

TARFish

Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.

www.tarfish.org

*Looking after the
interests of recreational
marine fishers*

12th October 2018

DPIPWE

Director of Marine Resources (via email)

I write in reference to your letter dated 6th September requesting our feedback on the “Review of the Southern Calamari Fishery – Analysis of Management Tools” document which was provided.

You have specifically requested our views ‘on the attributes of the various management tools with regard to the pros and cons of each option’ and ‘an indication of a preferred management option with accompanying rationale’.

We note that the document:

- aims to evaluate the costs and benefits of various management tools potentially available for this fishery
- states the issues facing the fishery are primarily related to resource sharing and access – within and between both the commercial and recreational sectors. Any measures introduced would need to be effective and equitable across both sectors
- states there has been substantial increase in catch and effort on the North Coast
- states Management interventions such as limited number of species-specific licences in the south-east resulted in fishing effort spreading to other areas of the State
- states Independent dive surveys, and anecdotal information from industry, confirmed that there had been a failure of calamari moving to inshore spawning grounds to lay eggs in the latter quarter of 2017. This appears to be system-wide trend across the North Coast if not wider.

We also note:

- Calamari is a short-lived species, less than 12 months, whose populations are known to be highly variable from year to year
- Are serial spawners in spring and early summer with the expected peak spawning period in the North of the state to be in October
- Are sexually mature from about 7-8 months old, 15-20cm mandrel length

In summary it would appear, given the above, that there are concerns about the ongoing sustainability given scientific research has determined that recruitment failure has occurred and the stocks being caught may be too high which does not leave enough calamari in the water to ensure adequate levels of recruitment, all within a species that is known to be highly variable in abundance.

Attributes of the various management tools with regard to the pros and cons

Seasonal Spawning Closures

TARFish supports seasonal spawning closures that are based on scientific research. We have had the opportunity to be briefed recently by IMAS on the current research findings and have no issues with the current closure periods. The noted Costs/Benefits/Key Issues are sound and would apply equally across all sectors.

Commercial Trip Limits

The Costs/Benefits/Key Issues appear straight forward however the note that “Trip Limits may be of limited benefit to the stock...” may not be accurate if Trip Limits were combined with Total Allowable Catch. They would then potentially provide some intensive fishing pressure relief on the fishing grounds as vessels would be required to return to port to unload once the Trip Limit had been reached. Trip Limits should be considered for pre-spawning closure period only.

Recreational Bag Limits

TARFish believes the current bag/possession limits are reasonable given the value that the recreational sector places on this fishery. The note that “A daily individual bag of ten good sized calamari might be considered generous within “need for a feed” scenario” is without definition. As we have pointed out over the years there is no definition for the oft touted departmental “need for a feed” message that is constantly used to justify reductions in recreational bag/possession limits across all fisheries. It is hard for recreational fishers to embrace an undefined concept that allows 100kgs of Octopus to be legally caught but not 4kgs of flathead. The feedback we have received from recreational fishers is that no reduction in bag/possession levels for calamari are required/justified.

It is worth noting the daily bag limits for Vic are 10, WA 15, NSW 20 & SA 15 therefore any further reductions considered for Tasmania would be out of step with other states that have Southern Calamari.

It is noted that there is “potential increase in incidences of high grading” - this may or may not be an issue depending on the survivability after release. Is there any scientific information on post release mortality of calamari to determine if this is a valid issue? TARFish is not aware of any such information.

An alternative management measure that TARFish believes warrants consideration is the feasibility of a pre-spawning bag limit and a potentially different post spawning bag limit. A lower pre-spawning bag limit would have the potential to reduce catch and once they have spawned, and after the area spawning closure, then the bag limit would automatically revert to the current bag limit. Once they have spawned they would perish naturally in a short period of time therefore the logic would support resumption of the current bag limits.

Recreational Boat Limits

TARFish does not support Boat Limits as they supersede the individual’s bag/possession rights

Catch Cap

TARFish accepts the short-term costs associated with making this measure an efficient management option in the Calamari fishery. If it was to be progressed we suggest it may only provide a degree of benefit (protection) to pre-spawning stock and

logic would indicate it be lifted after the area spawning closure as the Calamari will naturally die within a short period of time post spawning.

Size Limits

TARFish supports size limits that are set at sexual maturity unless alternate measures are available to ensure stock sustainability is not compromised. Given this position we would support consideration of such a management measure however as we noted at the recent RecFAC meeting there could be added complexity given the widespread use of commercially available Calamari sold as bait.

Area Closures

TARFish would support Area Closures where it is valid and as is noted may provide buffer areas or refuges. South Australia uses Area Closures in their Calamari fishery for specific locations and specific objectives.

Access by Permit

Agree with the rationale and comments re the unsuitability of Permits as a viable management measure.

Limit Commercial Access

TARFish accepts that there is a degree of complexity, cost and workload associated with this management measure but also notes that the document states “Management interventions such as limited number of species-specific licences in the south-east resulted in fishing effort spreading to other areas of the State.” It also states that “catch taken in South East Waters – where access is limited by the requirement to hold a fishing licence (southern calamari) – has remained fairly stable over the last three years.”

The above indicates limiting commercial access in an area has led to stabilised catch levels which would support this management measure being part of a package of measures that should become a key component of the resource management system.

Given the North Coast fishery has only recently provided significant commercial catch levels to warrant increased levels of fishing activity it would appear logical to extend the same management measures that support the South East area to other key fishing areas of the state.

Total Allowable Effort

This management measure should be left under consideration, however, given its stated significant resource overhead should be a lower priority and reconsidered should higher priority, more efficient management measures not provide the required outcomes.

Total Allowable Catch

This management measure should be left under consideration, however, given its stated significant resource overhead should be a lower priority and reconsidered should higher priority, more efficient management measures not provide the required outcomes.

Indication of a preferred management option

Drawing from the above TARFish suggests the following, in order of priority:

- Limiting Commercial Access in an area has led to stabilised catch levels therefore should be implemented in all key fishing areas
- Seasonal spawning closures that are based on scientific research should be part of the fishery management as they provide protection to spawning stock
- Commercial Trip Limits, pre-spawning area closures, should be considered as they may provide some respite from intensive concentrated fishing pressure in the lead up to spawning activity
- Different Pre/Post spawning bag limits should be investigated for applicability
- Minimum size limits should be investigated to determine if they provide any biological benefits to the stock
- Implementation of pre-spawning area closure catch caps should be considered
- Area Closures should be considered where it can be determined they provide specific benefit that is not available via other measures.

TARFish's charter is to look after the interests of recreational marine fishers and to that end we have provided what we believe to be considered feedback on the range of management measures that may be suitable for further developing management of the Calamari fishery.

As with all fisheries management there is no single "silver bullet" solution to the challenges this fishery faces, and it will take a package of measures working together to have the potential to address the challenges.

Thank you for seeking our views on this review and please do not hesitate to contact me with any clarifications or questions you may have.

Regards



Mark Nikolai

Chief Executive Officer