

Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG)

Meeting 4/2016

Thursday October 6, 2016

IMAS, Nubeena Crescent Tarooma

Minutes

Present:

Members:

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

Observers:

J Ramsden, B Russell, B Rowe, B Amos, B Lesser, T Chadwick, G Hughes, S Anning, K Hoskin, B Greene, C Pepper, C Mitchel, R Langdale, B Bennett, B Rex, M Gleeson, C Pepper, K Hoskin,

Apologies:

Alan Gray, Bryan Denny

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.

This meeting considered the status of the stocks and the IMAS data to set the TACC for 2017.

The presence of observers, including divers was noted; the Chair thanked them for their time and emphasised that they are always welcome and that diver input was appreciated.

3. Adoption of agenda;

The agenda as circulated was agreed.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting:

Members agreed the minutes of the FRAG meeting held on August 23, 2016, were accepted as a true and accurate record. The minutes are loaded onto the TACL website and The Chair recommended members view.

5. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting:

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

L50+2. Length of 50mm + 2 years of spawning. CSIRO are developing a scientific paper to back the size recommendation.

Ongoing

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

Referred to AbFAC and agreed
Completed

Action 3. Investigate changes to logbooks to check impact of selective fishing

Identify directed fishing.
Ongoing

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

Completed

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

Discussed at AbFAC with regard to by-catch. The area is closed and decided not to re-open. To be considered by DPIPWE in 2017.
Completed

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 AbFAC agenda.

At AbFAC the marine police aren't aware of any impact by recreation fishers. Noted that recent convictions have been abalone related. Consideration with the recreation fishers to limit the number of abalone in possession to 10, the bag limit is currently 20. There is no data kept on recreational fishing, with only an estimate is 30t per year.

Dean to follow up with RecFish on possession limits.

The FRAG was reminded of a discussion two years ago re the size limit change for recreational fishing, the proposal was held over until the next survey was to go out to members. The TACL to present a view at AbFAC #4.

Ongoing

Action 1. Size limit reduction for the recreational fishers in the Northern part of the fishery to be discussed at AbFAC

Action 7. Update on the SAFS process

Ongoing

Action 6. SAM + 2 – Policy on agreed values

Ongoing

6. IMAS presentation of data and fisheries assessment;

IMAS has utilised the data from 1992 - 2016, some is skewed due to zones splitting blocks. The plot shows a visual picture of the cycle of depletion, re-building stocks to improvements.

These plots take into account the individual diver, weather, time of year, by-catch - using the 90th percentile.

The Eastern, Northern, Central West and Western zones are showing signs of improvement. Bass Strait and Greenlip are – ok

Eastern Zone;

Over the last 4 years the CPUE has remained flat with re-building set back by weather events and conditions.

Western Zone:

The CPUE shows the effect of 'doubling up'.

Central West:

An increase in catch rate.

Northern Zone:

Increased TACC with a reduced size limit the catch rates have fallen.

Bass Strait Zone:

CPUE uncertain, increase in TACC

Greenlip Zone:

CPUE stable.

MCDA PROCESS;

Multiple Criteria Decision Assessment - takes multiple sources of information to provide a target catch rate for TACC setting in each block.

Question.

1. How far away from the target line, if below the target line is a management change required?

If the gradient has improved over the last 12 months there is no change required.

EASTERN ZONE: 2017

31A –	16.1t - IMAS recommend and agreed
30 –	6.0t if the Gardens is opened @ 1t
29 –	20.0t
28 –	3.0t
27 –	15.2
24 –	20.0t
23 –	19.6t
22 –	20.0t
21 –	20.0t
20 -	30.0t
19 -	2.0t
17 -	10.0t
16 -	23.0t
14 -	33.3t
13 –	191.0t IMAS recommend 191t (no change) - agreed
Eastern Zone TACC Total	444.5T

FRAG comments;

2016 is the first year to use the 'MCDA Harvest Strategy'; IMAS have used previous figures to populate the table as a building block. There have been multiple meetings to set an achievement target.

IMAS is tasked with putting together a harvest strategy that can be peer reviewed and audited, if there are any further conditions that need to be considered than they have to be documented. The database is now consistent with the dataset prior to 1992 and since. When all data is combined the 55th p% realises the same outcomes.

In future the TACC process will use the MCDA Harvest Strategy to manage the fishery for sustainability.

There was discussion on the target being set higher for a quicker turnaround of improvement of the fishery.

Block 31A – is not fishing well, open Jan /March each year when the rest of the Eastern Zone is closed. Boundary changes are under review. If the zone fishes well the catch can be increased.

