Draft Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery – Summary of key changes

September 2020



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# Introduction

A five-year Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery (NZRLF) adopted on 14 November 2014 expires on 30 June 2021, following an extension to the term of the Management Plan to this date implemented on 31 October 2019.

The Executive Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) tasked the Rock Lobster Fishery Management Advisory Committee (RLFMAC), the recognised peak advisory body to PIRSA on fisheries management for the South Australian Rock Lobster Fishery, to conduct a review of the management plan and recommend amendments to the plan if necessary.

The RLFMAC membership includes an Independent Chair, an independent scientist, industry members from each of the two fishing zones in the fishery, PIRSA, a recreational fisher, and a conservation member. Permanent observers represent South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), PIRSA Compliance and executive officers of the South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen’s Association and the South Eastern Professional Fishermen’s Association.

The RLFMAC reviewed the following key components of the 2014 management plan:

* Harvest Strategy
* Ecosystem impacts
* Objectives
* Remaining parts of the management plan

This document summarises the significant changes included in each section of the draft Management Plan now provided for public consultation.

## Fishery to which this plan applies (Section 1)

Minor amendments to update references to fisheries regulations.

## Consistency with other management plans (Section 2)

Minor amendments to update references to fisheries regulations.

## Term of plan (Section 3)

The term of the plan is proposed to apply from the date of adoption on 1 July 2021 for a period of ten years.

The *Fisheries Management Act 2007* requires a review of a management plan as soon as practicable after the fifth anniversary of the commencement of the management plan. Hence a review of the Management Plan will be required as soon as practicable after 1 July 2026.

## Description of fishery (Section 4)

### Commercial Fishing

Information has been updated related to separation of the zone into two regions, Inner and Outer Regions in 2015 and removal of the annual winter fishing closure in the Outer Region in 2016, allowing commercial fishing in this region for 12 months of the year.

A description of the disruption to the export market from the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020 and temporary management arrangements implemented in response is also included. These temporary arrangements included removing the normal winter fishing closure for the commercial fishery in the Inner Region of the fishery in 2020 and allowing for uncaught quota entitlements to be carried over from the 2019/20 quota period to the following two quota periods.

### Recreational Fishing

Updated to include information from the most recent recreational fishing survey conducted in 2013/14.

### Aboriginal traditional fishing sector

Minor changes.

### Ecosystem and habitat

Simplified.

### Biology

Simplified with reference provided where further information can be found.

### Stock status and export approval

Updated to refer to the most recent national fish stock status classification and export approval for the fishery under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* until 2025.

### Stock assessment and research

Minor changes to update information in this section.

### Strategic research plan

Updated to include information relating to a strategic research and development plan prepared by the RLFMAC to guide its advice on the undertaking of research and development projects for the Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery.

### Economic characteristics

Simplified and updated with key information and reference to annual reports provided.

## Co-management arrangements (Section 5)

Updated to include reference to the RLFMAC established in 2015 by the South Australian Rock Lobster Advisory Council (SARLAC) to take over the roles and responsibilities of the previous RLFMAC.

## Allocation (Section 6)

Minor changes and includes updated recreational catch estimates from the 2013/14 recreational fishing survey.

## Ecosystem impacts (Section 7)

Updated to refer to an updated Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) risk assessment conducted by the RLFMAC in 2018.

## Goals and objectives (Section 8)

Updated reference levels included in the table of goals and objectives to be consistent with amended performance indicators included in the proposed harvest strategy.

Minor amendments to wording of other objectives as recommended by a Management Plan Review Working Group established by the RLFMAC. This working group consisted the Independent Chair of the RLFMAC, Executive Officer from South Eastern Professional Fishermen’s Association (SEPFA), Executive Officer from South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen’s Association (SANZRLFA) and PIRSA.

## Draft Harvest Strategy (Section 9)

The draft harvest strategy aims to achieve the following three broad objectives:

1. Optimum utilisation within ecologically sustainable limits;
2. Improve stock towards levels giving long-term optimum utilisation; and
3. Avoid stock over-exploitation.

The operational objectives of the draft harvest strategy are:

1. Increase egg production in the Inner Region of the Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishery towards a stock improvement target of 20% unfished egg production (%UEP) by 2036;
2. Maintain zonal commercial catch rate (CPUE, November – April) at or above the long term average (2003-2018) of 0.87 kg/potlift; and
3. Maintain Outer Region commercial catch rate (CPUE, November – May) at or above the Trigger Reference point of 0.60 kg/potlift.

The new draft NZRLF management plan incorporates key changes and refinements listed below:

* Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) is recommended separately for each of two regions, the Inner and Outer Region.
* Raw commercial catch rates (CPUE) remains the primary performance indicator for decision rules in the harvest strategy for both regions. Catch rate is calculated separately for each region.
* The secondary indicator, Pre-recruit index is only used in decision rules related to TACC for the Inner Region.
* Draft harvest strategy decision rules incorporate a conservative approach to TACC allowing for a maximum TACC of 300 tonnes for the Inner region and 46 tonnes for the Outer Region.
* The harvest strategy identifies trigger and limit references points for both Inner and Outer Region.
* Reference points for monitoring the performance of the harvest strategy in meeting the identified operational objectives are provided.
* Reference points for defining stock status are included.
* Includes a description of activities to monitor the fishery during closure and to reopen the fishery.

