

## **Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG)**

Meeting 3/2016

Tuesday August 23, 2016 – 10.00am

IMAS, Nubeena Crescent Tarooma

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### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

##### **Members:**

Ian Cartwright (Chair), Joey McKibben, Dean Lisson, Darvin Hansen, Avril Brown, Alan Gray, Ben Cobbing, Byron Ransom, Greg Woodham, Jeremy Huddleston, Paul Richardson, Alan Hansen, Matt Bradshaw (DPIPWE), Craig Mundy (IMAS), Malcolm Haddon (CSIRO), Jillian Freeman (minutes),

##### **Observers:**

T Lesser, B Lesser, M Gleeson, B Amos, M Porteus, B Charles, C Mitchell, B Richardson, S Seabourne, T Chadwick, M Steane, J Evans, G Hughes, A Hansen, P Seabourne,

##### **Apologies:**

Steve Crocker, Rob Scanlon.

#### **1. Welcome and opening remarks:**

The Chair welcomed members and observers, and outlined that the main purposes of the meeting were to review the season to date, gain an overall view of the status of resource, and from the IMAS data and industry input, and consider recommendations to AbFAC. This meeting is also where initial thoughts on the 2017 TAC are gathered and considered.

The presence of observer, including divers was noted; the Chair thanked them for their time and emphasised that they are always welcome and that diver input in the past has been greatly appreciated.

#### **3. Adoption of agenda;**

The agenda as circulated was agreed with two additional General Business items:

- Opening the East Coast of Flinders Island
- Catch caps and closures

#### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting:**

Members agreed the minutes of the FRAG meeting held on May 3, 2016, were accepted as a true and accurate record.

#### **5. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting:**

##### **Action 1. Development of re-building strategy for Eastern & Western Zones**

Completed

##### **Action 2. Update on the SAFS process**

The SAFS – (Status of Australian Fish Stocks) process is a National common reporting template providing a research driven, independent process for assessing all Australian fish stocks.

The results of the SAFS assessment is of great interest to the abalone fishery, given the growing demand for demonstrably sustainable fisheries products in the market place and the global increase in scrutiny of fisheries management.

The SAFS methodology as applied to abalone has been problematical given the particular biological and management characteristics of the species/fishery. Malcom Haddon is now on the SAFS working group.

The new harvest strategy has input from several workshops within the industry and has been reviewed twice. This HS will be pivotal to gaining an acceptable assessment through the SAFS process. Currently, the SAFS, which will be based on 2015 data shows that:

- the Central West is the only zone in the 'red' , The reference year will be 2015;
- Eastern Zone and Bass Strait will be green, sustainable
- Western, Northern and Greenlip will be yellow, transitional depleting

Information relating to the number of cuts (to quota) to date, that recruitment is not necessarily related to biomass and there is commitment (via control rules) to change the TAC as required to address overfishing/overfished stocks.

#### **Action 1. Size limit/caps paper to be finalised and discussed at FRAG #4 2016**

The draft document is close to being finished and a final paper on size limits will be presented to FRAG 4. It was noted that given the controversy over size limits, there needs to be irrefutable support for the process with published evidence as the Minister will follow the science.. IMAS and CSIRO modelling shows what can be achieved, LM50 +2 years appears to be working well and has now been validated.

A proposal (discussion paper) will be mailed out next week and comprises:

for a change to the Upper West Zone, Central West boundary will be extended with a 2 step increase in size limit = 2 zones with 2 size limits. xxx is with the Minister and next week DPIPWE will mail out the concept for consultation of the

The Greenlip proposal to increase the size limit to 150mm for the North East.

The TACL was encouraged to submit a proposal to DPIPWE. It was noted that FRAG members will have a number of opportunities to put in comments on the proposal: as individuals, as FRAG members, as FAC members and via the Abalone Council.

