

Rationale for setting the 2021/22 abalone total allowable commercial catches

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) uses a multiple-lines-of-evidence assessment approach to assess the state of the abalone resource and set the annual total allowable commercial catch (TACC) for each of the three commercial abalone zones.

The information considered in arriving at the TACCs includes:

- *Fishery dependent information*: catch history, catch per unit effort (CPUE) and diver observations; and
- *Fishery independent information*: independent dive survey data that includes pre-recruit and recruit abundance.

Following a comprehensive consultation process that included workshops and a call for submissions from key stakeholders, I have made the following decision on the TACC for the Western and Central Abalone Zones. Consultation on the Eastern Abalone Zone was completed earlier this year and published separately.

Western zone

- a blacklip abalone TACC of 59.9 tonnes; and
- a greenlip abalone TACC of 1.4 tonnes.

The Western Zone abalone fishery demonstrates a well-regarded co-management approach, with formalised arrangements now in place. Whilst the fishery continues to recover, stewardship by industry aims at long term sustainability in line with the harvest strategy. The responsible approach demonstrated for this season highlights this. The relationship between the Western Abalone Divers Association (WADA) and VFA continues to be a strong and will support actions this season including a review of the harvest strategy.

Central zone

- a blacklip abalone TACC of 240.8 tonnes; and
- a greenlip abalone TACC of 3.4 tonnes.

The final TACC for the Central Zone was determined following a productive workshop and aims to provide support to a continually declining stock. The draft harvest strategy in conjunction with the weight of evidence in the stock assessment informed the decision. Adapted size limit arrangements have been implemented, with stakeholder input carefully considered, as a conservative measure to provide added protection to spawning stock. It is envisaged that these measures, together with enhancements driven through the Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG), will provide a basis for rebuilding the resource.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Travis Dowling".

Travis Dowling
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Fisheries Authority

09 / 06 / 2021