

TASMANIAN ABALONE COUNCIL LTD

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Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG)

Meeting 2/2013

Tuesday 23rd April 2013 – 10.00am

IMAS, Nubeena Crescent Tarooma

DRAFT Minutes

1. Present:

Members:

I Cartwright (Chair), G Woodham, D Lisson, M Webster, T Johnston, B Cobbing, J McKibben, P. Richardson, J. Hault, R. Scanlon, V Collins, R Rex, D Tarbath, M Bradshaw, J Freeman (minutes), C Gardner, C Mundy

Observers:

L Forbes, A Hansen, G Moroney, B Ransom, S Anning, R Menadue,

2. Apologies

M. Haddon, R Rex, B Greene,

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed observers. It was noted that the meeting discussion would include i) a review of the fishery performance so far for 2013 and ii) a review of minimum size changes, catch caps and any other changes that can/should be implemented in 2013 and iii) changes that would need time to develop and would not be implemented until 2014. It is important that information on changes suggested by the FRAG are communicated clearly to all members as soon as possible.

3. Adoption of agenda:

The agenda was adopted with additions to General Business.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting:

Agreed to be an accurate record and accepted.

5. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting:

Action 1 – Development of indicators, target and limit reference points -.

Malcolm Haddon continues to develop an abalone model, which is being developed in conjunction with Craig Mundy. While the model will help to identify how the fishery performs under various management settings, it will not provide forewarning of recruitment declines.

Parameters considered for use as indicators include catch rate against the target catch rate, 3 and 5 year average catch rate, and rate of change over the last 12 months.

The diver sector meeting on Friday 10th May at IMAS will discuss what constitutes acceptable target reference point for the fishery, including acceptable catch rates.

Action 2 - Follow up on funding with FRDC for Occupational Divers Course, based on FRDC People Development Funding

Funding support for this initiative is very likely to be available from the FRDC under the people development programme- Joey McKibben will put together a proposal to put to FRDC and IMAS, with assistance from the Chair as necessary.

Action 1 Joey McKibben to develop a proposal for funding of a scientific diver training programme.

Action 3 – Finalisation of Block 5 report and presentation of results to FRAG

Discussed further in agenda

Action 4 – Information of processor/diver numbers and options for maintaining profitability/viability in these sectors

This issue was discussed at the TACL Board Meeting, TACL will provide the funds to engage a lawyer and Bruce Felmingham to work together and provide firm recommendations for divers and processors.

The processor sector moratorium has a deadline of 31st August.

Action 5 – Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process –

Ongoing -

Action 6 – Increase size to 140mm Partridge Island, Bruny Island 14 C & D

AbFAC was supportive, Matt and Dean have had discussions on boundaries.

Action 7 – Extended East Coast Closure (4 or 6 months)

Discussion at AbFAC and decided to leave the closure at 3 months January to March inclusive. Tony Johnston provided a graph, which shows the peaks in the early part of the year. Live exports have been falling over the last 5 years, 95% is exported to China. 12t is exported to other countries.

Action 8 – Increase size limit on Western Zone to 145mm from April 1, 2013

Discussed further in the agenda.

Action 10 – ‘Shell Study’ article to be inserted in ‘Fishing today’

Completed –

Action 2 Shell Study article to be put on the TACL website.

IMAS – AbFAC actions;

Action 7. Recruitment research – the project started at IMAS and is combined with 2 other states to get priority on funding from FRDC.

Current Priorities – East Coast decline and PST research.

Greg is on SAMRAC and advises there is limited funding for the IMAS team to respond and react to immediate issues.

If there is a natural mortality event there are resources available to mobilise quickly. If AVG is detected, fishing and processing activity would be suspended.

Quick response funding is available through the Abalone Overcatch fund

Motherboats are following a 12 month voluntary implementation of new Bio-security protocols.

