

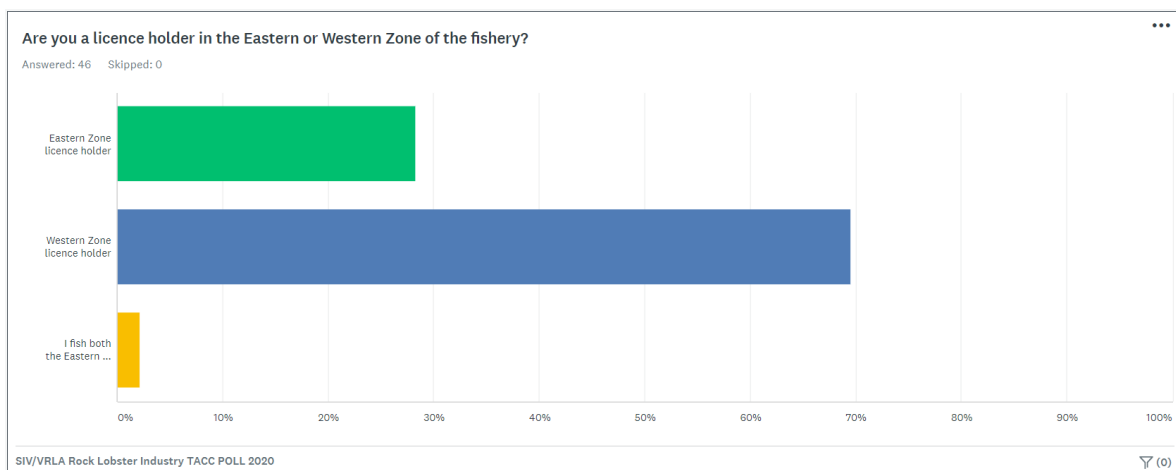
Introduction

Following the 2020 TACC forums, Seafood Industry Victoria and the Victorian Rock Lobster Association have undertaken our annual poll (sent to all Victorian Rock Lobster licence holders where an email address or mobile number is on record¹) to provide advice on behalf of industry to the Victorian Fisheries Authority regarding TACC preferences and a position on various other management arrangements. Opportunity was also provided for respondents to make additional comments, all of which have been de-identified and included in the data below.

Noting the short window of opportunity to provide response, following the forums, SIV and VRLA undertook the survey via SurveyMonkey capitalising on the limited time.

As a result of emails and text messages sent out to all Victorian Rock Lobster licence holders, 46 responses were successfully completed online.

The responses that were received from industry are summarised and presented below.



The 46 respondents collectively hold approximately 65 licences, and we received 13 Eastern Zone respondents and the 32 Western Zone respondents, with 1 participant fishing in both the Eastern and Western Zones, as outlined by the above table.

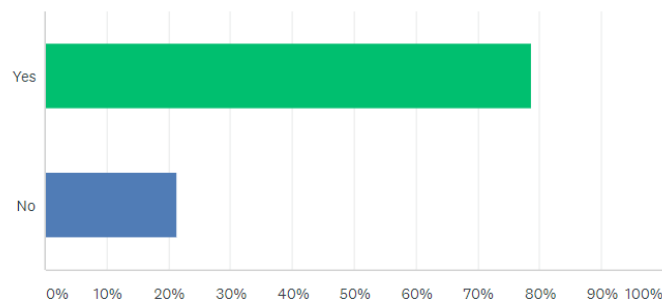
¹ By way of a reminder (and potentially for additional reach) a text message was also sent by VRLA and SIV to the mobile phone of all licence holders that included a link to the survey.

Results - Eastern Zone TACC

Note: where the figures state 'skipped' this is due to respondents being directed away from the entire page as they identified as Western Zone fishers only.

Proposal of 40 tonne TACC for 2020/21 season, do you support this?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 32



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	78.57% 11
No	21.43% 3
Total Respondents: 14	

Comments/rationale received regarding the setting of the TACC for 2020/21:

“Quota is set to high for stock to rebuild.” - A comment supported by three licence holders, with ne providing the following comment “Poor recruitment. Poor catch rates. Increasing the exploitation rate in a struggling fishery. Over the last two years I’ve taken a fraction (up to a fifth) of what I normally would take out of the area, without showing any improvement.”