#### **Action 4. At King Island look at data from resident divers vs visiting divers in deep water and weather conditions**

Completed

#### **Action 5. East coast closure Feb 1 to April 30 discussion paper'**

Completed

#### **Action 6. SAM + 2 – Policy on agreed values**

See action 3 above

#### **Action 7. Boundary changes – consultation electronically with members**

Completed

### **6. Report from SMEG (Spatial Management Evaluation Group)**

Malcom Haddon provided a presentation on 'Alternative Harvest presenting a range of management strategies based on multi criteria decision analysis (MCDA). The MCDA process has been subject to MSE testing and with further work needed to agree catch rate targets and other key parameters. When fully implemented the MCDA-based

harvest strategy will formalise the FRAG process of TAC setting and make the process and outputs more defensible. This work also meets a number of the recommendations arising from the Buxton and Knuckey Reports.

Currently the CPUE target has a higher weighting (50%) than the other two parameters (catch rate and catch rate gradient, both at 25%). This emphasises the need to ensure that the catch rate target settings are optimal.

### **Conclusions;**

- The MCDA process can lead to successful management – depending on settings.
- The main trade-off is between catch and stock depletion levels
- Which combination of options to select is a policy decision.
- Without exceptional recruitment the expectation is that stock recovery will take years.
- The longer the assessment interval the more variable the outcomes and slower things will be (not always a bad thing)
- The Target CE Performance Measure is necessary for the outcome to be balanced.
- The higher the weight on the Target CE Performance Measure the more rapid the changes will be (not always a good thing)

A SMEG meeting will be held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> August to discuss the harvest strategy and in particular catch rate targets.

## **7. Preliminary discussions, including catch and effort update and results of MCDA and other IMAS/CSIRO analysis.**

### ***Eastern Zone;***

The FRAG expressed concern that that efforts to rebuild stocks on the East Coast had been significantly affected by two major events:

- The longest water temperature 'heat wave' on record (200 days) ; and
- An extreme storm event with considerable impacts on the shallow water ecosystem on the east coast.

It is clear that the fishery is coping with a changing environment on the East coast including elevated temperatures and loss of macrocystus.

Below are the observations of the FRAG to the IMAS data presented by Craig Mundy.

Actaeons – estimate reduction of 20t TAC 2017. There has been a negative effect due to a heat wave event;

Block 13 is trending ok – 5/10% reduction of TAC for 2017

Block 14 rapid downturn in catch rate (could be due to heat wave event) – 10% reduction of TAC 2017

Block 16 showing a downturn pattern – 15% reduction

Block 17 catch rates ok – no change

Block 19 low levels of catch – no change

Block 20 trending down – 10% reduction

Block 21 sharp trend down – 15% reduction

Block 22 sharp trend down (environmental damage) – 20% reduction

Block 23 trending down – 15%

Block 27 trending down – 15%

Block 28 small amount of catch (recreational divers?)– 5% reduction

Block 29 trending down – 15% reduction (cryptic)

Block 30 trending down – 15%

Block 31 trending down – management changes?

**Overall trend and summary of comments;**

The E. coast rebuilding strategy has been set back with a number of blocks reversing the upward trend seen last year, particularly in the upper part of the zone. This is considered to be due to the warm water and June storm event, which have had differing impacts on the stock in different blocks. Both these impacts are entirely independent of fishing, but the status of the stock after these events is the key issue.

**The initial MCDA analysis suggests a TAC reduction of 10%-15%, ie 50-100t. All FRAG members were in support of at least a 50t reduction with some suggesting the cut should be 15% (100t) or higher.**

The MCDA score, which will incorporate revised catch rate targets and possibly other amendments will produce a default TAC. There was strong support for abiding by the results of the MCDA process, while noting that under special circumstances, which need to be validated and have credibility, the MCDA output could be varied.

Alan Hansen noted that in his view, the size limits in some areas are constraining the catch.

**Central West Zone:**

Sub block 6A-C downward trend – 15% reduction. It was noted that while this Zone may be removed following the current consultative process, the stock condition in this area required addressing.

**Western Zone:**

Block 6D not a lot catch

Block 7

Block 8 trending up

Block 9 trending ok

Block 10 flattening out

Block 11 improved slightly

Block 12 improved

Block 13 trending up

**Overall trend and summary of comments;**

A reasonable amount caught and catch rates have increased

The MCDA scores are likely to result in suggesting a slight reduction. Consequently either the status quo will be maintained or a slight reduction suggested, depending on a decision on the pace of the re-building strategy.

