

Rationale for setting the 2023/24 Western Zone of the Victorian Abalone Fishery total allowable commercial catch

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) uses a multiple-lines-of-evidence 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 including a workshop and public consultation period, I have made the following decision on the TACC for the Western Zone of the Victorian Abalone Fishery for 2023/24.

Western Zone

- a blacklip abalone TACC of 30.8 tonnes;
- a greenlip abalone TACC of 1.9 tonnes; and
- legal minimum sizes for blacklip abalone and greenlip abalone.

The Western Abalone Divers Association (WADA) and the VFA continue to work together with the objective of rebuilding the abalone biomass in the zone. The draft harvest strategy in conjunction with a weight of evidence stock assessment approach informed the decision.

Considering the stock assessment, diver observations provided during the TACC workshop, and responses received during public consultation, a 3-tonne reduction from the previous quota period is in place for the 2023/24 season.

In addition, WADA and the VFA will work with western zone stakeholders on a recovery plan and monitoring program for the Portland spatial management unit, to further guide decision making post-disease outbreak.

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

Travis Dowling
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Fisheries Authority

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