

Crustacean Fisheries Advisory Committee (CFAC)

26 April 2023

IMAS Tarroona

CFAC 91 Draft Minutes.

Members present:

Ian Cartwright	Chair
Rene Hidding	CEO TRLFA
Karl Krause	TRLFA representative
Dawn Jordan	Rock Lobster industry representative
Brian Adkins	Rock Lobster industry representative
Ian Heathorn	Processor representative
Klaas Hartman	IMAS Scientific Representative
Julian Harrington	TSIC representative
Jonathan Hammond	TRLFA representative
Michael Blake	Processor representative
Clive Perryman	Rock lobster industry representative
Ben Cunningham	Marine Police
Justin Lawson	Marine Police

NRE Advisers:

Sonja Hempel	NRE Tas Fishery Manager
James Parkinson	CFAC Executive Officer
Marion March	Acting Manager Compliance and Licensing

Apologies:

Malcolm Budd	NRE Tas Compliance & Licensing
Troy Rainbird	Rock Lobster industry representative

Observers

Kylie Cahill

Item	Title	Discussion Points	Action	Who	Timing
1 A	Welcome	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting acknowledging Tasmanian Aboriginals as custodians of the land on which we are meeting along with paying respect to indigenous leaders. Members introduced themselves, noting Senior Constable Ben Cunningham and Senior Sergeant Justin Lawson replace Craig Crawford and Rachel McKay as the Marine Police representatives on the FAC. The FAC also noted that Kylie Cahill was attending the meeting as an observer.	-	-	-
B	Apologies	Mal Budd, Troy Rainbird;	-	-	-
C	Declaration of pecuniary interests	Register of interests was reviewed, noting Dave Ponsford was still on the register and no details were included for Clive Perryman. It was resolved that an updated register of interests would be sent around.	Update pecuniary interest register	-NRE Tas	By end of May-
D	Adoption of agenda	The agenda was amended with the following additional items included under other business: 10.1 Area 5. 10.2 High grading to fish at higher female size limit 10.3 Moving between northern and southern female size limit regions when females closed.	-	-	-
E	Minutes of the previous meeting 90	The FAC was reminded that the minutes for meeting 90 were distributed to members post meeting, with comments and edits accepted. The FAC accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting with the following changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add Mark Hursey as an Observer	-	-	-

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance update: A TRLFA representative discussed the requirement for mandatory recreational catch reporting. • TRLFA update: TRLFA intends to provide the Draft Plan to NRE Tas in November and the CFAC in due course. 			
F	Actions arising				
	Meeting 90 Item 1: Provide justification of benefits of enabling the transfer of fully caught units to NRE Tas Compliance & Licensing	It was noted that the objective of the action item was for the TRLFA and industry to provide NRE Tas with the benefits of being able to transfer fully caught units during the season to provide justification for the cost of changes to Dept systems. It was resolved that industry would work with NRE Tas to progress the issue.	Completed		
	Meeting 90 Item 3b: NRE Tas to confirm the total number of quota units for the 2023/24 season .	Item completed	Completed		
	Meeting 90 Item 7: NRE Tas to decide on composition of working group and notify CFAC.	Carried over, ongoing			

	<p>Meeting 90 Item 8: IMAS to consider research opportunities for retaining the Elephant Rock lobster research area</p>	<p>The IMAS member noted this was still in progress and a clear research agenda for the closed areas had not been developed.</p> <p>The TRLFA EO noted that there was an expectation that when an area was closed for research that it should open again once that research had been completed. He stated that he had followed up with the local school community and that they were not in a position to utilise the area for education.</p> <p>The FAC was informed that the TRLFA board proposed that the two research areas should be opened. The FAC voiced no objection to this proposal.</p> <p>The FAC noted that the Minister will be making an announcement regarding the areas in the near future.</p>	Completed	-	-

Item	Title	Discussion Points
2.	Brief updates – IMAS	<p>The IMAS member provided the FAC with a research update. Points raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on a new stock assessment model, looking at modelling frameworks, and aim to have something up and running in the next few months. The model will be able to better deal with, and be more flexible in relation to modelling spatial areas. This will assist with assessment of the east coast area, will reduce necessity for scaling within the assessment areas. • IMAS attended Victoria rock lobster port meetings. The FAC was informed that Victoria is looking to develop a harvest strategy that meets MSC standards for stock assessments. Noted that Southern rock lobster was one of the species where cross jurisdictional assessments were utilised to inform management.

