recording - Contactless charging - Non-volatile Flash memory 32Mbit: - RF link for data download and further integration into other systems - Acetal plastic housing with stainless collar for increased strength - 130m depth recording maximum - Bootloader for wireless firmware updates - 3x LEDs visible through sidewall to provide feedback on battery state and logging state - 75mm x 35mm x 22mm

#### **New GPS Loggers; Funded by AIDF – Furneaux units**

- The box will be the same as the current units. We have also worked out how to display the current sub-block on the LCD display and to create a daily register of which sub-blocks were fished to make it easier for the divers to report daily catch in each sub-block at the end of the day. The LCD display will be double the size of the current one.

#### **ABALONE COUNCIL AUSTRALIA**

Funded R&D – some examples to date;

- Toxic algal bloom / PST management
- Abalone viral ganglioneuritis management
- QA Code of Practice
- Control of Perkinsis in abalone
- Nutritional profiling of abalone
- Minimising stress and optimising harvest strategies
- Linking Fishery dependent and fishery independent assessments
- AWA Marketing program
- SafeFish
- Seafood Trade advisory Group (STAG)

#### **ACA Strategic Objectives 2018-2023**

1. Healthy stocks maintained at biological optimums
2. Abalone stewardship – globally verified and promoted
3. A clear and harmonised Harvest Strategy in every state fishery
4. Higher productivity through innovation – pre and post harvest
5. A professional marketing program for the world's best abalone
6. Australia recognised as a global home of Wild Abalone
7. Smart people using best practices
8. Team work across Australian abalone fisheries and users

9. An efficient ACA leading national industry
10. Build social capital for industry benefit

Trans Tasman Abalone Convention – 7<sup>th</sup> Convention hosted by ACA will be held in Hobart in late October / early November 2018 over 2 days.

*Levy Ballot;*

- Levy Prospectus and Consumer Education and Promotion Program will be signed off by ACA Board in May 2018
- Final approval from FRDC/DAWR/AEC by June 2018
- Poll to take place in July/August 2018
- Levy potentially in June 2019 (subject to Ministerial and Parliamentary approval)

[www.abalonepal.com.au](http://www.abalonepal.com.au)

**Salmon industry expansion plans:**

Tassal

- Okehampton Bay
- West of Wedge

Huon Aquaculture

- Storm Bay
- South Bruny Island

Petuna

- Storm Bay

▪ **Key Recommendations from TACL**

1. The “No Grow” zone should extend from South East Cape to Boreel Head
2. For all remaining areas within the “Grow” zone, a buffer of 1.5 nautical miles between outer edge of rocky reef to the edge of any marine finfish lease should be mandated – this zone should exclude all finfish aquaculture activities
3. A “Salmon Industry Scorecard” that benchmarks the industry against world’s best practice be made publicly available via an independently managed web portal
4. A FinFish Farming (Compliance & Monitoring) Unit be established within the EPA
5. Real time environmental data from within and adjacent to all finfish leases be available publically via an independently managed web portal.
6. A robust Finfish Biosecurity Plan be enacted with appropriate checks and balances to ensure compliance
7. Further R&D investment is required by the salmon industry to ensure new technology is adopted to reduce environmental impacts
8. Comprehensive baseline environmental assessment is conducted on rocky reef systems adjacent or proximate to proposed finfish leases PRIOR to the lease being granted.
9. A broad industry based reference group be established throughout the Government’s Growth Plan implementation phase which includes representation from the abalone industry.

**Other options;**

- **Juvenile Reseeding trial**
  - Using hatchery reared juveniles up to 40mm
  - Source juveniles from “triple bottom line” biosecure facility
  - Bred from adults located in area designated for re-seeding
  - Monitor mortality post release
  - Risk assessment/cost benefit
  - Risk management plan
  - PCR testing/quarantine
- **Translocation of stunted stock**
  - May be useful to re-build stocks in an adjacent area, E.g. in NW
  - Trial conducted in Bay of Fires
  - Handling protocols

The full report is in the Members section of the website – [www.tasabalone.com.au](http://www.tasabalone.com.au)

### **Treasurer’s Report:**

Treasurer Avril Brown presented the unaudited Financial Report and discussed the overall finances of the TACL. The AIDF is managed separately from operational funds for projects to be undertaken and not used for operational expenses.

The TACL has a good working relationship with the Government Ministers and in the best interests of the members donates to political parties.

