

Eastern Zone Rock Lobster Zone Recommendations:

Venue: VFA port consultations April, 2019

Summary: The Eastern zone has seen a decrease in CPUE in the 2017/18 season resulting in a TACC decision to potentially reduce the TACC to 26 tons for the 2019/20 season. There is scope within the management plan to increase the exploitation rate from 15% to a higher threshold. This would allow the industry to lessen the impact of the dramatic reduction to the TACC while complying with the Rock Lobster Management plan's objectives. The PRI and lack of available data remains an issue for any future TACC increases.

Recommendations:

These recommendations are focused on minimizing the impact of any TACC cut on the Lobster Fishers and quota owners as well as addressing some of the other issues currently being experienced within the Eastern zone, including the increased impact of the Recreational divers taking Lobsters particularly over the summer months and allowing for a better experience for the shared use of the resource for both sectors.

The following recommendations are made;

- Increase the exploitation rate from 15% to 22.5%
- De-coupling the PRI from all TACC decisions until sufficient data is being collected within the zone
- Extending the September fishing month from the 15th to the 30th.
(Maximizing landed catch value)
- Commencing the 2019/20 season from the 1st July to the 30th September and then re-open from the 15th November to April 30th
- Commencing the 2020/21 season from the 1st May to the 30th September and then re-opening from the 15th November to April 30th

Rational:

Industry and Recreational Co-operative Effort

- If we can shift some of the effort of the commercial fishers to target their Lobsters during the autumn/winter months we can not only ensure the maximum value of the landed catch but also relieve the congestion currently being experienced on the water over the summer months at the same time giving the recreational divers a better chance of success.

Landed Catch Value and profitably

- The costs associated with a reduced TACC require all operations to maximise their landed catch value while reducing the risk associated with leaving quota to be caught at the tail end of the season.