6. Review of 2013 Fishery Performance March Quarter:

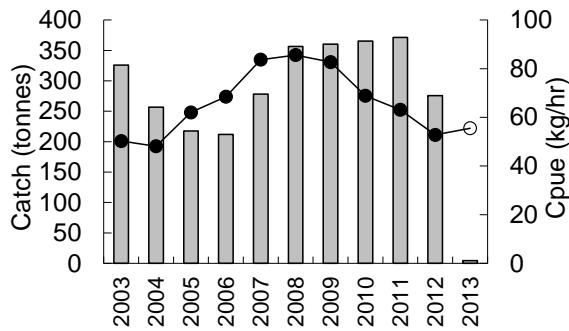
April 2013 FRAG 2 fishery performance review – 22 April 2013

Landings to 12 April 2013:

Zone	tonnes landed	TAC (tonnes)	% caught	tonnes left
Greenlip	18.5	140.0	13	121.5
East	15.9	528.5	3	512.6
North	96.8	308.0	31	211.2
West	394.4	1001.0	39	606.6
Central West	23.7	101.5	23	77.8
Bass Strait	6.7	70.0	10	63.3
	530.8	2149.0		1618.2

Eastern Zone

Actaeons 13C, 13D, 13E (capped area)



2013 Cap: ?

Catch to date: 4 t

Mean CPUE to date: 56 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 291 t

Fishery condition: low stock levels

Suggested catch for 2013: ? t

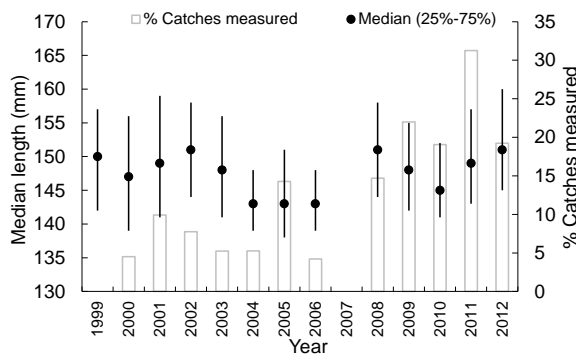
Suggested management changes:

Notes:

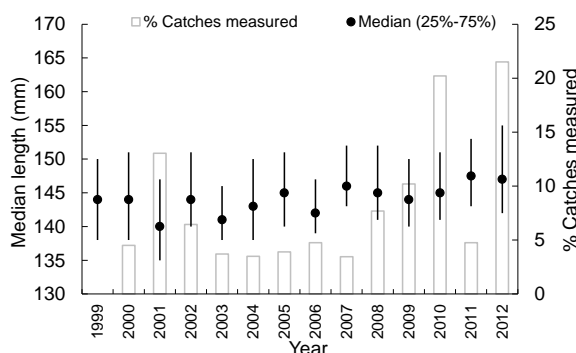
- Insufficient catches to assess fishery at this stage
- 18 catches to 12 April, catch rates 37-120 kg/hr, daily landings 110-440 kg
- Length data from 2012 show larger fish - does this mean less recruits?

Median length of catch

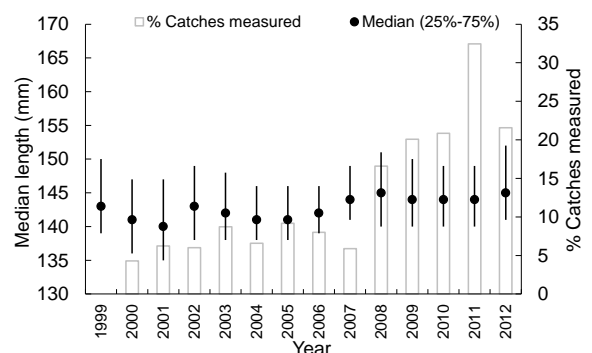
Sub-block 13C
Fishers Point to Whale Head



Sub-block 13D (Black Reef, Recherche)



Sub-block 13E (Actaeon Island, Breaks etc.)