#### **The Balance sheet indicates;**

Current assets of \$450,000 in Investment Accounts. \$641,000 in the AIDF Account. \$460,000 in a Saving and Operational (Cheque) account.

The overall Operational Budget expenditure for the FY 17/18 is estimated at \$429,000 of which \$322,000 has been expended.

Other line items are not expected to vary considerably from the Budget estimates prior to the end of the FY. At this point in time a surplus is expected.

#### **Reserve Funds;**

Interest earned from historical term deposits has been consistently low for the past 5 years. However, with the expected surplus this financial year added to the small surplus last financial year the Reserve Fund is anticipated to improve. The moderate increase in the Levy for the 2017 calendar year and lower than anticipated consulting fees have contributed to the surplus. The outlay of \$31,000 to the 3 major political parties was supported by the Board as a one-off contribution for the election campaign.

The Levy increase (2017) provides the TACL an opportunity to start rebuilding the Reserve Fund.

#### **Abalone Industry Development Fund;**

In this FY the AIDF has provided ongoing project funds to the Centro Project and Development of a Reef Monitoring program for the Actaeons. The later project has been completed this FY and the Centro Project has been extended by a further project application supported by the Dept as required under the conditions of the Grant Deed.

#### **Abalone Industry Re-Investment Fund**

It is anticipated that this source of project funding (redirected royalties) should become available in September 2018. As part of the financial planning it is noted that the administrative workload will increase. In line with the focus of the funding it is recommended that the TACL consider a

new part-time position for a Project Officer. Funding for the position can be managed by a tripartite system. In part by the AIRF as administrative funds, in part by a system of leveraging each project and in part by the TACL to provide operational support. This position could also provide a role in a succession planning strategy for the TACL.

Executive meeting discussion on the AIDF administration of the fund.

President Joey congratulated Avril on the work undertaken as Treasurer.

## **Larval Seeding Proposal: Craig**

### **Stock re-building**

- What is the best approach - Translocation, reseeding juveniles, larval release?
- Translocation limited by available source populations
- Cost/mortality trade-off for larval vs juvenile release
- Biosecurity issues for farm raised animals

### **Juvenile release**

- Pilot projects in NSW, WA, SA, NZ, California, BC etc
- Japan only commercial scale reseeding
- It works!!! But pilot study outcomes over-estimate success
- E.g. Tory Channel experiments
- Scale of juvenile production problematic
  - E.g. entire production of one farm required as a minimum to restock Western Zone Victoria post AVG

### **Larval release**

- Zero (almost) biosecurity concerns
- Potentially higher mortality post –release
- Is this any greater in the wild than on a farm
- Minimal infrastructure
- Capacity to work in areas where farm production is not available.

### **Larval release – what does it involve**

- Collection of broodstock
- UV (ozone) spawn induction system
- Larval rearing tanks
- Vessel based (mother boat or UTAS research vessel)

Comments;

Cape pillar to Eddystone Point is the area suggested as this part of this fishery has seen significant reductions in productivity in recent years. Research data will be collected to monitor the effectiveness and success along with wave data. This data can be used to predict any effects of storm events and what the consequences could be. There is mortality of abalone both wild and farmed in warm water. Releasing the larvae for 6-8 seasons will re-create the biomass.

## **Motion 1. Rob Rex & Greg Langley**

The size limit for the current 138mm East Coast fishery be reduced to 132mm in January 2019

*Rob Rex background;*

Size limits and quota are the most discussed issues at FRAG meetings. The current size limit protects 8% of the biomass and it is agreed that it should be protected between 15% to 25%. Therefore the protection should be restricted by quota level not size limit. Changing the size limit will open up areas that are not currently fished due to a restricted quota and will spread the effort. Quota level is the only tool.

**For;**

Rob Royle presented a graph showing the increase in size limit since 1975. The geographic area is diminished for divers to fish with a reduction of 77% in the TAC to 294t.

The size limit was 132mm and less for 20 years.

**Against;**

The divers are diving where the fish are; more fish taken at a lower size limit would leave less biomass and the export market wants larger fish.

The environment has changed due to *Centrostephanus* encroachment of up to 50% by area: the ecosystem has been depleted along with a rising water temperature of 2 degrees and storm events.

The current size limit gives 8% protection, a larger % is recommended to protect the biomass.

**IMAS – abalone** spat does not travel very far. Finding a balance economically and for sustainability, along with a size limit that allows preservation and protects against higher levels of fishing

Secret Ballot counted and verified    Against = 1085    For = 754  
Motion defeated

**Motion 2.      Rob Rex & Greg Langley**

The system of block closures in the East Coast fishery be abandoned as recommended in the Knuckey Report.

