# Statutory Consultation

The total allowable commercial catch (TACC) for the Victorian abalone fishery is reviewed and set each year by 1 April through a Further Abalone Quota Order (FAQO). Statutory consultation with stakeholders under Section 3A of the *Fisheries Act 1995* is required prior to the Minister (or delegate) making decisions related to the TACC and Fisheries Notices.

Consultation on the zonal 2020/21 TACC and size limits commenced with a stock assessment and quota workshop held in the Eastern abalone zone in November 2019. The Western and Central abalone zone workshops are scheduled to be held in January 2020.

The Eastern zone workshop was attended by industry stakeholders and representatives from fisheries management, science and enforcement within the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA). In addition, MRAG Asia Pacific representatives attended to present the stock assessment results. This is the first year of their contractual arrangement to provide this service to the VFA. The purpose of the workshop was to consider all of the available information and to recommend a zonal TACC and size limits for inclusion in the FAQO and Fisheries Notices, and further consultation with stakeholders.

# Eastern Zone

The Eastern Zone stock assessment and quota workshop, chaired by Ian Cartwright, was held on 27 November 2019.

The stock assessment and quota workshop included a presentation of data collated by MRAG Asia Pacific, contracted by the VFA, and diver observations with the available information reviewed using a weight-of-evidence approach.

The information considered by the VFA in arriving at a recommended TACC includes:

* Fishery dependent information: catch history, CPUE and diver observations; and
* Fishery independent information: independent survey data that includes pre-recruit and recruit abundance.

A summary of information presented by the VFA and the observations made by divers in the workshop is provided in Table 1.

The outcome from the workshop was to recommend to the Minister (or delegate) that:

* the 2020/21 blacklip TACC for Eastern Zone be 337.5 tonnes (a reduction of 8 tonne from 2019/20); and
* a single size limit change be made at one Spatial Management Unit (SMU), being Mallacoota Large (138mm reduced to 135mm).

The TACC reduction for the 2020/21 quota period was industry initiated in response to an inability to access reef codes 24.15 & 24.17[[1]](#endnote-1). This reduction is to offset displaced catch from the closed area to adjacent reefs. The VFA committed to reviewing this in the future and reinstating this allocation if the access constraint is remedied.

A summary of the optimum targets, thresholds and limits for each SMU and reef code, and the proposed TACC and size limits is provided in Table 2. The VFA will undertake a further review of all available information including submissions provided during the two-week statutory consultation period before making a final recommendation on the Eastern Zone TACC.