### Decision Rules

Inner Region

*Table 1: Proposed decision rules for TACC for the Inner Region*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Inner region CPUE (kg/potlift) | TACC (t) |
| <0.40 | 0 |
| 0.4-0.44 | 17 |
| 0.45-0.49 | 52 |
| 0.5-0.54 | 90 |
| 0.55-0.59 | 129 |
| 0.6-0.64 | 150 |
| 0.65-0.69 | 170 |
| 0.7-0.75 | 215 |
| 0.76-0.79 | 235 |
| 0.8-1.19 | 250 |
| 1.2-1.99 | 275 |
| ≥2.0 | 300 |

1. PRI rule - A TACC increase will be considered when a CPUE trigger reference point has been reached and PRI is at or above the trigger reference point.
2. One-step rule - TACC can increase by only one TACC level in any year regardless of the absolute CPUE estimate.
3. Consecutive year rule - A TACC increase under rule 1 will only be considered if there was no TACC increase in the previous season.
4. TACC in the Inner region will be no higher than 250 tonnes until CPUE exceeds 1.2 kg/potlift and the PRI rule is satisfied for three consecutive seasons. This rule would only be applied once in the life of the harvest strategy and only to the CPUE band of 0.8 – 1.19 kg/potlift.

Outer Region

Table : Proposed decision rules for TACC for the Outer Region

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Outer region CPUE (kg/potlift) | TACC (t) |
| <0.40 | 0 |
| 0.4-0.44 | 3 |
| 0.45-0.49 | 10 |
| 0.5-0.54 | 19 |
| 0.55-0.59 | 29 |
| 0.6-0.69 | 38 |
| 0.7-0.79 | 44 |
| ≥0.8 | 46 |

1. One-step rule - TACC can increase by only one level in any year regardless of the absolute CPUE estimate.
2. Consecutive year rule - A TACC increase will only be considered if there was no TACC increase in the previous season.

### Additional indicators

Other data and performance measures will be used to assess the fishery but do not trigger explicit TACC adjustments. These include:

* % Unfished Egg Production (%UEP)
* Puerulus settlement index (PSI)
* Exploitable biomass
* Levels of exploitation
* Model estimated recruitment index
* Length-frequency data collated from voluntary pot sampling and observer program

Percentage of unfished egg production

%UEP = current egg production as a percentage of unfished egg production. Estimated using the qR model (McGarvey and Matthews 2001).

### Monitoring

Monitoring of performance of the harvest strategy will be assessed against the objectives of the harvest strategy, including %UEP in the Inner Region. The lowest satisfactory rebuilding trajectory is the estimated %UEP in each year at 20% below a trajectory line between %UEP estimated in 2018 and 22% UEP in 2036.

*Table 3: Proposed annual lowest satisfactory rebuilding trajectory*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Season | Lowest satisfactory rebuilding trajectory | Season | Lowest satisfactory rebuilding trajectory |
| 2021/22 | 8.9% | **2029/30** | 13.5% |
| 2022/23 | 9.5% | **2030/31** | 14.1% |
| 2023/24 | 10.1% | **2031/32** | 14.7% |
| 2024/25 | 10.7% | **2032/33** | 15.3% |
| 2025/26 | 11.2% | **2033/34** | 15.9% |
| 2026/27 | 11.8% | **2034/35** | 16.4% |
| 2027/28 | 12.4% | **2035/36** | 17.0% |
| 2028/29 | 13.0% | **2036/2037** | 17.6% |

### Stock status classification

The primary performance indicator used in the harvest strategy, nominal zonal CPUE, will also be utilised for determining the stock status as described below.

Table : Stock Status Classification

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Zonal Commercial Catch Rate  | Status |
| ≥ 0.6 kg/potlift | Sustainable |
| < 0.6 kg/potlift | Depleting or Recovering |
| ≤ 0.4 kg/potlift | Depleted |

### Review of the harvest strategy

A review of the harvest strategy would be considered if %UEP is below acceptable levels of rebuilding described in the harvest strategy for two consecutive years.

During the life of the harvest strategy annual estimates of CPUE may be standardised to account for changes in fishing behaviour that significantly influence the annual catch rates estimates. If this standardisation is completed, PIRSA with advice of the established consultative group, may recommend amendments to the Harvest Strategy under section 46 of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

## Compliance and monitoring (Section 10)

Simplified.

## Resources required to implement the plan (Section 11)

Simplified.

## Review of Plan (Section 12)

Sets out requirements to review management plans described in Section 46 and 49 of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