“Recognise and appreciate the VFA working with majority of industry to provide a sensible and measured approach to setting the EZ quota for 2019/20”.

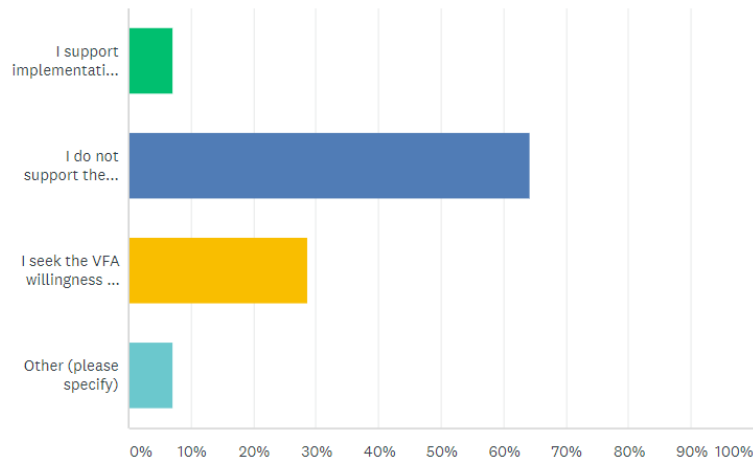
It should be recognised from the minutes of the Port Visit forums, that there are varied views across the Eastern Zone, which is a large management area, and that there are some areas that are harder fishing than others.

On the basis of industry responses and almost 80% support for continuing the TACC at 40tonnes, this recommendation is therefore supported by SIV and VRLA.

Regarding the implementation of VMS (Eastern Zone):

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) units have been legislated to be installed on Rock Lobster vessels by 1 July 2020. We heard a number of issues and concerns highlighted by Industry throughout the Post Visit meetings. Please select from the following options:

Answered: 14 Skipped: 32



Comments received from industry through the Poll:

"The integration of the VMS into the e-catch would make for a far safer time onboard the vessel with the implementation of a green and red flashing light on the e-catch home page so that the skipper can see that the VMS is working."

"I have no issue with the implementation of the VMS however I would like to see the following happen; 1/ I seek the VFA's willingness to work with industry on a phase in, collaborative approach, and seek a further exemption to at least 2021 given the current crisis that we are faced with and the associated costs that will be incurred. 2/ the \$250 contribution towards the installation is grossly out of touch with what the real costs will be and as such I seek that the VFA look further into this. The industry rate for a qualified marine electrician is \$120 to \$150 per hour and the time that it will take to fit the unit to most vessels so that they comply electrically to the AMSA and NSCV regulations will I believe see most installations taking a minimum of 6 hours and in some cases longer due to access and mounting difficulties. 3/ The idea that it will be our responsibility to ensure that the unit is functioning correctly when we are being told that it has to be mounted on the wheelhouse roof is obscene and needs to be addressed before we are enforced to have it installed. This is a MAJOR safety risk, especially for single handed operators as climbing onto the wheelhouse roof to see if there is a green or red-light flashing. This must be resolved before any units are fitted as this alone is a serious issue. The VFA would have blood on their hands if someone was severely injured or fell overboard and drowned whilst trying to inspect their VMS's function."

“Over the last few years, we have been told that we are the most compliant fishery and now we are told that we have to have VMS with no explanation of why! This is a massive burden and is unjustified and unfair.”

“VMS has to be on a boat, but the fees will be charged back to the licence holder. It’s an operator cost not a licence cost.”

“The VFA annual report last year noted that a feasibility report looking into the VMS has been completed. When asked for the report, we were told that this was not the case, there was no report and that this was just an ‘internal decision’ made by the VFA. How therefore can this be justified when there has been no feasibility or cost benefit evaluation?”

“The whole VMS implementation has been poorly thought out. There were many serious issues raised and suggestions being made regarding switching units between boat is just ridiculous. There is no Policy or Process for what happens when units are not working, and we have to go fishing. We will be left to the mercy of fisheries officers, which is pretty much Russian roulette.”