Item	Title	Discussion Points
	Brief updates – TRLFA	<p>The TRLFA CEO provided an update on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern regarding Area 5 would like a discussion, added as other business. • Size limit change has worked, bigger fish, bigger dollars, has not impacted catch rates. • Will want to talk about race to fish east coast, 25% diff in price because of race to fish, noted on agenda. • Looking for resolution to opening of season on 1 March, on agenda. • Arrangements need to be developed to allow fishers to fish at 120mm all the way up the west coast, to NW. Added as other business. • Would like to be able to move between size limit regions once females are closed. Added in other business.
	Brief updates – Processors	<p>The seafood processor representative gave a brief update. The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion regarding tags at the processor premise, NRE Tas is working on a solution. • China - Australia trade talks are happening, an improvement on 12 months ago. A lot of misinformation being reported in media. • Despite rumors, there is currently no evidence of China opening or lifting impediments to rock lobster imports. • Processors export to a number of countries in good faith and are not responsible for how produce is distributed following arrival at the first port of landing. <p>Both processors and harvest sectors are struggling.</p>
	Brief updates – Compliance	<p>Tasmanian Police update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and complex changes to rules are a challenge for all; procedures to amend rules should include an education/awareness element. • Most compliance focused on recreational fishers due to where they operate, with more of a safety focus. Large boat operations focusing on commercial activities.

Item	Title	Discussion Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VMS has been helpful for planning patrols identifying hot spots, focusing on NE and east coast where a lot of fishing is happening. • Trialling Starlink to access VMS at sea in remote areas. • VMS has been very helpful from a search and rescue perspective, can be used to coordinate rescues based on who is about. Better communications, with better access to contact info phone etc. The FAC supported mechanisms to get marine police contact numbers for industry members. • New inspector, Steve Watson has been appointed. • Patrol vessel Van Diemen replacement under construction, will be ready by March next year. • Inspections tracking as they normally do. No change in compliance offences, increase in size limit offences relate to size limit changes, some confusion around transiting. Noted commercial transit report confusion particularly through Dunalley Canal and questions relating to north and south size limit areas, the Department will look into this. • The FAC discussed the purpose and implications of cautions, noting they are often used as an education tool that have no implications for future cases or prosecutions. Noted that cautions are used to measure marine police performance. Industry expressed some reservations concerning this practice. • The FAC discussed possession of undersize fish, noting the difficulties supervisors have being available to measure every fish straight out of the pot while navigating their vessel, with fish going into a holding area, before being checked and placed into tanks or wells by the supervisor. • Noted police will continue to use discretion as whether to issue a caution or not. Industry noted that it would appreciate some discretion which will help with cooperation. The police member reiterated that cautions should be seen as a wakeup call, to consider your practices. • The FAC acknowledged the great work Mark Gibson and NRE Staff did getting the fleet fitted with VMS by 1 Nov. The TRLFA CEO noted a great outcome <p>NRE Tas Compliance and Licensing update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress amendments to the fisheries rules to cater for modern VMS unit.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking approving another tag for processors, noting already catered for in rules. • It was suggested there was a lack of awareness regarding the need for personal possession tags, with industry members questioning the need for tail clipping and tagging. • Industry members asked why they could not take up to the full amount of their personal possession fish (20) in one trip. • TRLFA noted they did not support the arrangements as they stand, regarding number that can be taken, does not support the double marking. • Marine police noted a greater risk with possession of 20 fish than 5 fish, industry members thought they should be able to take 1-20 as they wish. Noted that take home possession falls under rec possession based on blanket possession of non-commercial fish.
	<p>Brief updates – NRE Tas</p>	<p>NRE Tas Fishery Manager provided an update on catch and other issues, with the following points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NE and East coast have not been impacted by size limit increases. <p><i>Centrostephanus:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centro workshop in Launceston in mid Feb. • Centro national task force has been created. • AIRF to be extended waiting on details. • Centro strategy has been released. • Question when the Tasmania management strategy will be released. <p>Fisheries Digital Transition Plan update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-fishing report being amended, due to confusion as it is very poorly worded, particularly the northern and southern size limit zone for females. Nothing there is also questions regarding catch caps. • Beta trial underway of reporting app, being released in late June. • Port tours from 1 May to 8

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3	CSIRO Rock Lobster Climate Change Workshop – Part I Update	<p>Beth Fulton has been working with fisheries around Australia running workshops looking at risks created by climate change.</p> <p>Beth took the FAC through a presentation providing some outcomes of the recent managers' climate change workshop that featured rock lobster, where it was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL fishery was rated as a high risk in three out of four ecological risk variables. • Southern rock lobster was classified as vulnerable to climate change. • Vic and Bass Strait looking at a 20% reduction in productivity, for 20 plus years, IMAS member noted that TACS have been reduced to account for a 30% reduction in productivity. • Working through steps 1 to 3 of the climate change adaption handbook • Looking to involve industry in step 2 <p>Points raised in discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sobering situation. • Beneficial for industry to participate, including active fishers and TRLFA board members. • Noted Tas impacted by global decisions. • 40% chance of start of climate change effects in 20 years full effects in 60-80 years. • Reports in confidence within industry if needed. • Noted need to be careful regarding language, will impact investment decisions going forward. 		
		Action	Who	Timing
		NRE Tas to coordinate TRLFA and industry to attend stage two of workshop.	NRE	

