


TARFish

Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.

www.tarfish.org


*Looking after the
interests of recreational
marine fishers*

17th August 2017

DPIPWE via email.

As requested by Minister Rockliff detailed below is the TARFish feedback on the departmental background paper for the TRLFA/TARFish/DPIPWE working group titled “Developing a Package of Management Changes for East Coast Rock Lobster Fishery”.

1. Simplify Area

TARFish believe there is little benefit to be gained for the recreational sector in the proposed reduced area with significant benefit to be afforded to the commercial sector due to productive South East deep-water offshore commercial fishing grounds now being excluded from the proposed Revised Stock Rebuilding Zone (SRZ). It is interesting to note that the 20t commercial sector overrun last year came from these same SE deep-water offshore fishing grounds that are now proposed to be excluded.

Should the decision be made to move the SE boundary zone, consideration should be given to moving it from the proposed access point at Southport to Gordon. Southport is a long way to tow recreational boats on roads that are average at best. Southport provides extremely limited access points for recreational fishers. Gordon provides a range of safer access points with much less travel time for recreational fishers.

The recreational sector, unlike the commercial sector, has no transiting provisions through areas that are closed which limits their safe access points to ramps in open areas only. The lack of any transiting provisions for the recreational sector are likely to significantly reduce any perceived benefit of boundary changes to the SRZ.

TARFish would be prepared to accept the proposed Revised Stock Rebuilding Zone as long as the SE boundary was changed to Gordon and transiting provisions were instigated for the recreational sector to support increased levels of safety for recreational fishers.

2. Apply season reductions to the Revised Stock Rebuilding Zone, not the entire Eastern Region

As noted above TARFish believe there is little benefit to be gained for the recreational sector in leaving open the two additional areas in the North East and South East. The vast majority, probably in excess of 95%, of recreational catch comes from the Revised Stock Rebuilding Zone.

3. Reduced Recreational Season

Any season reductions increase the safety issues for recreational fishers as it will force them to fish in the lead up to Christmas in bad weather, should it eventuate. Catching lobster for Christmas is a long held cultural recreational activity right around the state and reducing the available time to fish before Christmas will concentrate fishing activity into a very short time frame.

Due to the propensity of recreational fishers to adapt to changing input controls by modifying their fishing activities, TARFish does not support a season reduction, and believes it will not be effective in restraining catch. Seasons have been reduced in previous years and catch has actually increased.

It must be understood that the modelled IMAS Theoretical Recreational Catch used to justify the proposed season reductions assumes no change in behaviour of recreational fishers which we all know is not the case, hence why previous season reductions have failed to constrain catch. This is not a criticism of the IMAS work in this space it is simply a statement of fact that TARFish believes needs to be brought to the attention of Minister Rockliff.

4. Buffer – how long

The two-weekend buffer period is very significant for the recreational sector, as it allows the recreational sector to achieve good catch rates before the opening of the commercial sector, which has previously commenced with intensive inshore fishing.

TARFish believes the two-weekend buffer was established as a tripartite agreement between the TRLFA, TARFish and the Department over 10 years ago and subsequent ministerial decisions around continuing the two-weekend buffer have validated the existence of the agreement. TARFish will not accept an opening after the commercial sector due to the value recreational fishers place on the benefits to the recreational sector of the two-weekend buffer.

5. All commercial catch to be controlled by a catch cap within new SRZ

Agreed. Timely catch monitoring systems need to ensure that issues like last year's 20t commercial sector overrun cannot happen in the future.

6. New Decision Rules for reacting to overruns in the future

Agreed, but more importantly it is imperative for the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Strategy that decision rules are implemented and followed through.

7. Recreational Transiting Provisions

The recreational sector, unlike the commercial sector, has no transiting provisions through areas that are closed which limits safe access points to ramps in open areas only. The lack of any transiting provisions for the recreational sector are likely to significantly reduce any perceived benefit of boundary changes to the SRZ.

8. Data needs from IMAS

TARFish agrees that any measure that is to be considered must be supported by appropriate scientific information.

Additional TARFish feedback not covered in the departmental paper.

As expressed on previous occasions, TARFish does not support the current resource sharing arrangement between the commercial and recreational sectors for the east coast stock rebuilding area and supports a growth model for the recreational sector to increase its allocation, over time, to not exceed an agreed proportional 170t state-wide allocation to the recreational sector for the Eastern Region.

Short-term, ad-hoc decisions are being made ahead of a substantial IMAS research project on management options for constraining catch, which is likely to provide additional information to the sectors and Minister to facilitate a more informed decision process.

TARFish seeks a direct catch control mechanism to be developed for the recreational sector, which would be more effective in directly constraining recreational catch.

As previously advised we believe that effective management of the Rock Lobster stocks requires finer scale area management than simply East and Western regions, and now a proposed Stock Rebuilding Zone. We suggest that area management should at least be on a scale equivalent to the scientific research zones 1 – 12 with each zone having its own defined Total Allowable Catch (TAC) which would total no more than the overall state TAC.

Should you have any questions or require clarification on our submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards



Mark Nikolai

Chief Executive Officer