

Total allowable Commercial Catch for Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery 2023/24

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

I am pleased to advise that I have set the Rock Lobster Fishery TACCs for the upcoming season, commencing on 1 July 2023, at:

- **242 tonne in the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery**
- **21 tonne in the Eastern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery**

These catch levels follow the objectives set within the current harvest strategy whilst also aligning the fishery with the future direction set under the new Draft Harvest Strategy and Draft Management Plan. This decision has also received unanimous support from the Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group (RLRAG).

Eastern Zone

There were some positive signs in that the Eastern Zone PRI is recovering from the recent historical low period. However, the PRI was only just met and given the extended history of stock issues in this zone the RLRAG and independent scientific service provider advised caution when considering the TACC increase permitted by the harvest strategy. Additional consideration has been given to aligning with the strategic direction of the new DRAFT harvest strategy to immediately strengthen stock rebuilding in pursuit of higher catch rates and improved efficiency.

Western Zone

The key trends in the Western Zone have continued to show improvement. The current harvest strategy TACC table specified that a TACC increase was available, however this would have exceeded the target exploitation rate by more than 10 percent. The VFA endorsed the RLRAG recommendation to adjust the TACC slightly to align with the rebuilding plan under the new DRAFT revised harvest strategy. The new rebuilding strategy will continue to pursue stock rebuilding resulting in increasing catch rates and align the direction of the fishery to achieve MSC certification.



Travis Dowling
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Fisheries Authority

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