

TARFish

Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.

www.tarfish.org


*Looking after the
interests of recreational
marine fishers*

23rd August 2018

Hon Sarah Courtney MP

Via email

Minister,

I write in reference to your letter dated 14th August in relation to seeking our views on the following proposed changes for the Rock Lobster fishery in 2018.

1. *Recreational Fishery - "All waters, except the East Coast Rock Lobster Stock Rebuilding Zone from 3rd November 2018"*

TARFish support this proposal.

2. *Reduced Recreational Season – East Coast Rock Lobster Stock Rebuilding Zone, open 8 December*

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 the Minister.

Two-Weekend Buffer

The two-weekend buffer period between the opening of the recreational and commercial sectors 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 a commercial opening date that does not support the two-weekend buffer due to the value recreational fishers place on the benefits to the recreational sector of the two-weekend buffer.

3. *Commercial Fishery – “All waters, except the East Coast Rock Lobster Stock Rebuilding Zone, opens 15th November 2018.”*

TARFish would support this proposal as it maintains the two-weekend buffer period, as long as the recreational sector opens no later than 3rd November 2018. If the recreational sector opens after the 3rd November 2018 then we do not support the proposal as it does not honour the two-weekend buffer agreement.

4. *Commercial Fishery – East Coast Rock Lobster Stock Rebuilding Zone – opens 11th December 2018*

TARFish are ambivalent to this proposal as it is unclear if it is conditional on the recreational sector opening on a specified date.

It is pleasing to note that you will be giving “full considerations to the outcomes of the FRDC project titled *Rebuilding Southern Rock Lobster stocks on the East Coast of Tasmania*”. TARFish has long been critical that short term, piece-meal decisions have been made, particularly in the Rock Lobster fishery, when a strategic synergistic suite of measures is required given the considerable challenges the fishery faces.

TARFish will be giving further consideration to measures that would be expected to support the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Strategy and look forward to furthering discussions on the following matters raised in previous years:

Implementation of New Decision Rules for reacting to overruns in the future

It is imperative for the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Strategy that decision rules are implemented and followed through.

Implementation of 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.

Data needs from IMAS

Future measures that are to be considered for implementation must be supported by appropriate scientific information.

Recreational/Commercial Allocation

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.

Direct Catch Control Mechanism

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

Finer Scale Area Management

TARFish believe that effective management of the Rock Lobster stocks requires finer scale area management than simply East and West regions, and now a 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 statewide TAC.

Centrostephanus Rodgersii

TARFish continues to have concerns about the significant ecological impacts on the marine habitat by the Long Spined Sea Urchin, *Centrostephanus Rodgersii*. These marine pests have, and are expected to continue to have, a material impact on the habitat of rock lobster. IMAS have indicated the stock assessment model does not explicitly take account of the habitat degradation in the rock lobster fishery and the linkages between productivity and recruitment for the fishery are not very well known. These linkages should be investigated for impact on fishery performance and appropriate management response put in place to address the risks associated with “Centro”.

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

Regards



Mark Nikolai

Chief Executive Officer