

Abalone Victoria (Central Zone) Fisheries Advisory Resource Group

3 September 2019

Chair: Dallas D'Silva, Tony DeDomenico

Attendees: Josh Cahill Alan Buck, Kaz Bartaska, Darvin Hansen, Kate Simpson, Mark Asplin, Cameron Dixon, Justin Bell, Greg Staples, Joel Shannon, Jamie Espie, Warren Threlfall, Peter Johnson, Markus Nolle, Reinhard Strauss, Renee Strauss, Ric Devries, Michelle Hansen.

Agenda 1: Welcome and introduction

Co-chairs welcomed all and opened the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Review of actions

Actions from the November 2018 FRAG were taken as addressed with clarification provided that the ABASE notifications will continue to be sent to AVCZ, noting that same information is available directly from Fisherweb.

Agenda 3: Zonal Size Limit Review

The abalone manager and AVCZ EO provided summaries of the different positions presented in the tabled papers related to the size limit review (**Attachment 1 and 2**).

The model proposed by VFA is a phased approach over three years. AVCZ position was to hold adjusted size limit for a period of 3 years.

Discussion was held regarding boundary changes to SMUs, VFA indicated preference for no reef code boundary changes in order to minimise regulatory burden, whilst AVCZ presented the view that fine scale management is more important for resource sustainability. However, AVCZ proposed that SMUs can be altered without altering reef-code boundaries.

Discussions for further consideration by VFA regarding the proposed size limits were summarised as follows for each SMU.

SMU	Comments
Shipwreck	VFA and AVCZ agree on 130mm.
Cape Otway	All agree that year 1 SL is acceptable. One industry member commented that Year 2 figure is ok for 90% areas, noting that at 127mm around 15% of the fish will not be taken from the Parker River to Torquay area. Year 3 figure is considered too high by Industry.
Surfcoast	Industry commentary: This area is a small contributor and can't get effort to here. If LML is too high, it will discourage fishing activity and concentrate effort.
PPB	VFA don't support quota increase. One industry member advised that there was no support for increasing effort in an area that needs to be rehabilitated. Another industry member stated that without more fishing effort in PPB we won't be able to assess the state of the resource. A sea urchin culling/habitat rehabilitation proposal is being considered and AVCZ should be involved. Addressing urchins will have benefits for all fisheries in PPB and will need to involve all

SMU	Comments
	stakeholders. Don't need to harvest abalone to assess status. Environmental factors have affected all fisheries in PPB. All agreed to work together to take action to improve conditions in PPB.
Back Beaches	AVCZ propose to close areas (big bay reef code 12.02) on a voluntary basis, recognising that industry need to take the lead. One industry member noted the area fishes well at 120mm. It is thought that above 120mm, this will lock out some areas from fishing. Some areas will grow through 120mm, others will struggle to grow past 122mm in 12 months. Towards Cape Schanck they tend to be smaller. VFA to consider year 3 figure.
Flinders	Agree on 112mm for the first year. It was suggested that growth is fast in this area. AVCZ propose a boat limit and this will be implemented voluntarily.
Phillip Island	AVCZ will try and implement voluntary boat limits. Agree on 112mm for first year, AVCZ proposed 115mm for seal rocks. Whole of Phillip Island can handle a size increase.
Kilcunda	Stock can grow through to 115mm in some areas, just not in one year. VFA reiterated they do not support more than one LML per SMU. It was noted that some areas may support an increase over time. AVCZ stated that this SMU requires 2 LMLs to be managed effectively.
Liptrap	AVCZ want 2 LML, same issue as Kilcunda in that east do not grow as quick as west. Still get fish at 110mm but will lock out a fair proportion of areas.
Prom West	VFA support their proposal, AVCZ want split LML, don't agree with 120mm on mainland.
Prom East	Support 110mm
Cliffy	AVCZ want 2 LML, anecdotal data suggests stock is larger at Seal Is. Struggle to get past 112mm at other islands. AVCZ suggested prior reporting where there is multiple LML.

Agenda 4: Review 2018/19 Stock Assessment/Harvest Strategy overview

Cameron Dixon (MRAG) provided an introduction to his experience and the role of MRAG as contractors delivering the stock assessment.

It was noted that the draft stock assessment report is expected to be delivered to VFA in early October. Cameron and Cathy will be attending the TACC meeting in January to present on key outcomes from stock assessment report. AVCZ noted that FRDC is funding a national approach to Harvest Strategies and the application of Harvest Strategies in the stock assessment process.