FRAG Comments:

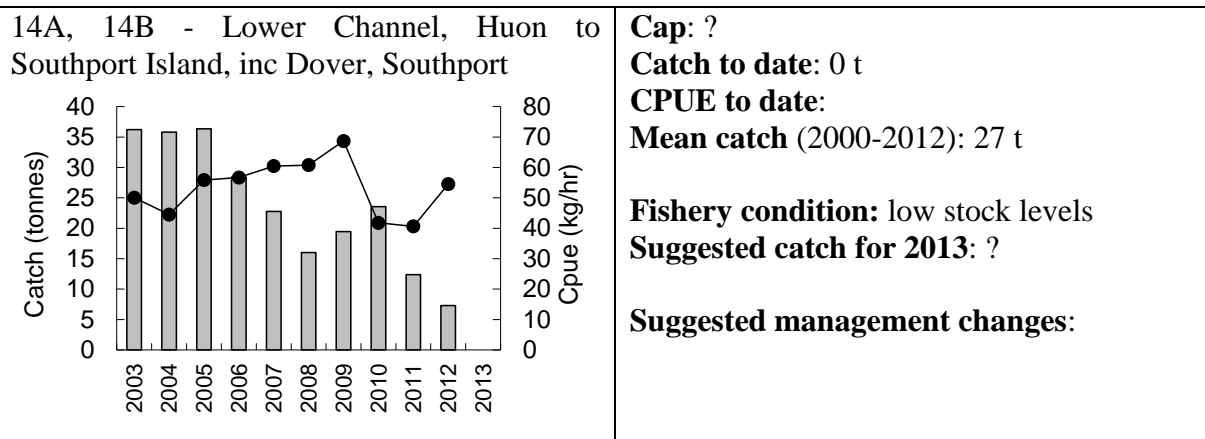
Statistics show an increasing median size.

Suggest bigger fish are being caught nearer fresh water, and suggest leaving the area alone.

Divers are diving in deeper water.

The fish may be getting larger with few recruits, there are concerns the fishery will fall over.

Fish may have time to grow through or very few smaller fish coming through.
It is more likely to be lack of recruitment and more time for the fish to grow larger.



Notes:

- 7 t caught in 2012, no fish caught in 2013
- Insufficient samples measured for length data

FRAG Comments

Freycinet block – Coles Bay to South of Seymour 5 tonne cap and 145mm size limit

Action - TXT to divers reminding of size limit

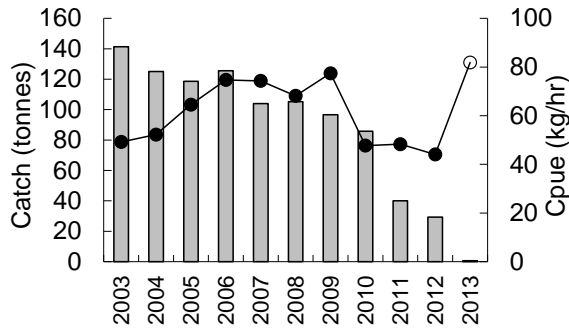
Start and finish trip access from Dover to Actaeons, Blocks 13C, 13D, 13E, 14A, 14B stay at 138mm. All of Bruny Island, north is 140mm to Block 29.

Block 31A – Tasmanian Seafoods has studied the results of catch, condition and shell size.

Block 31 stay at 138mm North of Eddystone to Cod Bay 138mm, Cod Bay 132mm to Northern zone boundary at Musselroe.

The Board agreed Block 15 to stay closed due to PST.

Bruny Island – Blocks 14C, 14D, 14E, 15, 16.



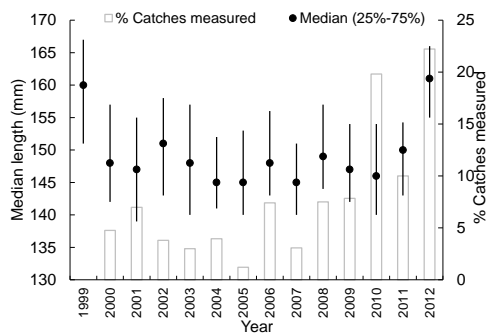
Cap: ?
Catch to date: 640 kg
CPUE to date: :-)
Mean catch (2000-2012): 113 t

Fishery condition: low stock levels
Suggested catch for 2013: ?
Suggested management changes:

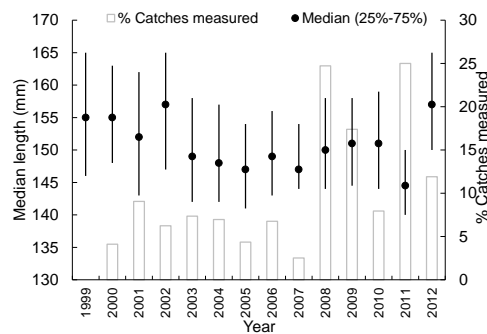
Notes:

- In 2012, increase in size of fish, particularly South Bruny (coincidentally area closed with PST restrictions). Does this mean no recruitment last couple of years? Or that the fishing mortality is so low that fish are able to grow to a large size prior to capture?

