



NZ ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY COUNCIL LTD

Ka whakapai te kai o te moana

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Review of CRA 4 for 1 April 2019; Supplementary submission

1 March 2019

Background

On the eve (the evening prior to) the NRLMG meeting of 14 February, NZ RLIC heard from two entities who suggested they were concerned there might be a shortfall in catch against total ACE in CRA 4 in the current fishing year. However, there were conflicting opinions as to why that might be the case. This new information was received after the provision of submissions to the Ministry for the review of rock lobster stocks 1 April in January. This information was conveyed to CRAMAC 4 to try and better inform the situation and discuss a course of action.

The NZ RLIC submission on CRA 4 in January was based on a well attended CRAMAC 4 meeting held in Masterton in December. At that meeting the fishermen from throughout the QMA reported a good fishing season to date and there were no reservations expressed about the proposed TACC increase. The mandate from that meeting was to support the operation of the management procedure and the TACC increase.

Assessing the situation and course of action

Various opinions have emerged as to why ACE may not be caught, and it may yet be taken - the fishing year does not end until March 31st. Feedback from various CRA 4 industry participants seems to predominantly relate to issues of availability of ACE to fishermen not affiliated to LFRs and the timing of ACE distribution over the course of the fishing year. Two other factors have also been reported; an otherwise productive fishing period over Christmas/New Year was closed to many CRA 4 operators due to quality issues thought to be associated with an unusual second moult occurring along the east coast in mid to late December; and there has been an unusual recent prevalence of easterly winds which prevent fishing.

Following the NRLMG on 14 February, CRAMAC 4 discussed the situation with NZ RLIC and decided that in order to be responsible and better inform the situation, the views of QSOs

and fishermen throughout the QMA should be sought. If it was necessary to take action to limit catch of the available CRA 4 ACE in the 2019/20 autumn/winter and spring/summer seasons the CRAMAC could use the ACE shelving mechanism applied successfully in the past. This shelving proposal would entail monitoring the fishery performance during the 2019 autumn/winter season, and potentially release the 62 tonne increase incrementally during the spring/summer if issues were not evident in the performance of the fishery.

Floating a proposal for ACE shelving is a mechanism to ascertain the view of the CRA 4 Quota Share Owners. Importantly, initiating that action allowed for a prompt response should the industry response to the potential shelving gain a strong mandate.

The feedback to date suggests that although some of the fishermen in one area report fishing is slow, that is not unusual for that area this time of year, and there is not widespread concern about the performance of the fishery overall and/or the sustainability of the proposed new TAC/TACC. Some iwi have expressed reservations about a further TACC increase. Experience would suggest the operators in CRA 4 are an inherently conservative group and we think if they were observing issues in the fishery they will come forward.

Conclusion

CRAMAC 4 initiated the use of a management procedure to guide TAC decisions for the fishery and expect that to be applied again for 2019/20 fishing year. If underlying abundance or localised fishery performance issues do emerge these will be reflected in CPUE and will be redressed by the operation of the Management Procedure in November 2019 and the subsequent TAC setting from April 2020. The CRAMAC will also consider steps to shift some fishing effort if it is a localised issue. Fluctuations in TAC/TACCs are a feature of the fishery over time.

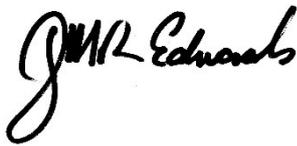
When the current management procedure was selected in 2016 after a comprehensive process to consider the performance of alternatives against a range of measures it was acknowledged to be conservative, and it immediately led to a substantial TACC reduction of 108 tonnes for 1 April 2017. That same procedure led to a modest increase for 1 April 2018 and the further proposed increase for 1 April 2019. We clearly have a responsive management procedure in place.

The use of management procedures over the last two decades have successfully rebuilt New Zealand's rock lobster fisheries and provided certainty for all sectors and a foundation for the monitoring and assessment approaches used. The NRLMG has consistently agreed that management procedures should be applied unless there is very good reason to depart from their outcomes. There is no reason to suggest that CPUE in CRA 4 does not reflect the underlying stock status, or to doubt the ability of the management procedure to inform the Minister's TAC/TACC decisions. A consensus views from operators will emerge by 15 March. If new information does emerge through the engagement with CRA 4 operators, there is time to respond, and use that information to better inform the Minister.

There is therefore no reason at this time not to support the TACC increase suggested by the management procedure. There is a lot at stake for the commercial operators and Quota Share Owners in the QMA, and there will be very strong opposition and serious concern about a decision to ignore the management procedure; to impose very substantial economic costs; and more importantly, to take such action in the absence of reliable information to suggest the management procedure should not be applied.

We have discussed this supplementary advice with the Chair of CRAMAC 4. This is a relatively complex matter, and we would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss these matters with you in order to better inform your decisions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Mark Edwards

Chief Executive Officer

NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council