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Total allowable Commercial Catch for Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery 2020/21

Consultation on the 2020/21 Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACC) was undertaken in February/March 2020 in accordance with section 3A of the Fisheries Act 1995.

Setting the 2020/21 TACC has occurred in accordance with the *Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan* and Harvest Strategy. The strategy is based on standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE), pre-recruit indices (PRIs), predetermined TACC levels that correspond with CPUE bands, and decision rules that are used to set the annual TACCs for the Rock Lobster Fishery.

The key trends in the Western Zone suggest improved stock conditions. The standardised catch rate has been on an upward trend for the past five years and levels of egg production remained steady. The numbers of undersize lobsters have increased from the recent historical low, but are still at low levels.

The conditions in the Eastern Zone have shown some signs of improvement with catch rates increasing for the first time in six years. However, continued declines have been observed in numbers of undersize lobsters, levels of egg production and biomass. The PRI has dropped to a historical low of 0.08 undersize lobster per pot.

I have therefore set the Rock Lobster Fishery TACCs for the 2020/21 season at the following levels:

- 246 tonne per year in the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery (no change); and
- 40 tonne per year in the Eastern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery (No change)

The TACCs at these levels are determined to be appropriately conservative under the new harvest strategy to continue to rebuild the rock lobster population.

Travis Dowling
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Fisheries Authority

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