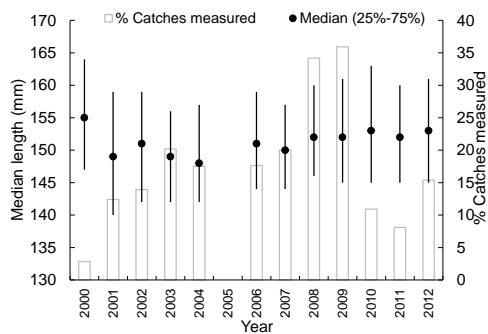
Sub-block 14D Hopwood Point to West Cloudy Head



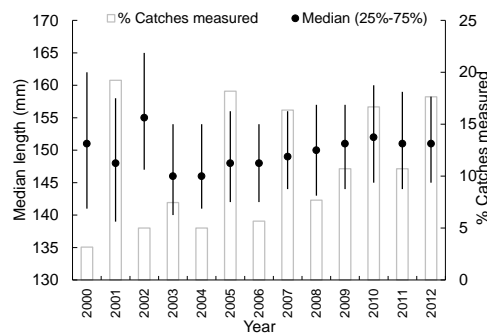
Sub-block 14E West Cloudy Head to Boreel Head, including the Friars



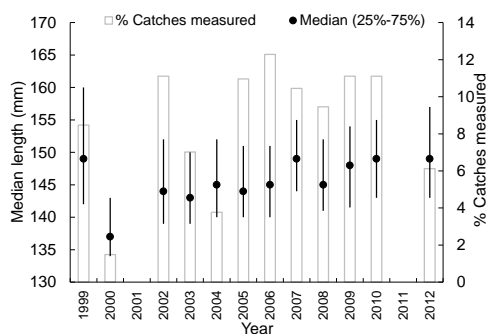
Sub-block 16A Boreel Head to North Mangana Bluff



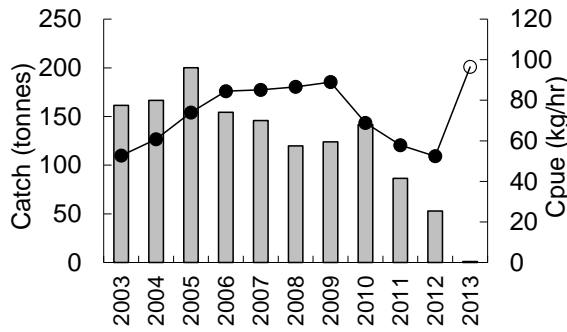
Sub-block 16C Neck Beach to Trumpeter Bay



Sub-block 16D Trumpeter Bay to Dennes Point



Storm Bay - Blocks 17 - 21. – Hobart to Tasman Island including Nubeena.



Cap: ?

Catch to date: 1 t

CPUE to date:

Mean catch (2000-2012): 136 t

Fishery condition: low stock levels

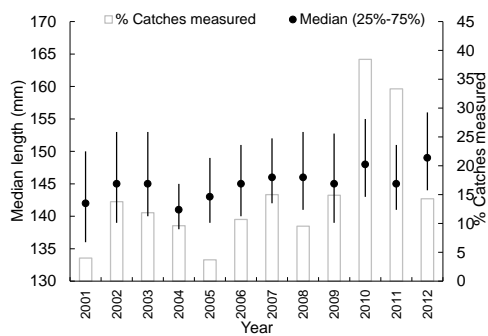
Suggested catch for 2013: ?