A presentation was provided by VFA on the draft harvest strategy introduced last year (**Attachment 3**). AVCZ asked whether VFA have conducted any study on the impacts of their size limit proposal, especially considering the CZ fishery utilises a CPUE based harvest strategy. VFA will consider all variables when applying the harvest strategy.

Preliminary results for the upcoming season were presented and it was noted that there is a need for rebuilding at some SMU, particularly Back Beaches.

Agenda 5: Spatial management measures

AVCZ summarised their proposal for spatial management measures as per the tabled document (**Attachment 4**).

It was noted by VFA that there were two components to the proposal:

1. An electronic reporting system (facilitating licence and quota transactions) was proposed: the VFA provided a summary of the electronic reporting system that is currently being developed for implementation in 2020.
2. A change to the TACC management system was proposed: the VFA advised that the proposed change to the TACC management system is a fundamental change that would require significant legal changes and would need to be discussed at the fishery level. AVCZ expressed the need to shift effort from the Back Beaches, Flinders and Phillip Island SMUs to west of Port Phillip Bay in an equitable manner to avoid a shotgun start. An industry member suggested an East/West quota split.

It was noted that Tasmania have different quota for different areas and it was suggested that the first activity needed is to identify which areas are of concern in Victoria. It was agreed that voluntary measures should be considered and discussed before legislative amendments are investigated, although concerns were raised by industry about the challenges of voluntary measures and their efficacy.

Agenda 6: Stock Enhancement Measures

AVCZ proposed a number of stock enhancement measures (**Attachment 5**). Following earlier discussions with VFA it was noted that discussions relating to Marine Protected Areas (Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries) were outside of VFA's jurisdiction and these would not be discussed.

The following discussion was had on the other measures proposed by AVCZ:

Proposal	Comments
Translocation	<p>Cameron Dixon described the translocation project conducted as part of his research in SA and post meeting provided a copy of his research (Attachment 6).</p> <p>It was noted that translocated animals and those left behind benefited with increased growth. Translocation was successful but care needs to be taken as they are sensitive, and translocation resulted in a delayed growth response.</p> <p>Further consideration of translocation activities needs to be undertaken including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- how to protect areas following translocation- volumes required to be translocated- approval processes (e.g. translocation evaluation panel and permits)- experience and advice from Eastern and Western zones
Port Phillip Bay Enhancement - Urchins and Reseeding	<p>AVCZ to collaborate with other stakeholders and participate in workshops scheduled later this year to discuss this.</p> <p>It was noted that every diver will want to be involved in this.</p> <p>Kaz Bartaska provided information about the project he has underway to recover waste from urchins and is seeking a permit for the non-roe harvest of urchins.</p>

Proposal	Comments
	Tasmania provided information on its fund to address the issue of urchins with the aim of eradicating these. Commercial harvest has increased to 700t with subsidies to assist with roe harvest.
Greenlip abalone reseedling	<p>Advice was provided that it is best to trial this at low cost first to determine if it would work. It is important to ensure that there is suitable cryptic habitat.</p> <p>Further consideration is required to develop a reseedling project including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - source of broodstock and genetics - hatchery facilities to breed animals - translocation approval and other permits - disease testing

Agenda 7: Recreational and IUU Harvest

AVCZ provided a proposal on recreational and IUU harvest (**Attachment 6**).

AVCZ indicated that there was recreational support for tagging and estimating recreational take. Advice was provided that AVCZ should work with VRFish to put forward a joint proposal to VFA. AVCZ also noted that the recreational sector are willing to have size limits brought in line with commercial LMLs. VFA provided an overview of the recreational fishery, demonstrated by compliance data. This included recreational inspections and anecdotal rates and IUU harvest. Approximately 2700 recreational abalone inspections were conducted in the 2018/19 financial year.

VFA advised that they record reasonably good data on IUU from their compliance records.

Estimates of IUU and recreational take can be estimated from compliance data and presented at TACC forums each year. Early estimates suggest that recreational harvest is less than 3% of the total catch.

Agenda 8: Other matters

Independent chair: it was acknowledged that an independent chair was required for future FRAG meetings and the TACC meeting. AVCZ and VFA will work together to identify a suitable chair prior to the next meeting.

Next meeting: the next meeting will be scheduled for October / November. The AVCZ EO and VFA will confirm dates.

The Chair thanks all for attending and closed the meeting at 12.50pm.