

Total allowable Commercial Catch for Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery 2022/23

Consultation on the 2022/23 Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACC) was undertaken in March/April 2022 in accordance with section 3A of the Fisheries Act 1995.

Setting the 2022/23 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 marginally improved stock conditions. The standardised catch rate has continued on an upward trend and egg production has remained stable for the past seven years. Biomass has been increasing slowly from a recent low in 2008/09, however had a decrease in 2020/21. The numbers of undersize lobsters have continued to increase from the recent historical low, but are still at very low levels. The pre-recruit index has been below the reference point of 1.81 in the previous seven seasons. In 2020/21 the combined PRI was slightly above the reference point with a value of 1.90.

Overall, the conditions in the Eastern Zone also showed marginally improved stock conditions, although this is from the lowest levels observed in the fishery. Catch rates have improved from the previous fishing period, biomass estimates increased slightly for the first time since 2013/14 and egg production slightly increased. Further, whilst remaining below the PRI reference point, there has also been some positive signs regarding an increase to the number of undersize lobster across multiple indicators.

I have therefore set the Rock Lobster Fishery TACCs for the 2022/23 season at the following levels:

- 246 tonne per year in the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery (no change); and
- 32 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 harvest strategy to continue to rebuild the rock lobster population.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Padovani".

Chris Padovani

**A/Director Fisheries Management, Policy, Science, Licencing and Communications
Victorian Fisheries Authority**

21 / 04 /2022