**Northern Zone**

Block 31B trending down

Block 39 – open the greenlip with the blacklip

**Action 2: Block 39A, 31B, & 39B North East blacklip open at the same time as greenlip – May 1, 2017**

Block 48 trending ok  
Block 49 minimal catch taken  
Block 5 trending down – 15% reduction  
Block 1 trending down  
Block 2  
Block 3 trending up, catch rates higher  
Block 4 – minimal catch

#### **Overall trend and summary of comments;**

**Overall – there is need for some action to address falling catch rates noted in priority blocks (31, 48, 49, 5 & 3). This action may be a TAC reduction of the order of 10/15% (18/25t)**

A proposal was tabled to include a dropbox and space to note an alternative LML on catch dockets to better understand the extent and impacts of selective fishing. After extensive discussion, it was agreed to look further at such a change to the docket book, noting that the data will only be of value if all divers comply and report correctly.

**Action 3: Investigate changes to logbooks to investigate impacts of selective fishing**

#### ***Greenlip***

North West - Trending ok.  
North East - Trending ok, 150mm.  
Furneaux  
Block 32, 33 trending ok with a reasonable amount of catch.  
Block 35, 36 small amount of catch.

#### **Overall trend and summary of comments;**

The greenlip fishery is better managed due to an egg production model. The size limit is protecting the fishery. Management change not required.

#### **FRAG #3 Summary:**

Preliminary reductions which may apply in 2017, subject to further discussion and finalisation at FRAG 4;

- Eastern Zone - 50/75t
- Northern Zone – 18/25t
- Western Zone – 0 to a small change

When considering the 2017 TAC it was agreed that it would be useful to look at catch targets and catches for each block for the last two years.

**Action 4: IMAS to include catch targets and catches for each block for the last two years in the data presented to FRAG 4**

#### **8. Other business:**

##### **1. Opening the East Coast of Flinders Island – multi species harvesting.**

An industry proposal to re-open the western side of Flinders (blocks 33B to 38C, to target greenlip and harvest blacklip as a by-catch) was tabled. The east coast would remain closed under the proposal. It was noted that there is a safe anchorage in Block 37C to fish the outer reefs and Bass Strait Islands.

There are 3 reasons - safety, an underdeveloped fishery and the efficiency of harvest.

The FRAG supported the proposal to open the west coast of Flinders Island to fish blacklip and greenlip to distribute the catch.

**Action 5: DPIPWE to consider re-opening the western side of Flinders Island to blacklip fishing**

**2. Caps & closures 2016–**

DPIPWE discussion - when catch has reached 80%

- Central North – the catch is currently 4.5t with a cap of 5t.  
*Close and the Dept. will write a permit for 100kg if requested.*
- King Island Greenlip – the catch is currently 14t+ with a cap of 20t.  
*Close at 20t as there are other options to fish.*
- North East Greenlip – the catch is currently 26t with a cap of 27t  
*Close.*
- North West Greenlip – the catch is currently 19.5t with a cap of 21t.  
*Close as there are other options to fish.*
- Block 5 Blacklip 127mm - catch is currently 45t with a cap of 50t.  
*Close as there are other options to fish.*

DPIPWE - Bass Strait Zone

- Furneaux closed at 38t
- Bass Strait Islands - 0t
- Central North closed at 4.5t

**3. Reduction of the recreational take of abalone of 10 per day.**

The recreational bag limit of 10 per day per person is seen as overly generous under the circumstances, whereby professional abalone divers are working to a quota system to address severe stock downturns. There has been a storm event as well as prolonged warm water affecting the catch and there are sound reasons for approaching the recreational sector to reduce the current bag limit.

The areas mainly affected are around holiday spots and could create an environmental issue.

**Action 6: The view of the FRAG is the bag limit of 10 per person per day is too high and should be reduced; item to be placed on the FAC agenda**

**4. Wave & swell height**

IMAS provided a presentation on swell height data from Jun 1 to Aug 1 in 1 hourly patterns from around the state. This information can be overlaid with the catch data from divers to justify days of low catch due to wind and wave height.