Item	Title	Discussion Points
4	2023/24 Rock Lobster	<p>The CFAC noted that the 2023/24 season dates will be set</p> <p>The CFAC considered the season opening arrangements with the TRLFA CEO proposing that the new quota year opens at 13:00 on 1 March. NRE supported the principal.</p>

Item	Title	Discussion Points
	Season dates	

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5	Unloading dead or dying rock lobster	<p>The processor member provided background to the issue of unloading of dead and dying rock lobster noting the current rules promoted stupidity and incompetence regarding handling and treatment of the catch sighting a number of recent cases he was aware of. He suggested fish deemed dead should not be dumped at sea, noting processors can't take dead fish. He suggested that dead fish should come off quota.</p> <p>The Marine Police member provided an overview of the rules and noted there were a number of repeat offenders, he suggested that the lobster should come off quota, and proposed an application process for lobsters not to come of quota, where the onus was on the fisher to show cause why decrementation should not occur.</p> <p>The IMAS member thought there needed to be an incentive to report dead lobsters, however it was noted that all fish caught are required to be recorded in the catch record.</p> <p>An industry member asked what the quantity of lobsters was that have been deemed dead? This was not known.</p> <p>Suggested that those who consistently lose lobsters through poor handling should not expect their dead losses not to come off quota, noting if fishers don't pay penalty for mishandling lobsters, there will be no incentive to cease bad practices.</p> <p>The marine police member noted that the numbers of fish was significant when put into perspective with the east coast and was an important perception issue.</p> <p>The FAC was informed that a similar rule was being placed in the new giant crab rules, and was an opportunity to develop a rule where a fisher must apply for dead giant crab not to come of quota that could be applied to the rock lobster fishery in the future.</p> <p>It was suggested that the handling of lobsters by fishers that resulted in deaths was potentially an animal welfare issue.</p> <p>The FAC agreed that the issue was worthy of further consideration.</p>

Item	Title	Discussion Points		
		The issue of disposal was discussed noting that disposal at sea was not ideal with lobster potential washing up on shore and disposal at a tip may draw public attention to the issue. It was agreed marine police would work with NRE regarding a policy for disposal of dead rock lobster.		
		Action	Who	Timing
		NRE and Marine Police to develop policy to dispose of dead rock lobster	NRE	

Item	Title	Discussion Points		
6	Potential management responses to address the “race to fish	<p>The TRLFA CEO provided background to the issue, noting there is currently a race to fish on the east coast which was caused by the catch-cap being cut to 94 tonnes . Processors are advising fishers not to fish at times due to a large quantity of fish being landed and the impact of prices. He suggested breaking the year into three periods were 30t could be landed in each period, spreading the catch across the quota year.</p> <p>A member who fishes the east coast suggested this will create three races to fish and did not support the TRLFA discussion proposal, he suggested putting the measure up was better approach.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO noted if more fish were available to be caught later in the year this could result in a 20% increase in price with more fish landed for Christmas. Industry members agreed the Christmas price was better and ways to allow harvest of more fish at that time would assist with increasing the price and overall revenue for the fishery.</p> <p>NRE Fishery Management member generally supported the principle and would consider proposals, being mostly concerned about maintaining the catch. However, the extra work required around managing three periods as proposed by the TRLFA CEO as noted.</p> <p>The processor member suggested the bigger fish now caught on the east coast would be better caught for the Christmas market in December when the price was better.</p> <p>The FAC agreed to consider the views from upcoming May round of port meetings.</p>		

