

Abalone Fisheries Resource Assessment Group

Annual Report 2018

Chair: Ian Cartwright

Background

The FRAG is a committee established by the TAC to:

- consider outcomes of the abalone assessment, including the interim data report;
- review performance of the fishery;
- discuss and identify key drivers influencing catch and effort distribution, and catch rates;
- consider TAC setting motions from industry and provide comments prior to the AGM*;
- provide recommendations to AbFAC on the annual TAC, distribution of catch and related issues; and
- provide other advice as required, including advice relating to size limits, zone boundaries and research.

Operation

- FRAG Membership: independent Chair, full membership of the TAC, CEO of the Council, 2 IMAS reps and 1 DPIPWE fisheries manager.
- Observers welcome and continue to valuable input.
- Four meetings per year, with robust discussion
- Timing linked to FAC dates, to ensure timely advice
- FAC appointments made by the Minister.
- The Abalone Council considers advice from the FRAG and makes its own submissions to the FAC/Minister

Size Limits

- Were discussed at all FRAG meetings
- The issue continues to be contentious with widely differing views within industry on their role in the management of the fishery
- A comprehensive review of size limits has been completed and peer reviewed; additional peer review requested
- Shift to L50+3 rather than L50+2 as a default; revised limits set out in draft DPIPWE Harvest Strategy
- Timing for any changes to size limits a matter for discussion
- Recommend change to 145mm in Western Zone now with Minister for decision to take effect July 2019

NE Boundary Change

- DPIPWE concern that the three boundary changes proposed by industry have implications for other fisheries, including RecFish and Southern Rock Lobster, and compliance.
- TACL will need to put a compelling case of the benefits to the State and the fisheries arising from the boundary changes.
- Industry frustrated with process, indicating that it has been requesting the changes for some time and that there were real benefits from the proposal to the sustainability the fishery, given there is no suggestion to increase the quota.
- Industry and DPIPWE agreed that some actions may be possible in the short term to give determine what benefits the changes would yield.
- Structured fishing under permit could be issued for Block 40, to survey the quantity of fish and estimate the value. The research area in Block 30C could be revoked and a survey also undertaken there.

Meeting 1: 9 April 2018

Considered the status of the resource based on IMAS updates and diver observations and ii) discussed, and as appropriate, made recommendations on:

- The Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund and associated activities
- The 2018 Stock Assessment Report
- NE boundary changes
- Three motions going before the General Meeting (E. Coast size limit reduction, E. Zone opening and Re-seeding from E. Coast aquaculture facility
- ‘Reverse cap’ for greenlip, the latter to encourage fishing North West & Central North before opening North East

Meeting 2: June 19 2018

Considered the status of the resource based on IMAS updates and diver observations and ii) discussed, and as appropriate, made recommendations on:

- Finalisation of the size limits paper
- Boundary changes
- Harvest strategy and associated size limit implications
- The opening and target catch for PST-affected areas (Blocks 22-28); agreed a proposal for 5T fishing under permit, obtained through a ballot process

Meeting 3: 17 August 2018

Considered the status of the resource based on IMAS updates and diver observations and ii) discussed, and as appropriate, made recommendations on:

- NE Boundary
- Workshop to improve understanding of size limit review outcomes
- Remaining catch from PST closed blocks (8t)
- Blocks 10 and 11 – review and possible closure after next pattern
- Opening of remaining areas of greenlip fishery (October)
- *Centrostephanus* and the importance of a coordinated (between sectors) approach
- Environmental monitoring of the Lower Channel

Meeting 4: 18 October 2018

i) Considered the status of the resource based on IMAS updates and diver observations and ii) discussed, and as appropriate, made recommendations on:

- 2018 TAC recommendations, using the MCDA-based empirical harvest strategy
- NE Boundary
- An additional education and awareness workshop covering the harvest strategy and size limits
- How best to manage catches and fishing on depleted areas of the E. Coast (Blocks 22-19), balancing sustainability with information with Reinvestment Fund activities

Key issues

- The MCDA-based harvest strategy again provided a more objective way to set TACs.
- The meta-rules were applied, including small changes in TAC at the zone level.
- Further reduction required for the E. Zone – Acteons seen to be in need of relief after several years of overruns
- Limited fishing north of Cape Pillar positive.
- Further reduction required for greenlip – some discussion of the effect of selective fishing
- Full FRAG support for reductions; some calls to be more conservative.