Block 30 – IMAS will be doing experimental fishing with a view to open the ‘Gardens’ at 138mm. 2017 TACC is set at 6t assuming the Gardens will open with a 1t cap.

Block 29 – only a small amount of catch taken to date, is the target too high?

Block 28 – small amount of catch, comment - growth is slower and fish don't grow to 145mm. The catch to date is 2.8t, caught relatively easily and therefore recommend 3t in 2017.

Block 27 – falling away rapidly with a drop in catch rates, IMAS suspect the weather has made a difference or the drop may be due to an increase in size limit.

Block 24 – has dropped over the last couple of years but is now looking better. The central part of the East Coast has been affected by Alexandrium tamarense, biotoxin algal blooms are not affecting abalone. The testing has been undertaken.

Block 23 -

Block 22 – catch reducing each year with a stable catch rate, a downturn recently may be due to environmental factors. Majority view is reductions; there are some signs of recovery.

Block 21 – catch reducing, assume environmental factor. Small fish seen that will be available in 2 years. Based on diver feedback and catch year to date.

Block 20 – the catch has dropped away but is now stable, but well below target. Divers report this block is fishing well with smaller fish seen that will be available in 2 years.

Block 19 - not enough data to provide robust data - 2t

Block 17 – good quality fish being seen by experienced divers, whereas new diver component has seen a levelling off.

Block 16 – catch stable, catch rate has fallen off this year. Processors report good catches. Storm and heat wave events have affected this block.

Block 14 – Stable and increasing catch rate, recent lower catch rate could be due to a heat wave event.

Block 13 – has been fishing well, catch rates falling away slightly in the last quarter.

The MCDA is working well as a scientific model, there have been a few environmental affects that have deviated from the model. Running the model with more a conservative total has almost the same result.

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL Eastern Zone = 444t. A reduction of 84t (17%)**

Three members of the FRAG felt a reduction of 20% is more appropriate, and a proposal was suggested for a 20% reduction.

Note - "Alan Hansen believes that the size limit should be reduced, as the fish will grow old before reaching the size limit. Proposes to reduce the size from 138 down to 136mm and leave the quota unchanged"

WESTERN ZONE; 2017

FRAG comments;

The previous reductions have resulted in improvements; inshore fishing catches have improved. Processors resist collecting fish from this area.

Swell information overlaid with the model hasn't shown any difference to the data.

The 'Meta rule' over rules the MCDA (When changes are made, leave for 2 years to consolidate the outcome) – providing the previous reductions have a positive result.

Block 6D –	20.0t	catch rates have been on a downward trend, weather affected
Block 7 –	51.0t	catch rates have been on a downward trend, weather affected
Block 8 –	13.0t	rapid increase, stable.
Block 9 –	106.0t	stable catch rate, not a lot of fishing to date.
Block 10 –	80.0t	stable catch rate after the last TACC cut.
Block 11 –	160.0t	stable catch rate
Block 12 –	252.0t	stable catch rate
Block 13 –	35.0t	stable catch rate

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL Western Zone = 717t. using the Meta Rule**

Central West 2017:

Block 5D -	.0t	
Block 6A,C	35.0t	declining catch rate– Motherboats fish this area in November.
Block 6B –		below target
Block 6C –		catch rates improving,

The size limit is increasing from 132mm to 140mm

***The TACL Board will put a proposal of the CW boundary change to DPIPWE.*

A reduction of 15% with the rationale that the SAFS process the zone will show red.

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL Central Western Zone = 35t.**

NORTHERN ZONE:

Overall the trend is downward

Block 31B –	22.5t	not open from Jan to Mar 2017, the fish will be in better condition
Block 39 -	5.3t	
Block 49 –	33.0t	Albatross Island is trending ok; the Hunter Island catch rate is down which is of concern. 10t off Albatross and 30.5t
Block 48 –	7.5t	
Block 5A -C	42.5t	catch rates are down. Now closed as cap has been reached
Block 1 –	12.0t	a small amount of data is giving mixed results; the divers are not concerned with the catch rate.
Block 2 -	0.0t	
Block 3 –	40.0t	there is a level of uncertainty with the data.

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL Northern Zone 2017 = 148.3t (a 40.5t decrease)**

Bass Strait Zone 2017

FRAG comments;

There is room to grow the zone, suggest to keep at the same TACC by keeping the western side of Flinders open to develop the lower end of the fishery. Propose to follow the MCDA process to show the process works both ways.

