



# AVCZ MEMBER NEWSLETTER

March 2020

## Quota Roll Over

The quota roll over provisions are 100% still going ahead. VFA have informed me that whatever quota balance remains on any given license as at the end of 31 March 2020 will be applied to that same license for the commencement of the new quota period (1 April 2020). This quota will be added on top of what you receive for the new season.

The management of SMU levels and limits will be done by way of proportional allocation of the uncaught zonal quota to SMUs that did not reach their Optimal Target (Quota reference Point) in the 2019/20 quota period. Additional catches will not be added to SMUs that reached their Optimal Target. Limits and Thresholds will be applied using the same proportional percentage as applied if no additional catch was applied.

## License Fee Renewals

Unfortunately after receiving initial agreement from VFA on extending license fee renewals, an extension on payment terms is not going to be granted. As I have highlighted in several emails, if you do not intend to fish prior to 1 June, you have until the end of May to pay your license fees. This is nothing new, and is a provision that has always been in place every year. If you do choose to take this option, your license is effectively 'suspended' and you can't use it. But you do not lose it. For anyone who doesn't pay their license renewal fees by 31st March 2020, you are still eligible for the quota roll over and you do not lose your uncaught quota. All that happens is that your license is 'suspended' and you are not able to use your license until your fees have been paid. All fees MUST be paid by 31st May 2020 unless VFA formally write to you informing you that payment terms have been extended based on negotiations with AVCZ.

## COVID 19 Assistance Packages

There are plenty of State and Federal Government assistance packages out now which have been designed to assist small business operators. I URGE you all to get in touch with your bank and inform them that you are involved in the fishing industry, they will likely put your loan repayments on hold. Also get in touch with your accountant/book keeper/financial advisor to find out what grants or exemptions you are able to apply for. Both State and Federal Governments have dedicated websites which provide accurate and up to date information on what is currently available. These have been provided to all members via email in previous correspondence although if you didn't receive them please contact Josh directly.

## 2020/21 Season TACC and LMLs

Thank you to those who attended a productive TACC forum in Hastings on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020. I am sure by now you have all received a copy of the Fisheries Notice from VFA regarding the 2020/21 TACC and LMLs. The TACC for 2020/21 is 252.6t for blacklip and 3.4t of greenlip. Greenlip LMLs remain unchanged, although blacklip LMLs are: Shipwreck 130mm, Otway 125mm, Surf Coast 110mm, Port Phillip Bay 105mm, Back Beaches 119mm, Flinders 112mm, Phillip Island 112mm, Kilcunda 115mm, Liptrap 110mm, Prom West (mainland) 115mm, Prom West (islands) 120mm, Prom East 110mm, Clifly Group 110mm.

## Native Title Claim

There is no additional information to provide regarding the native title claim at the moment. As stated previously these things are incredibly slow. As soon as any new information comes to light AVCZ will inform fishery stakeholders.



## **New Independent AVCZ Director**

Mr. Frank Gambera has been appointed as an independent director through the casual vacancy clause of the AVCZ constitution replacing Markus Nolle. Mr Gambera is a commercial lawyer with over 36 years experience in the legal sector and brings a wealth of knowledge to the Board. Frank is also currently a director at McMahon Fearnley Lawyers and can be contacted at [fmg@mcmahonfearnley.com.au](mailto:fmg@mcmahonfearnley.com.au).

## **Shell Measuring Data Sticks Needed!**

For all divers involved in the shell measuring program, the new LMLs that VFA have implemented for the 2020/21 fishing season must be updated on all data sticks. Please send your data sticks in to Josh to have the updated software installed to ensure that your machine is showing the correct LMLs for each SMU when your deckie is measuring. You can still measure if the LML on the board is incorrect, but you must make sure that you are fishing to the appropriate LML for that area as per the Fisheries Notice.

## **Port Phillip Bay Urchin Management**

Urchin overgrazing is an issue in Port Phillip Bay that most members are passionate about. As a result, AVCZ have been working with VFA and the urchin fishery to arrange access to discreet areas within Port Phillip Bay for urchin management purposes. This difference between this project and what has been done in the Eastern Zone is that this project is not trying to completely eradicate urchins from the bay, only reduce their density so overgrazing isn't occurring. AVCZ will fund divers via a daily rate to be involved in the urchin management program which we are hoping to get off the ground soon. Due to there being an existing urchin fishery in the bay AVCZ must be mindful of working cooperatively with stakeholders to benefit the fishing opportunities for urchin divers by improving the roe quality and benthic canopy.

