

<u>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP</u>	Meeting 27-28 November 2007
Report from the RAG	<i>Agenda Item No. 5</i> <i>FOR DISCUSSION</i>

PURPOSE

To inform the group about outcomes from the RAG meeting.

SPECIAL NOTE

At this time RAG members have not confirmed the minutes of the meeting, and ordinarily the RAG would report directly to the PZJA, to whom they're primarily responsible. This report is preliminary and the purpose is to keep the working group and through its members other stakeholders informed about the work of the RAG. Members should let others they may speak to know that the information contained in this report is preliminary.

BACKGROUND

The TRL Resource Assessment Group (RAG) convened their fourth meeting on Loloata Island (near Port Moresby) on 4-5 October 2007. The meeting was convened at this venue because many of the members of the RAG were already in Port Moresby for the Australia-PNG bilateral fisheries meeting convened on the two days immediately preceding the RAG. Further, it was a way to convey a message that the RAG was a body serving three jurisdictions by holding the meeting in PNG. The RAG agenda is shown at Attachment 5.

A principle purpose for holding this meeting was for the RAG to review the draft CSIRO stock assessment report that had been submitted by Yimin Ye. Though Yimin had presented many of the results at meeting 3, members had not had the opportunity to read and study the stock assessment report in detail. A number of comments were made on the report which Yimin and the other authors took on board before submitting the final report.

Another important purpose for holding the meeting was to go through the process to recommend a TAC for 2008. Even though the fishery will not be limited by a quota in 2008 members thought that it was important to work through the process so when the fishery does move to quota management there is less of a chance that there will be any 'hiccups'.

As it turned out the process was very useful because it revealed much more about the process than had been previously understood and appreciated by some RAG members. The main outcomes from this process follow in Box 1.

BOX 1.

1. The RAG agreed to use the results from the mid-season survey to set the basis for the Preliminary TAC:
 - a. The Preliminary TAC will be set by October each year using the P-based model;
 - b. The lower 95% confidence interval of the estimated Preliminary TAC will be used (acknowledging that this estimate is less likely to be an accurate forecast than the final TAC);
 - c. 75% of the Preliminary TAC will be allocated to industry prior to the final TAC being released in March of each year (to ensure that there is very little possibility that the final TAC would be less than the allocation made under the preliminary TAC);
 - d. The Preliminary TAC will be further split between Australia and PNG to honour the catch sharing arrangements.
2. The RAG will explain the process used to determine the TAC to fishers and release a provisional quota by the end of October of each year;
3. The Final TAC will be determined from the results of the pre-season survey and released in March each year.
4. The quota for the season will be adjusted in light of the Final TAC (when 100% of the TAC would be available and the model would be used rather than the lower 95% confidence limit);

Following these rules:

- Using the SS-model, the forecast TAC (based on the recruitment figures from the end of 2006 for the total fishery area including PNG) for 2008 is estimated to be **697.3t**. In coming to this figure the target fishing mortality rate F0.35 was used. (this figure is not really relevant at this point because the next (preliminary TAC estimate is already available).
- The estimated Preliminary TAC for 2008 based on age 1+ index of the 2007 mid-year survey is **956.5t**. The RAG discussed the wide difference between the Forecast TAC and the Preliminary TAC.
 - The lower 95% confidence interval for this estimate was **652.5t**
 - 75% of that amount was **489.4t** would be recommended as a starting allocation. This would be split between PNG quota¹, TIB competitive quota and TVH ITQs

A further purpose of the RAG meeting was to discuss the methodology that Queensland could adopt to assess its fishery and move towards quota setting in that jurisdiction. This was an opportunity to involve a wider group of people in these discussions than are typically available. It was also another step towards establishing the RAG a body of universal importance for the three jurisdictions.

¹ PNG has not yet indicated how it would manage or allocate its share of the quota.

DISCUSSION

The processes that are needed to be in place and operating effectively before a quota system comes into force continue to develop. This meeting of the RAG like those that have preceded it highlight the technical challenges that need to be overcome.

The RAG recommended that an annual stock assessment be done. This is necessary to produce forecast TACs and should help improve the assessment methods by incorporating new data sources sooner than later and identifying data issues on an annual basis which should help to resolve them more quickly. It also means that the data from the fishery will need to be available in a timely manner. This has so far been a challenge all on its own. The quota system may assist or further complicate the data issues – only time will tell. What we do know is that it will change the fishery significantly in terms of its stakeholder composition and all of the flow on effects that will have in terms of the data and how we understand the fishery.

The RAG has recommended a quantitative and transparent (albeit technically complicated) method for setting the TAC. This is an achievement on its own. And the RAG has established a process that has brought greater independence and most importantly an inclusive process involving each of the relevant jurisdictions.

RECOMMENDATION

That the TRLWG note the achievements of the RAG and the process it has recommended for setting the Preliminary and final TAC.

ATTACHMENT 5.

TORRES STRAIT TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRL-RAG)	MEETING No. 4 4-5 October 2007
Loloata Island Resort, PNG	

Meeting to commence at 0830 each day

Draft Agenda:

Apologies

Adoption of agenda

1. Ratification of Minutes of meeting 3. (AFMA)
2. Reports from relevant management meetings
 - a. TRL WG, TSFMAC, and PZJA (AFMA)
 - b. Qld Lobster WG (QDPI)
 - c. PNG (NFA)
3. Action items from the RAG meeting 3
 - a. Jim Prescott to get CSIRO's two research proposals and submit to FRDC for funding. (AFMA)
 - b. Ana Lara-Lopez to contact Craig Mundy from TAFI to get an update on the GPS tracking system trials and report back to the RAG at their next meeting. (AFMA)
 - c. Ana Lara-Lopez to contact Caleb Gardiner to organise a demonstration for the GPS tracking system at the 2007 Lobster Congress. Ana to liaise with Jim Fogarty to finalise arrangements. (AFMA)
 - d. The RAG recommended that QLD look into the possibilities of funding for research into the bifurcation point of lobsters between the east coast and Torres Strait. (QDPI&F)
 - e. BRS to find out if any funding is available through the recreational fishing grants to fund research into estimating non-commercial take. (BRS)

- f. Jim Prescott will provide copies of a journal article to all members of the RAG that he believes is useful for fisheries managers. 'Stock information requirements for quota management systems in commercial fisheries'. (AFMA)
- g. Samantha Emerick to finalise Fisheries Administration Paper 2 and to clarify membership. (AFMA)
- 4. Review 2006 Stock assessment report (ALL)
- 5. Review of Qld Assessment & potential TAC setting methods and advice (QDPI and ALL)
- 6. Preliminary TAC for Torres Strait (2008): Stepping through the process and providing the preliminary TAC advice (ALL)
- 7. Forecast TACs for Torres Strait (2009 & 2010) (ALL)
- 8. Other business
 - a. Membership (AFMA)

Next Meeting

Close of meeting

Useful Contacts

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