Block 32 –	1.0t	small amount of catch
Block 33 –	19.9t	stable catch and catch rate, TACC increase
Block 34 -	1.0t	
Block 35 –	1.0t	
Block 36 –	2.0	
Block 37 –	2.0t	stable catch
Block 38 –	17.6t	stable catch, TACC increase
Block 43 –	5.0t	Stable catch rate, TACC increase
Block 44 –	1.0t	
Block 45 –	1.0t	
Block 51 –	5.5t	stable catch rate, TACC increase
Block 53 –	18.8t	stable catch rate, TACC increase
Block 54 –	2.0t	
Block 56 –	0.0t	

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL Bass Strait Zone 2017 =77t using the Meta Rule.**

Greenlip 2017

FRAG comments;

By-catch data is being incorporated into the MCDA.

*Consistency of data since zones were introduced has shown a standardised catch rate pattern which support leaving the quota as is.

The price of greenlip has increased over the last 3 years.

Bass Strait Is -	0.5t	
Central Nth -	8.0t	
King Island –	20.0t	closed, standardised catch rates are ok
North West –	17.8t	closed, catch rate ok
Perkins Bay –	21.2t	catch rate declining, data not determined, maybe selective fishing.
North East –	25.5t	ok
Furneaux –	47.0t	ok

Action; Central North Greenlip **keep the quota the same but allocate 8t to the Central North Zone zone*

**The FRAG recommends and agrees the 2017 TACC;
TOTAL – Greenlip TACC 2017 = 140t**

TOTAL 133t reduction in TACC for 2017

FRAG Comments;

West Coast -

'Wait a year to see how the reductions affect the fishery'. The conservative approach hasn't shown a realistic outcome. Our product is a luxury product with little competition from over 400g fish.'

Over the last 7/8 years there have been substantial reductions, there is now a formal Harvest Plan to justify the TACC setting. Over the last 3 years the TACC has been reduced by 30%

There is a proposal to have a larger reduction in TACC to increase the biomass sustainably in the shorter term.

The majority of FRAG members agree to apply the Meta Rule, which gives the option of applying local information and transparency.

Apply the Meta Rule for 1 or 2 years and then use the MCDA.

East Coast Closure –

Propose to either open full year or to close from February to April, rather than January to March

Processors note the condition and mortality of the fish coming into the factory is not good in the early months.

There are mixed views on the proposal to open the East Coast January 1,
Agenda item for the AGM and AbFAC.

6. Report from SMEG (Spatial Management Evaluation Group)

The size limit paper is underway and will be discussed at FRAG #1, 2017. The MCDA will be refined by IMAS with regard to the Meta Rule.

7. General Business

May 1 opening – Greenlip caught early in the year fetch a lower price than later in the year.

Meeting closed 5.45pm

Actions

1	Size limit/caps paper to be finalised and discussed at FRAG #4	IMAS/CSIRO
3	Investigate changes to logbooks to investigate impacts of selective fishing	DPIPWE Paul Richardson Sub-Council Chair AbFAC
4.	Proposal to reduce recreational bag limit	Agenda item at AbFAC
5.	Update on the SAFS process	Craig Mundy/Malcolm Haddon Ongoing
6.	SAM + 2 – policy on agreed values. IMAS to submit a technical paper to FRAG #4	IMAS Ongoing

Blocks - Area	TAC 2017	Kgs/unit
Bass Strait Blacklip		
Blocks 32-38 Furneaux Group		
Blocks 50-56 Bass Strait Islands		
Blocks 42-46 Central North		
Total Bass Strait TAC	77	22
Central Western Zone		
Blocks 6A-6C Couta Rocks		
Total Central Western Zone TAC	35	10
Eastern Zone		
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		
Total Eastern Zone TAC	444.5	127
Greenlip		
Blocks 32-38 Furneaux		
Blocks 1-4 King Island		
North West not Perkins Bay		
Block 48A Perkins Bay		
Blocks 31,39,40 North East		
Total Greenlip TAC	140	40
Northern Zone		
Blocks 5A-5C		
Blocks 47-48 NW not Block 5		
Blocks 1-4 King Island		
Blocks 31B, 39 and 40 North East		
Total Northern Zone TAC	148.3	42
Western Zone		
Blocks 6D, 7 and 8. Granville Harbour, Sandy Cape		
Block 9 South of Strahan		
Blocks 10, 11 and 12A. South West		
Blocks 12B-13B South Coast		
Total Western Zone TAC	717	205
2015 TAC TOTAL	1561.8t	446kg/unit