Table 1 Eastern Zone stock assessment and quota workshop summary of information

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Spatial Management Unit (SMU)** | **Catch** | | | | **Harvest Strategy (HS) range** | | **Indicators** | | | | | | | | **Diver comments/Observations** | **Proposed 2020/21 Target** |
| **Total catch** | **OT**  **2018/19** | **OT**  **2019/20** | **Catch to date 2019/20**  **(@20*-Nov-2019*)** | **Long-term indicators**  **CPUE 2003/04 – 2018/19**  **Abundance 2003 – 2019** | | | | **Short-term indicators**  **CPUE 2009/10 – 2018/19**  **Abundance 2009 – 2019** | | | |
| **‘18/19 (t)** | **Min** | **Max** | **Survey**  **Sites ‘03** | **CPUE** | **Pre-recruits** | **Recruits** | **Survey**  **Sites ‘18** | **CPUE** | **Pre-recruits** | **Recruits** |
| **Airport** | **88.8** | **90.0** | **90.0** | **72.7** | **90.0** | **103.5** | **11** | **16%** | **-62%** | **-70%** | **9** | **9%** | **-38%** | **16%** | Significant discussion regarding Tullaberga Island and inaccessible fishing ground.  A consensus reached supporting a reduction of 5 tonne on reef code 24.15/25.15. Group dismissed displacing this catch to other areas within the SMU by consensus.  Diver survey (17 responses) – suggesting things are similar to previous years.  ***Agreed to reduce Airport SMU to 85t due to current circumstances.*** | **85t** |
| 24.10/25.10 – Little Rame Lee |  |  |  |  |
| 24.11/25.11 – Shipwreck – Seal Ck |  |  |  |  |
| 24.15/25.15 – Tullaberga Is |  |  |  |  |
| 24.16/25.16 – Gabo Harbour |  |  |  |  |
| 24.21/25.21 – Quarry Beach/Betka |  |  |  |  |
| **Marlo** | **70.9** | **68.5** | **71.5** | **46** | **71.5** | **82.2** | **20** | **8%** | **-30%** | **-66%** | **19** | **5%** | **-48%** | **-36%** | Diver survey (22 responses) generally positive. Increase not appropriate, stability preferred.  Frenchs and Pearl Point appear lower performing. Have been some good days however.  Another couple of years we’ll see some good catches.  ***Agreed to maintain status quo.*** | **71.5t**  *(Status quo*  *On all codes)* |
| 22.02 – French’s | 7.3 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 3.2 |
| 22.03 – Point Ricardo | 5.7 | 5 | 5 | 5.17 |
| 22.04 – Cape Conran | 20.5 | 12 | **15** | 12.65 |
| 22.05 – East Cape | 13.8 | 17 | 17 | 8.41 |
| 22.06 - Yeerung | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6.11 |
| 22.08 – Pearl Point | 15.6 | 20 | 20 | 10.46 |
| **Mallacoota Central** | **56.6** | **57.0** | **57.0** | **15.42** | **54.2** | **59.9** | **8** | **14%** | **-59%** | **-44%** | **8** | **3%** | **-51%** | **-8%** | Consensus for stability and maintenance of current management.  Diver survey – average fish size increasing.  ***Agreed to maintain status quo.*** | **57t**  *(Status quo*  *On all codes)* |
| 24.04 – Red River | 0.8 | 2 | 2 | 1.32 |
| 24.06 – Sandpatch Point | 16.8 | 18 | 18 | 10.61 |
| 24.07 – Sandpatch Lee | 32.4 | 30 | 30 | 26.38 |
| 24.08 – Benedore | 6.5 | 7 | 7 | 8.25 |
| **Mallacoota West** | **47.7** | **47.0** | **47.0** | **41.66** | **44.7** | **49.4** | **7** | **13%** | **-43%** | **-51%** | **7** | **-1%** | **-28%** | **17%** | Petrel Point identified as taking more catch. Switch Petrel Point and Island Point limits – consensus on this.  SMU remain as same target.  Diver survey (17 responses) – improving reports, more fish observed.  ***Agreed to maintain status quo on SMU. Petrel Point target to be amended to 18 tonne, Island Point amended to 15 tonne.*** | **47t**  *(23.04 18t;*  *23.05 15t)* |
| 23.02 - Whaleback | 8.3 | 8 | 8 | 5.24 |
| 23.03 - Mueller | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4.4 |
| 23.04 – Petrel Point | 19 | 15 | 15 | 19.25 |
| 23.05 – Island Point | 15.3 | 18 | 18 | 12.77 |
| **Mallacoota East** | **37.3** | **39.5** | **35.5** | **30.56** | **35.5** | **40.8** | **5** | **13%** | **-37%** | **-52%** | **4** | **1%** | **-33%** | **-13%** | Significant discussion regarding Gabo Island and inaccessible fishing ground.  A consensus reached supporting a reduction of 3 tonne on reef code 24.17. Group dismissed displacing this catch to other areas within the SMU by consensus.  ***Agreed to reduce Mallacoota East SMU to 32.5 tonne due to current circumstances.*** | **32.5t**  *(3t reduction at 24.17)* |
| 24.17 – Gabo Island | 23.2 | 22 | 22 | 22.29 |
| 24.18 - Gunshot | 2.6 | 6 | **2** | 1.18 |
| 24.19 – Iron Prince | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 7.09 |
| **Mallacoota Large** | **23.0** | **23.5** | **23.5** | **46.56** | **23.5** | **27.0** | **8** | **-5%** | **-85%** | **-63%** | **7** | **-12%** | **-58%** | **-49%** | Getting better, more small fish, looking good.  Some data not supported by divers observations.  10 years ago LML was put up to 138 to protect this area from overfishing. Thought after this time would’ve seen improvement.  138mm is not indicative of the population.  Cathy Dichmont: Importance of commercial size/frequency data – would help inform this situation.  Discussion re: appropriate LML  ***Agreed to maintain status quo and reduce size limit by 3mm.*** | **23.5t**  *(Status quo*  *On all codes)*  Proposed LML – **135mm** |
| 23.06 – Big Rame | 15.6 | 18 | 18 | 11.13 |
| 24.00 – The Skerries | 5.2 | 4 | 4 | 4.54 |
| 24.03 – Easby Creek | 2.2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.24 |
| **Mallacoota Small** | **22.2** | **21.0** | **21.0** | **15.42** | **21.0** | **24.2** | **6** | **30%** | **31%** | **-73%** | **5** | **10%** | **0%** | **-48%** | Leave it as is – fishing well (several positive comments)  Needs to be monitored in relation to urchin encroachment.  Referenced Diver surveys – require more data which was encouraged.  ***Agreed to maintain status quo.*** | **21t**  *(Status quo*  *On all codes)* |
| 24.09 – Little Rame | 16.1 | 15 | 15 | 10.48 |
| 24.14 – Bastion Point | 6.1 | 6 | 6 | 4.94 |
| **Eastern Zone** | **346.5** | **346.5** | **345.5** | **269.8** | **340.4** | **386.9** | **65** | **13%** | **-40%** | **-61%** | **59** | **3%** | **-38%** | **-21%** |  | **337.5t** |

Table 2 Recommended 2020/21 TACC and size limits for Eastern Zone

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SMU** | **Reef codes** | **Size Limit** | **Lower limit** | **Lower threshold** | **Target** | **Upper threshold** | **Upper limit** |
| Marlo | 21.00 – 23.01 | 120 | 50.1 | 60.8 | **71.5** | 82.2 | 93.0 |
| Mallacoota West | 23.02 – 23.05 | 125 | 32.9 | 40.0 | **47.0** | 54.1 | 61.1 |
| Mallacoota Large | 23.06 – 24.03 | 135 | 16.5 | 20.0 | **23.5** | 27.0 | 30.6 |
| Mallacoota Central | 24.04 – 24.08 | 125 | 39.9 | 48.5 | **57.0** | 65.6 | 74.1 |
| Mallacoota Small | 24.09 & 24.14 | 115 | 14.7 | 17.9 | **21.0** | 24.2 | 27.3 |
| Airport | 24.10-24.11, 24.15-24.16, 24.21 | 110/120 | 59.5 | 72.2 | **85.0** | 97.8 | 110.5 |
| Mallacoota East | 24.17 – 24.19 | 120 | 22.7 | 27.6 | **32.5** | 37.4 | 42.3 |
| **Proposed 2020/21 TACC** | | | | | **337.5** |  |  |

\* Default 15% thresholds and 30% limits have been applied to the recommended targets and only one change to the size limit was proposed (*reduction from 138mm to 135mm at Mallacoota Large*).

1. This access complexity relates to a current lease arrangement that is the subject of litigation. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)