## **Abalone Council Victoria Update**

The Abalone Council Victoria is now the peak body for abalone representation in Victoria, encompassing representatives from the Eastern Zone, Central Zone, Western Zone and Processors Associations. ACV have formally taken over this role from SIV. The Central Zone representatives elected by the AVCZ board are Allan Buck and Kaz Bartaska. At the last ACV meeting Josh Cahill was also appointed as the Executive Officer of the council following David Tonkin's retirement. ACV will be undertaking state wide abalone research projects and working with the Abalone Council Australia to represent Victoria in national abalone issues.

## **Temporary Line Fishing Permits**

The option for divers to uptake the temporary line fishing permits is still available for those interested. This is an excellent initiative by VFA to help supply the local market with more fresh and local seafood. There are some restrictions on what species can be caught and sold, and each permit granted is able to land up to 2t of fish per year. Please be aware that if you want to utilize one of these permits and supply local fish you will likely need PrimeSafe certification. For more information on the temporary line fishing permits and how to apply please contact Josh.

## **Diver Observation Survey**

A reminder to all divers that AVCZ strongly encourage you to complete the survey after each day diving. There is a link to the survey on the front page of the AVCZ website [www.abalonevictoria.com.au](http://www.abalonevictoria.com.au) alternatively, you can access the survey directly at [www.diverobservations.com](http://www.diverobservations.com). Completing this survey after each days diving helps to correlate what you are seeing on the bottom with the scientific data used in stock assessments.



## **VMS Update**

VFA are mandating the use of VMS in a number of commercial fisheries during 2020/2021. The Central Zone must have units installed on boats by 1 July 2020. VFA have agreed to use the existing Succorfish units (that CZ divers have had on their boats for a number of years) which saves space, but also provides us with a reimbursement for all the units that had previously been purchased by AVCZ. The data that VFA will be collecting with the units is at 15 minute intervals and for compliance purposes only and not stock assessment. The data that AVCZ collects with the Succorfish loggers is analyzed at a far finer scale and provides real benefit to stock assessments.

As part of the agreement for VFA to accept the Succorfish units as being appropriate, we need to demonstrate their efficacy hence the need to run the trial discussed in email correspondence. In the coming days, VFA will commence receiving data from Succorfish but there won't be any diver names or vessel names attributed to positions. All VFA will see is a series of dots on a screen indicating vessel positions. Please be aware that your unit won't send any information until your boat is on the water as the whole Victorian coastline has been 'geofenced' by Succorfish. Prior to 1 July when all vessels must have an operational unit on board, AVCZ will work with all divers to ensure that the Succorfish app is installed and operational on your phone so you can see if your unit is working properly in real time. The draft VFA policy for VMS will be released in the coming weeks. Contained within this policy are details of temporary manual reporting to be used if your unit malfunctions. AVCZ are working closely with VFA to ensure that this document is operationally feasible and doesn't restrict your ability to go to work if your unit malfunctions. Additional details will be provided to all once the document has been finalized.

## **Cape Schank Poaching Bust**

VFA arrested 5 men at Cape Schank on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 with almost 400 abalone. Fisheries Officers were able to return the abalone to the water which is a fantastic outcome. This is a timely reminder for divers to report any suspicious activity or observations such as large piles of shell to VFA compliance officers through the 13FISH. Alternatively, report to your EO and an anonymous report can be made on your behalf.

## **Data Release Forms**

VFA have developed new data release forms which AVCZ strongly encourage all divers to sign. The new forms don't have an expiry date so we don't have the hassle of re-signing every couple of years. Signing the release form is extremely important as it allows scientist Dr. Duncan Worthington to access your docket book information which is then married up to the logger and shell measuring data to give us a more accurate reflection of the health of the resource. As we didn't have any logger data performance indicators included in last years stock assessment it is even more important for everyone to sign the release forms this year to enable Dr. Worthington access to the data for analysis. A copy of the release form has been sent out by Mark Asplin. A copy is also included with this newsletter. Upon completion, please submit to both VFA and Josh. If you don't have access to a scanner just print the form out, fill it in, take a picture on your phone and email or sms to Josh.

## **COVID 19 - Boat Ramp Access**

AVCZ have been liaising with Transport Safety Victoria who have assured us that launching facilities for commercial operations will remain open regardless of what happens for recreational boaters. Commercial fishing is classified as an essential service and a business so we can continue working.