

From: president
Sent on: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 5:57:13 AM
To: Anthony McGrath (VFA)
Subject: Abalone consultation

Hello Anthony,

The Black Rock Underwater Dive Group would like to provide the following feedback regarding the Draft Fisheries (Recreational Abalone Open Days) Notice 2024/25

The draft outlines the open days when recreational fishers can access the central Victorian waters to collect abalone for the 2024/25 season. We believe that limiting access to only 60 days is neither fair nor reasonable for our members. We propose that there should be 365 days of recreational access in the central zone, with an interim five-year period allowing for seven-day-a-week access from the Melbourne Cup weekend to Easter weekend inclusively.

Furthermore, we advocate for a more conservative approach to managing the Abalone Central Zone to help rebuild abalone stocks. We would like to see an increase in the Legal Minimum Length (LML), which should align with the standards of other states. The current size limit of 110mm in the Central Zone is too small to facilitate any significant biomass increase.

Additionally, we acknowledge the issue of intertidal restrictions, which other stakeholders also face. However, we are willing to set intertidal access aside if we can observe an increase in biomass across the Central Zone.

Currently, the VFA has no Virgin Biomass calculations for either Blacklip or Greenlip Abalone in Victoria, unlike those available for Southern Rock Lobster. This lack of transparency and the absence of calculations regarding percentage virgin biomass are significant concerns, leaving us feeling uninformed about the state of the fishery in the Central Zone.

We also note that we no longer receive invitations to the TAC meetings as we did in the past. The attached document shows a historical formal invitation via the SDFV, a peak body for scuba divers. The purpose of consultation, as well as any consultation process, should be clear, open, timely, and transparent, and it should be adequately resourced.

We are concerned about the frequent changes in VFA Abalone managers. In our opinion, consistent and stable abalone management is essential, and we hope that the VFA position does not resemble a revolving door.

Anthony McGrath is the current Abalone Fishery Manager, and we hope he receives the support necessary to continue in his position for many years to come, especially considering that the last couple of managers had relatively short tenures. (Maddie Watt 2023, Travis Baulch 2021, Kate Simpson 2016)

Yours Faithfully,

Julian Tagell p

BRUDG president.