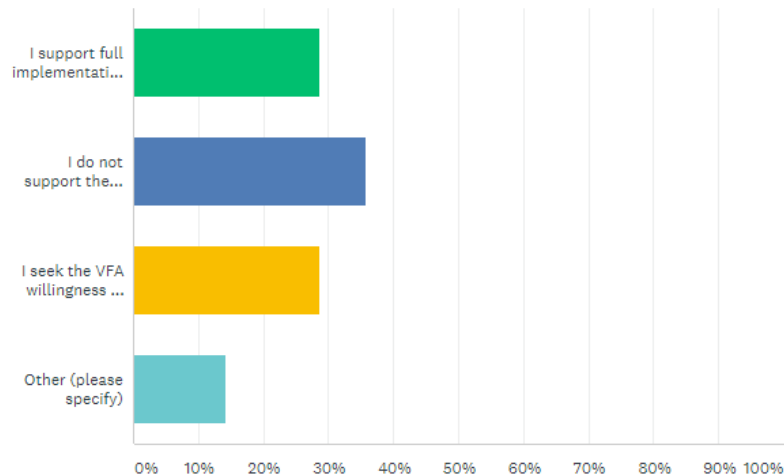
Observations and SIV Comments on VMS:

There is minimal support for VMS being mandated for install by 1 July 2020 and there were some extremely alarming discussions at the TACC Forums, which reveals that VMS can be supported by industry should the appropriate consultative and collaborative approach be implemented. It’s not too late, and therefore SIV and VRLA on behalf of industry seek a further 12-month exemption from the need to mandate the application of VMS and through this period we commit to working with the VFA towards developing an acceptable solution with industry.

Regarding the implementation of E-Catch (Eastern Zone):

Moving to an electronic reporting system has been regulated for Rock Lobster fishers by 1 July 2020. We heard a number of issues and concerns highlighted by Industry throughout the Post Visit meetings. Please select from the following options:

Answered: 14 Skipped: 32



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ I support full implementation of e-catch reporting on 1 July 2020	28.57% 4
▼ I do not support the implementation of e-catch reporting.	35.71% 5
▼ I seek the VFA willingness to work with industry on a phase in, collaborative approach over the coming 12 months.	28.57% 4
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 14.29% 2
Total Respondents: 14	

Noting there continues to be some level of concern and hesitation towards the implementation of e-catch (electronic) reporting, which was largely supported by the RAG in that there needs to be a measured approach to its roll out.

We (SIV, VRLA and industry) seek a collaborative, science-based approach towards the implementation of a phase in of e-catch in the Rock Lobster fishery over the coming 12 months.

Comments received from industry through the Poll:

"We are doing it hard at the moment especially license holders that have loans for business & home. VFA expect us to upgrade our phones to a better phone eg iPhone iPad again at our costs. The phone I have is a workman phone that is good for when you work by yourself as they work well when you have wet hands, the newest system are hard to work when you have wet hands all day and you are constantly trying to dry your hands to get them to work ."

"a phased in, joint approach would be more widely accepted by industry, once we get through the current crisis."

“E-Catch has not even been built yet, the current target completion date is end of May, leaving June for testing, bug fixing, training and roll-out! All to be ready by 1 July across the whole fishery. This is not going to happen! There needs to be a more realistic plan for this.”

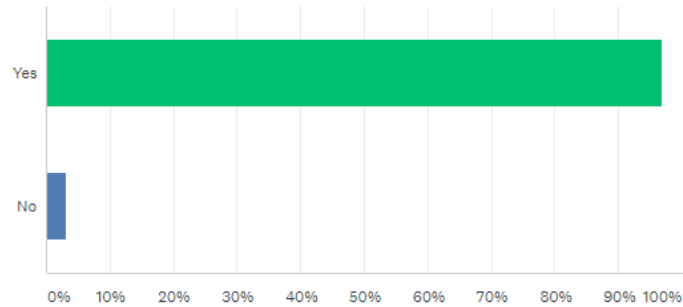
“Will there be grandfathering provisions in using paper DCR and CDR for older fishers who will struggle with e-catch?”