The FRAG supported a workshop in October with divers to incorporate the swell height into the data.

**Meeting closed at 4:15pm**

## Actions

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Size limit/caps paper to be finalised and discussed at FRAG #4  | IMAS/CSIRO  |
| 2 | Block 39A, 31B, & 39B North East blacklip open at the same time as greenlip – May 1, 2017               | AbFAC   |
| 3 | Investigate changes to logbooks to investigate impacts of selective fishing                             | DPIPWE Paul Richardson<br>Sub-Council Chair AbFAC |
| 4 | Include catch targets and catches for each block for the last two years in the data presented to FRAG 4 | IMAS  |
| 5 | Consider re-opening the western side of Flinders Island to blacklip fishing                             | DPIPWE  |
| 6 | Proposal to reduce recreational bag limit   | FAC   |

## Action Items FRAG #2 2016

|             | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b>                 |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1.          | Update on the SAFS process  | Craig Mundy/Malcolm Haddon<br>Ongoing |
| 2.          | Size limit/caps paper to be finalised and discussed at FRAG #2 2016                       | Malcolm Haddon<br>ongoing             |
| 3.          | SAM + 2 – policy on agreed values. IMAS to submit a technical paper to FRAG #4            | IMAS                                  |
| New Actions |   |                                       |
| 4           | Catch to date for last 2 years per block with nominal target for 2016, component for 2017 | IMAS                                  |
| 5           | Blocks 39A, 31B, 39B, blacklip open May 1, 2017   | AbFAC                                 |
| 6           | Dive Sub-Council meeting - Proposal for all divers to notify selective fishing            | Paul Richardson Sub-Council Chair     |
| 7           | 2016, open the west coast of Flinders Island to fish multi species to distribute catch    | AbFAC                                 |
| 8           | Reduce the recreational bag limit   | AbFAC                                 |

## 2016 TAC (DPIPWE)

| <b>Blocks - Area</b>   | <b>TAC 2016</b> | <b>Kgs/unit</b> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Bass Strait Blacklip</b>  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 32-38 Furneaux Group  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 50-56 Bass Strait Islands   |                 |                 |
| Blocks 42-46 Central North   |                 |                 |
| <b>Total Bass Strait TAC</b>   | <b>77</b>       | <b>22</b>       |
| <b>Central Western Zone</b>  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 6A-6C Couta Rocks   | 42              |                 |
| <b>Total Central Western Zone TAC</b>  | <b>42</b>       | <b>12</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, inc Maria                                 |                 |                 |
| Blocks 25-29A Freycinet and Bicheno  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 29B, 29C, 29D and 30A North East  |                 |                 |
| <b>Total Eastern Zone TAC</b>  | <b>528.5</b>    | <b>151</b>      |
| <b>Greenlip</b>  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 32-38 Furneaux  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 1-4 King Island   |                 |                 |
| North West not Perkins Bay   |                 |                 |
| Block 48A Perkins Bay  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 31,39,40 North East   |                 |                 |
| <b>Total Greenlip TAC</b>  | <b>140</b>      | <b>40</b>       |
| <b>Northern Zone</b>   |                 |                 |
| Blocks 5A-5C   |                 |                 |
| Blocks 47-48 NW not Block 5  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 1-4 King Island   |                 |                 |
| Blocks 31B, 39 and 40 North East   |                 |                 |
| <b>Total Northern Zone TAC</b>   | <b>189</b>      | <b>54</b>       |
| <b>Western Zone</b>  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 6D, 7 and 8. Granville Harbour, Sandy Cape                                      |                 |                 |
| Block 9 South of Strachan  |                 |                 |
| Blocks 10, 11 and 12A. South West  |                 |                 |

|                               |              |                   |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Blocks 12B-13B South Coast    |              |                   |
| <b>Total Western Zone TAC</b> | <b>717.5</b> | <b>205</b>        |
| <b>2015 TAC TOTAL</b>         | <b>1694t</b> | <b>484kg/unit</b> |