Item	Title	Discussion Points		
7	Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy update	<p>The NRE Tas Fishery Management member provided the FAC an update regarding the harvest strategy development process. Taking the FAC through a presentation, suggesting four regions within the fishery, target and limit reference points and that in the first instance, the harvest strategy would give priority to biological factors with social and economic aspects being developed down the track.</p> <p>The FAC discussed what an appropriate target for crustaceans (including rock lobster) was noting that 40% biomass had been suggested, however changes in productivity needed to be considered. The SA western zone was highlighted as an example where the target has been set at 28.8% and limit of 17%.</p> <p>The FAC had a discussion around how any MSC accreditation process would work in conjunction with development of the new harvest strategy.</p> <p>It was noted there may be harvest strategies applied to regions of the fishery under the Tas RL harvest strategy, with four regions proposed by the management member. The FAC had a discussion around how catch caps may be used, with an industry member strongly suggesting that a catch cap was not appropriate for the NW.</p> <p>The Chair reminded the FAC that there was generally only one lever to pull which is the TACC.</p> <p>Noted that recruitment was a big unknown and could not be managed, though meta rules could be applied around recruitment and measuring undersize from research pots etc.</p> <p>The fishery management member provided a timeline for the development of the harvest strategy, with a harvest strategy working group to be formed, with new harvest strategy to be in place by December.</p> <p>Noted CFAC will consider a draft before being finalised in December.</p>		
		Action	Who	Timing

Item	Title	Discussion Points		
8	Elephant Rock and North Bay research area opening	<p>The NRE Fishery Management member proved an update noting that the FAC had discussed the issue of the closed research areas at the last meeting and that a decision was pending from the Minister.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO noted that the public policy position should be that when a research area is closed it is open when the research has been completed, and informed that FAC that the local school community was not interested in using the area for education as proposed at the last meeting.</p> <p>The IMAS member provided the view from IMAS, which was that once the research project had completed then the area should open.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO informed the Fac that the TRLFA board supported opening the areas to fishing now that the research has finished.</p> <p>It was noted that the Minister has received advice from the CFAC and RecFAC, noting RecFAC supported rec only areas.</p>		
		Action	Who	Timing

Item	Title	Discussion Points
9	Giant Crab Management Plan	<p>A NRE representative provided the FAC with an update of progress with the giant crab management plan remake, noting that amendments were progressing as previously discussed with the FAC and industry other than the inclusion of some minor changes, an inclusion of a one month closure rather than the one week individual nominated closure and inclusion of dead giant crab provisions.</p>

Item	Title	Discussion Points
10	Other Business	<p>10.1 Area 5</p> <p>It was noted that Area 5 management was an item on a draft agenda for the meeting. The NRE Fishery Manager noted that on paper, biomass in area 5 looks poor, acknowledging percentage virgin biomass estimates are likely to be a conservative underestimate. However, expressed concerns about more catch coming from area 5. As a result, there may be a need to consider catch controls, including a catch cap. Consideration has been given to a research area as a means of better understanding biomass/catch potential in the region.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO informed the FAC that there has been increased effort in Area 5 this season, as bigger fish are achieving higher prices. It was noted catch has increased from 200t to north of 250t over the last few years. An industry member from the region noted the area is experiencing record catches rates.</p> <p>The IMAS member noted that the last assessment took the fishery up to end of Feb 2022, and will be interesting to see what the 2022/23 season looks like for the region. Noted MSC not concerned about local stock fluctuations, however the area was important for egg production. It was acknowledged that there is a level of uncertainty about the growth and biomass prior to commercial fishing.</p> <p>It was noted KI fishers could pay more for quota because of the better price for larger fishers, though this situation could change.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO provided the view of TRLFA board which was that a catch cap was not the only answer, which, it was suggested, could reduce the length of the season. While the NRE Fisheries Manager member was open to consideration different approaches to address issues in Area 5, she noted that Area 5 is a 'weak spot' in the fishery, with biomass at 16%. Others suggested that consideration be given to increase the legal minimum size. It was resolved that the FAC would consider the issue when the 2022/23 assessment was available.</p> <p>10.2 high grading females.</p> <p>The TRLFA CEO provided the FAC with background to the issue, noting it was a common practice for rock lobster fishers to leave southern ports and fish their way up to the NW, however that this now not an option, given the differential size limits for females and the need to cross zone boundaries. He Suggested that fishers be allowed to fish females at higher size limit of 120, around the south coast as they head to the NW.</p> <p>Marine Police members suggested that their preference was for single zone fishing to minimise compliance issues.</p>

Item	Title	Discussion Points						
		<p>It was suggested that fishers can unload at Strahan or Stanley before commencing a fishing trip in the northern SL zone.</p> <p>10.3 Transit reports in female closed season. The issue of requiring a transit report to cross the northern and southern size limit line when the females were closed was raised. The FAC was informed that the Department is looking at not requiring the transit report during the female closed season.</p>						
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Item	Title	Discussion Points
11.	Next Meeting	June-sept for next meeting for draft assessment stock assessment update.

Consolidated action list

Meeting	Item	Action	Who	Timing	Progress/ action/ notes
91	3	NRE Tas to coordinate TRLFA and industry to attend stage two of workshop.			
91	5	NRE and Marine Police to develop policy to dispose of dead rock lobster			