Suggested management changes:

Notes:

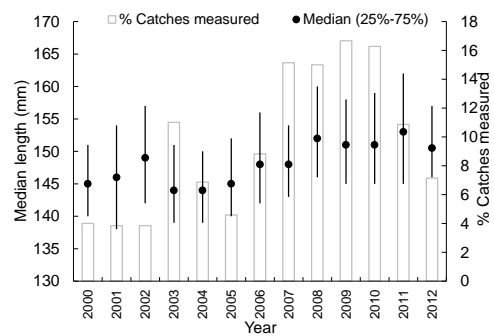
- In 2012, increased size of fish – consistent with lower levels of recruitment?

Sub-block 17B Blackjack shoreline from Lobster Point to Outer North Head

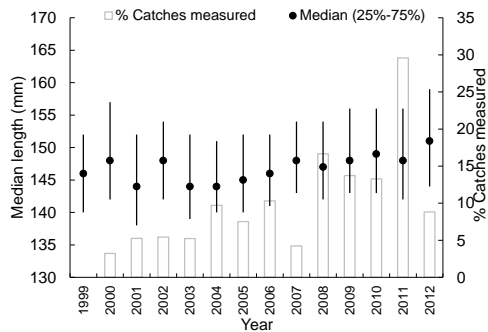


Sub-block 20A

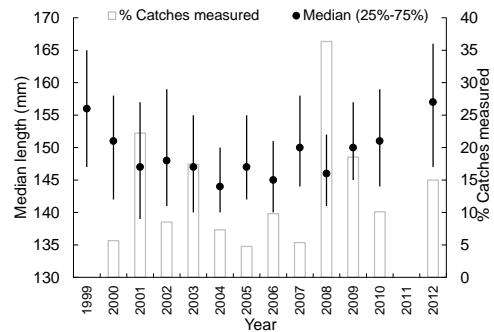
Outer North Head to White Beach



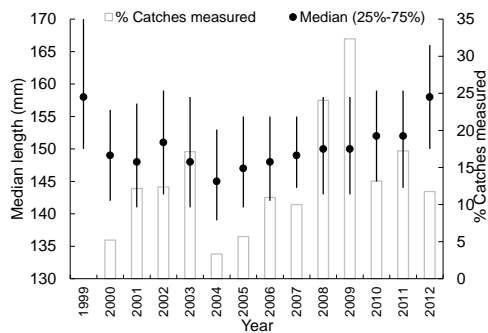
Sub-block 20B White Beach - Salters Point



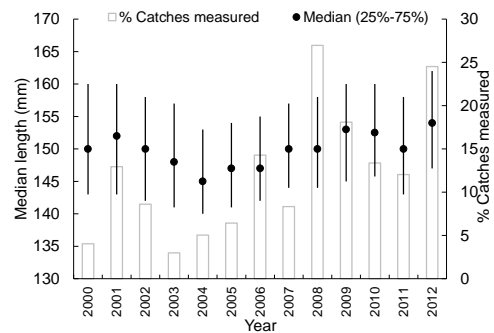
Sub-block 20C Salters Point to Cape Raoul



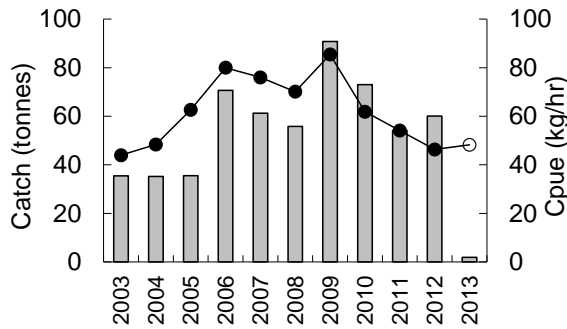
Sub-block 21A Cape Raoul to Port Arthur



Sub-block 21C Port Arthur to Cape Pillar



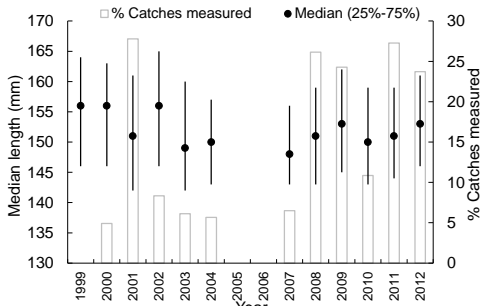
Block 22



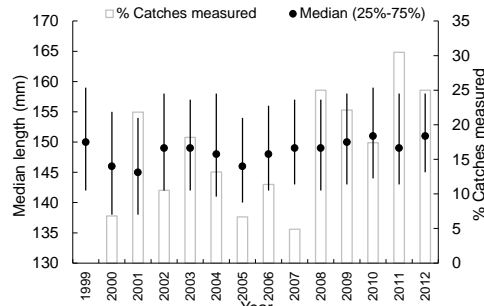
Cap: ?
Catch to date: 2 t
CPUE to date: 48 kg/hr
Mean catch (2000-2012): 56 t