FISHERY SUMMARY

Zone	Target	MCDA	IMAS	FRAG	KGs/ Unit
	2018	2019	2019	2019	
E	293.4	239.7	257.3	252	72
W	716.8	691.7	698.0	716.8	205
N	99.7	74.4	97.1	99.7	28
BS	92.6	72.1	88.5	92.6	26
GL	133.1	106.3	107.7	107.6	31
TOTAL	1335.6	1184.2	1248.5	1268.7	

2018 TACC = 1,333.6t rounded for kgs/unit

2019 TACC = 1,268.7t reduction of 64.9t (4.8%)

EASTERN ZONE SUMMARY

Block	IMAS 2019	FRAG 2019	Comments
13	146.9	146.9	Rebuilding stalled
14	21.3	21.3	Rebuilding stalled
16	13.8	13.8	Rebuilding stalled
17	7.5	7.5	Improving, below CPUE target
19	1.4	1.4	Rebuilding stalled
20	24	24	Improving, below CPUE target
21	18	18	Improving, below CPUE target
22	3.8	2	9 t spread over blocks 22, 23 ,24 ,27,28 exact distribution to be determined
23	3.7	2	
24	6.4	2	
27	2.8	2	
28	0.6	2	
29	3.8	3.8	Improving, below CPUE target
30	0.4	0.4	
31	3	5	Improving, below CPUE target
	257.4	252.1	

2018 TACC = 293.4 t

2018 TACC = 252.1 t reduction of 41 t (13%)

WESTERN ZONE SUMMARY

Block	IMAS 2019	FRAG 2019	Comments
6	23	23	Improving
7	54	54	Stable, at CPUE target
8	16	16	Stable, below CPUE target
9	84.8	84.8	Sharp improvement, weather?
10	83	83	Small Improvement
11	138.5	163	Small decline
12	255	255	Stable, close to CPUE target
13	43.7	38	Rapid improvement, above CPUE target
	698	716.8	

2018 TACC = 717 t

2019 TACC = 717 t (No Change)

NORTHERN ZONE SUMMARY

Block	IMAS 2019	FRAG 2019	Comments
1	6	6	Declining catch, Uncertain CPUE status
2	0	0	Negligible catch, status quo
3	8	10	Declining CPUE, below CPUE target
4	3.4	4	Negligible catch, uncertain CPUE
5	31.9	31.9	Stable, well below CPUE target, LML change
6	10	10	Minor improvement
31	22.5	22.5	Good improvement
39	5.3	5.3	Stable, at CPUE target
40	0	0	Negligible catch, status quo
49	10	10	Stable CPUE (Albatross Island)
	97.1	99.7	

2018 TACC = 99.7 t 2019 TACC = 99.7 t no change

BASS STRAIT SUMMARY

Block	IMAS 2019	FRAG 2019	Comments
32	1.1	1.1	Negligible catch
33	17.9	19.9	Trending down, CPUE at target
34, 35	(1, 1)	1	Negligible catch
36, 37	(2,2)	2	Negligible catch
38	14.2	15.8	stable two years, at CPUE target
41, 42	0	0	Negligible catch
43	4.5	5	CPUE trending down
44, 45	(1, 1)	1	Negligible catch
46, 47	0	0	Negligible catch
48	4.5	4.5	CPUE improving
49	11.1	11.1	CPUE improving
50	0	0	Negligible catch
51	5.5	5.5	CPUE uncertain, status quo
52	0	0	Negligible catch
53	19.7	19.7	Trending down, CPUE at target
54	2	2	Negligible catch
52, 55, 56, 57	0	0	Negligible catch
	88.5	92.6	

2018 TACC = 92.6 t

2019 TACC = 92.6 t No Change

GREENLIP SUMMARY

Block	IMAS 2019	FRAG 2019	Comments
King Island	18	18	CPUE trending up, near target
North West	13.4	13.4	CPUE trending up, below target
Perkins Bay	17	17	CPUE declining for many years
Central North	NA	NA	Negligible stock
North East	21.7	21.7	CPUE declining
Furneaux Group	37.6	37.6	sudden CPUE decline
Bass Strait	NA	NA	Negligible stock
	107.7	107.7	

2018 TACC = 133.1 t 2019 TACC = 107.7 t reduction of (25.4t)