*Rob Rex background;*

No cap closures will give divers access to all blocks from the April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Blocks that are closed due to PST or bio-toxin are not part of this motion.

**For;**

The practise of closing a block is not productive, efficient or effective as per the Knuckey Report. Divers are being forced to fish in less economic areas. A far more effective procedure is to allow divers to go to areas of more abundance, and leave an area when catch rates are low.

**Against;**

Triggers for closure are managed as per the agreed management process and manages the dive effort.

Secret Ballot counted and verified    Against = 1278    For = 822  
Motion defeated

**Motion 3.    Fred Ledwell & Greg Woodham**

The TACL supports the introduction of 40-50,000 juvenile farm bred abalone into the waters off Bicheno as a trial to replenish the East Coast biomass subject to any veterinary & Biosecurity requirements by the authorities

*Fred Ledwell - Background*

The aquaculture farm at Bicheno grows hybrid and greenlip abalone; by September/October 2018 there will be 40,000 surplus blacklip abalone that will be 20mm in size. The cost is .02c



per mm and estimates the cost to be \$20,000 to go ahead with divers putting the juveniles back into the water on depleted reefs close to Bicheno.

IMAS could tag 20% of the juveniles to obtain scientific data.

There is limited biosecurity risk as the broodstock came from Swansea and there are few movements onto the farm. A risk assessment plan has been developed

*For:*

IMAS could conduct research to test the proposal to see if farm bred juveniles are a viable option for re-stocking bio-mass in the future.

Used water from the farm is pumped into settling ponds before being disposed of.

*Against:*

AVG was an issue previously on this farm, which could be from incoming water or diseased material being brought onto the farm.

The broodstock is from Swansea and not an area close to the farm.

### **Motion passed by a majority show of hands**

*IMAS;*

To maximise the benefits with data gathered by IMAS pre and post release to measure the success or otherwise of farm bred juveniles. IMAS will choose some sites and establish some juvenile collectors to monitor abundance over the first year or two.

No tags would be required; IMAS would follow the New Zealand approach using shells pushed into the cracks where the juveniles would settle.

By utilising the diving fleet costs would be minimised.

### **General Business:**

#### **1. Dover – Southwood Facility;**

There is a proposed timber loading facility at Port Esperance; leaching of runoff and discharge of ballast may affect the reef system.

#### **2. Relocation of the northern boundary from Cod Bay (NE)**

Block 5 increase the size limit by 2mm with another 3mm increase in 2019, and extend the Northern boundary (132mm) to give the coastline a rest.

This year there is a reverse Cap in the greenlip Northern Zone – North East and North West greenlip will not open until the 8t greenlip is caught on the Central Coast, Robins Island to Peddle Point, or the quota will be reduced.

Supported by the majority to put to the FRAG.

#### **3. Amateur Bag Limit**

Members are concerned that the bag limit of 10 abalone per day and a possession limit of 20 is too high considering the commercial quota has been reduced significantly, the recreational take should be lowered

The issue has been an agenda item and discussed at AbFAC regularly, Dean has also discussed the issue with RecFish and TarFish. The take by recreational fishers is a voluntary estimate.

Discuss at AbFAC #1, if the size limit is increased the meat weight and subsequent value will be higher.

#### **4. Salmon Fish farm;**

There has been a large mortality of salmon at both Macquarie Harbour and the Channel.

The 'MAP' of 'the proposed 'grow' and 'no' grow zones for finfish in Tasmania' was distributed by the Minister without consultation with the fishing industry.

TSIC have discussed with the new Minister, Sarah Courtney, and she will hold off on the new map until there has been discussion with the relevant fisheries and new data has been received.

## **5. Diver issues;**

Dive Sub-council Chair, Paul Richardson gave an update on un-resolved issues in the dive sector. With an annual reduction in quota the FLAD has decreased in value, while the price of a quota unit has remained constant.

Most divers' are receiving a fair dive rate; but with an oversupply of divers and the reduction of quota to catch, diving does not provide a full time income.

This has been an issue for many years, and in the interest of quota holder's they have to find a process to negotiate the oversupply of divers.

The Board has to push down to progress this issue to a level where the option of a full time professional dive sector new entrants and young people want to invest in.

Put the Diver Moratorium back to the Minister.

MEETING CLOSED 4:10pm