Results - Western Zone TACC

Note: where the figures state 'skipped' this is due to respondents being redirected away from the entire page as they are Eastern Zone fishers.

Proposal of 246 tonne TACC for the 2020/21 season, do you support this?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	96.88% 31
No	3.13% 1
Total Respondents: 32	

Industry commentary received on the position of the TACC:

“Up 10 tonnes till we reach 300 tonnes”. Was a comment received by one licence holder.

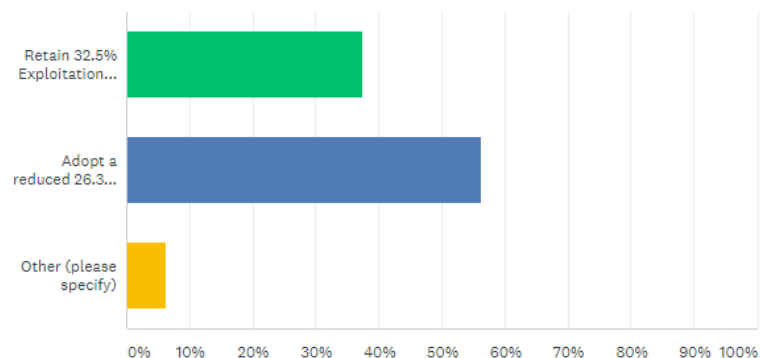
With the vast majority supporting *“Leave it as it is”*.

As the VFA is aware, there were many other ‘management’ issues and questions raised at the Port meetings, which were presented to the RLRAG yesterday (Thursday 12 March) that need to be considered going forward.

Considering the industry response and in excess of 95% support for continuing the TACC at 246tonnes, this recommendation is therefore supported by SIV and VRLA.

The VFA and the Rock Lobster RAG have been considering improvements in data and understanding of the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery. As per documentation circulated by the VFA, the RLRAG has recommended a revision to the WZ Exploitation Rate from 32.5% down to 26.3% (as per TACC Table above). This was also presented and discussed at the TACC Forum Workshops, and received support, however this is put forward for formal consultation also. Given consideration to all information presented, what exploitation rate do you support for the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Retain 32.5% Exploitation Rate	37.50% 12
Adopt a reduced 26.3% Exploitation Rate	56.25% 18
Other (please specify)	Responses 6.25% 2
TOTAL	32

The results of the Poll to consider a reduction of the Western Zone fishery exploitation rate are very interesting, and industry commends Dr Klauss Hartmann for the clear, concise and straight forward way this was presented at the recent Port Visits.

However there remain mixed views on the model predictions amongst industry and how that relates to and implies exploitation rate, and this is evident in the above presented Poll results, with 57% supporting moving to the reduced 26.3% Exploitation Rate. While 37.5% support retaining the ER at 32.5%.

Other comments received by industry:

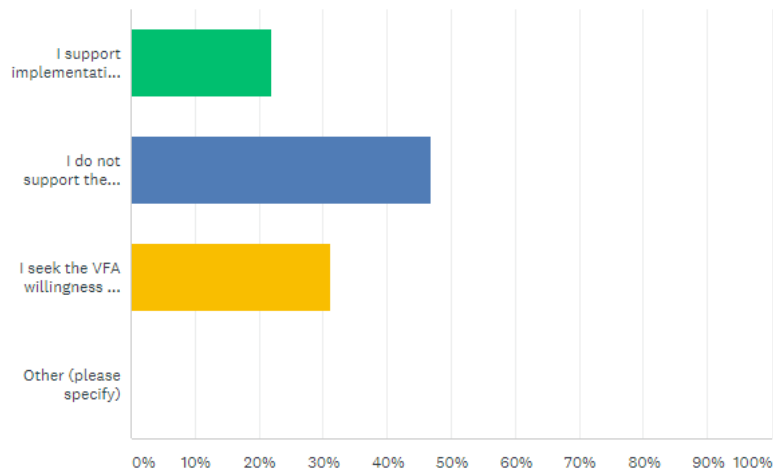
"I support leaving things alone the industry is improving"

"I support a slight reduction to 30% Exploitation Rate".

Regarding the implementation of VMS (Western Zone):

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) units have been legislated to be installed on Rock Lobster vessels by 1 July 2020. We heard a number of issues and concerns highlighted by Industry throughout the Post Visit meetings. Please select from the following options:

Answered: 32 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I support implementation of VMS on 1 July 2020	21.88% 7
I do not support the implementation of VMS.	46.88% 15
I seek the VFA willingness to work with industry on a phase in, collaborative approach, and seek a further exemption to at least 2021.	31.25% 10
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00% 0
Total Respondents: 32	

Comments received from industry through the Poll:

“why are we, the highly compliant, being forced to be watched by ‘big brother’ when effort should be into higher risk areas of poaching and illegal fishing”.

“\$250 for installation won’t go close”.

“Currently my entitlement to is not on a boat, should my licence fee reflect this, given I will not need a VMS.”

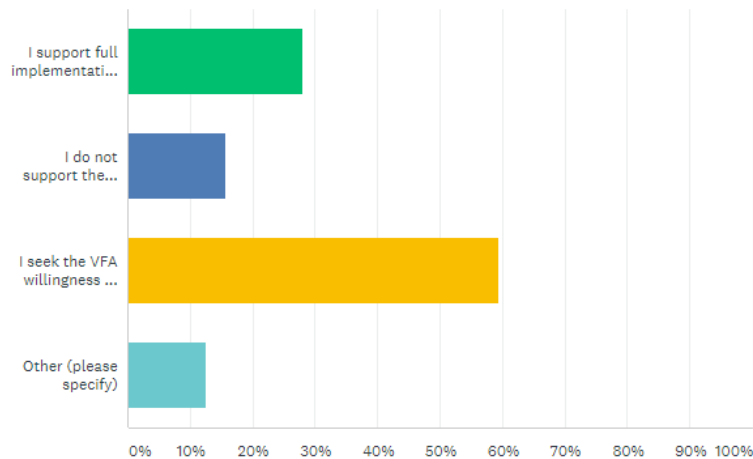
Observations and SIV Comments:

There is minimal support for VMS being mandated for install by 1 July 2020 and there were some extremely alarming discussions at the TACC Forums, which reveals that VMS can be supported by industry should the appropriate consultative and collaborative approach be implemented. It’s not too late, and therefore SIV and VRLA on behalf of industry seek a further 12-month exemption from the need to mandate the application of VMS and through this period we commit to working with the VFA towards developing an acceptable solution with industry.

Regarding the implementation of E-Catch (Western Zone):

Moving to an electronic reporting system has been regulated for Rock Lobster fishers by 1 July 2020. We heard a number of issues and concerns highlighted by Industry throughout the Post Visit meetings. Please select from the following options:

Answered: 32 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I support full implementation of e-catch reporting on 1 July 2020	28.13% 9
I do not support the implementation of e-catch reporting.	15.63% 5
I seek the VFA willingness to work with industry on a phase in, collaborative approach over the coming 12 months.	59.38% 19
Other (please specify)	Responses 12.50% 4
Total Respondents: 32	

Noting there continues to be some level of concern and hesitation towards the implementation of e-catch (electronic) reporting, which was largely supported by the RAG in that there needs to be a measured approach to its roll out. This is supported by almost 60% of responses to the poll as presented above, whereby a phased in approach and collaboration over the coming 12 months is supported by industry.

We (SIV, VRLA and industry) seek a collaborative, science-based approach towards the implementation of a phase in of e-catch in the Rock Lobster fishery over the coming 12 months.

Other comments received from industry:

Following a productive week of industry forums, SIV and VRLA sought from industry any other comments they wish to make. We present the below comments received for the VFA's consideration.

"Fee structure giving the current virus situation, potential for reduction"

"Port meeting locations are fine. The lack of representation by senior VFA officials was disappointing, especially considering that we only get together once a year.....poor form to be honest!"

"why were there no senior VFA managers at these meetings to answer and justify all these changes."

"More opportunity to raise and discuss issues- Don't need presentations on the workings of VMS etc."

"There should be more Port visits by VFA."

"They need to talk to us before they make decisions as we know that they have made some mistakes"

"This is not consultation; you have made the changes and now you come and tell us what they are. That's totally disrespectful (RE: Port Visits ad Reg changes)."

"With regards to the rollover of uncaught quota for the current TACC season, I would like to see this rollover quota split into 3 or 4 even packages so that there is less pressure placed on the fishermen to catch the fish in the coming season and also for the protection of the rebuilding phase that we are currently in with the Eastern Zone fishery. Hypothetically, if there is 9,000 kgs left at the end of the season, my wish would be to see this split into a three (3) year rollover where only 3,000 kgs would need to be added to the 40 tonne TACC. The major benefit of this approach would result in the following: 1/ the 3,000 additional kgs to be caught in the 2020/21 TACC period would go through an extra breeding cycle. 2/ the 3,000 additional kgs to be caught in the 2021/22 TACC period would go through two extra breeding cycles. 3/ the 3,000 additional kgs to be caught in the 2022/23 TACC period would go through three extra breeding cycles. This approach would obviously have a considerable positive effect on the rebuilding of the fishery and it would also help the local and export market by reducing the additional volume flooding onto the market which would severely effect the beach price and operators ability to keep up with bill payments. This rollover approach although it is certainly well appreciated by those who work in the fishery, it needs some very serious consultation at both a state level and also at an SRL level where by South Australia and Tasmania need to be fully onboard with the program and not trying to get the rollover caught in the proceeding season as this approach will further impact on the fishery as a whole. In addition to the above-mentioned approach, I would like to see a level headed approach to the consideration of allowing us to fish the grounds inside both Port Phillip and Western Port Bays during the winter portion of the season, 1st of July & 15th of September. There are a number of very positive benefits to being allowed to fish these areas and I propose that we are limited to being able to fish them during this period, to a total number of days of 50 out of the 77 days during this time frame. The additional benefits mean that we can continue to fish during periods of bad weather offshore and it also means that the offshore grounds do not receive constant pressure. This time frame would also see very little to no interaction with the recreational sector."

"Abolish closed season Sept 15 to Nov 15!! Could trial for 2/3 years if concerned Consider levy reduction or payment by instalments Take 5 shark on line permit. Open up the restrictions- more hooks etc"

“Make OFAL’s transferrable, provide us with more opportunities, noting the VFA’s so called ‘administrative error’ in the Regs”

“Make Ocean Access Licence transferable.”

“Costs are way too high. VFA a joke we pay fisheries management to stuff the stocks.”

“Fee structure giving the current virus situation, potential for reduction”

“We are doing it hard at the moment especially license holders that have loans for business & home. VFA expect us to upgrade our phones to a better phone e.g. iPhone iPad again at our costs. The phone I have is a workman phone that is good for when u work by yourself as they work well when you have wet hand the newest system are hard to work when u have wet hands all day and you are constantly trying to dry your hands to get them to work .”

“Fees are too high since quota has dropped from 66 to 40 ton.”

“There needs to be some sincerity and honesty from the VFA in creating sustainable ‘best use’ of Victoria’s seafood assets. This is plainly not happening at the moment. It’s all sizzle and no sausage for the poor consumer.”

“SIV support for industry has been exceptional, however support OFAL transferability.”

“No closed season Look at levies Up catch limit to five sharks for line permit and more hooks. Take fish for sale on line under RL Lic.”

“I feel more effort needs to go into improving methods of checking undersized stocks I think the method used to date doesn’t indicate a true and accurate picture”

“There should be a study done on the status of the fishermen in the industry to properly assess the impact that a 50% reduction in boat numbers has had and what the future may hold.”

“The port visit I attended at Apollo Bay was informative, well run and I appreciated the offers by VFA to the fishermen to pass on to next season the uncaught quota.”

“There needs to be more information on how other fisheries are managed and stock levels. i.e. VFA stated that the exploitation rate in the western zone is high for rock lobster fishery, but when asked what other states exploitation rate was VFA scientist didn’t know. If the VFA are making statements they should have the information to back it up and not pretend not to know. They should consult with industry more about issue that affect them.”