Fishery condition:
Suggested catch for 2013: ?
Suggested management changes:

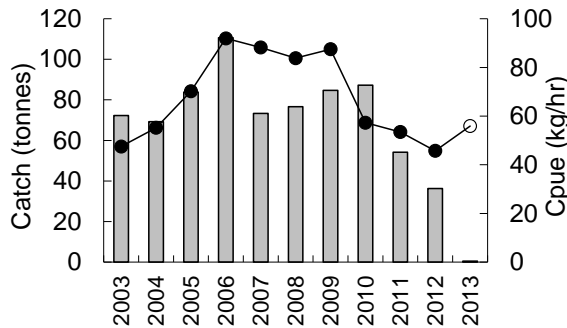
Sub-block 22A Cape Pillar to the Lanterns



Sub-block 22B The Lanterns to Eaglehawk Neck



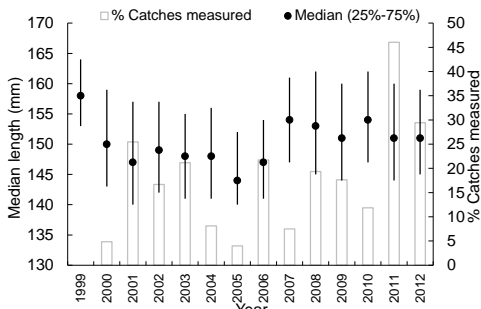
Blocks 23, 24 – Deep Glen Bay to Triabunna including Maria Island



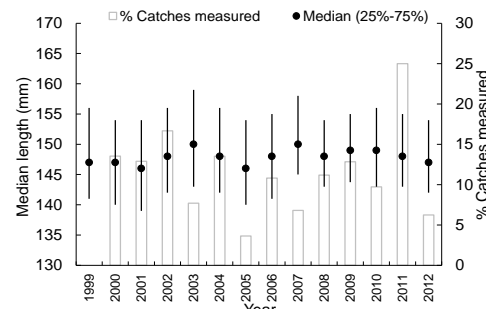
Cap: ?
Catch to date: 0.5 t
CPUE to date:
Mean catch (2000-2012): 84 t

Fishery condition:
Suggested catch for 2013:
Suggested management changes:

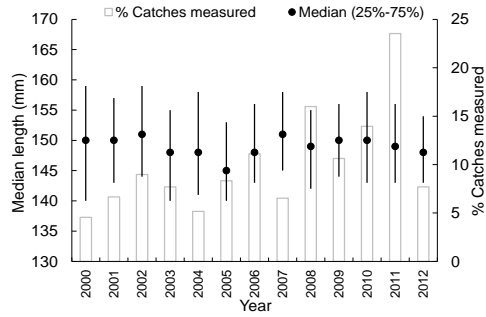
Sub-block 23A Deep Glen Bay to Lagoon Bay



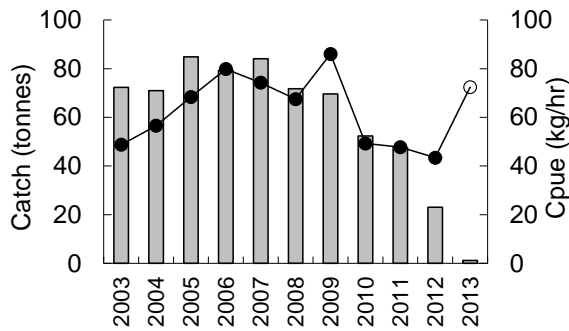
Sub-block 24D north-east side of Maria Island



Sub-block 24E
south-east side of Maria Island



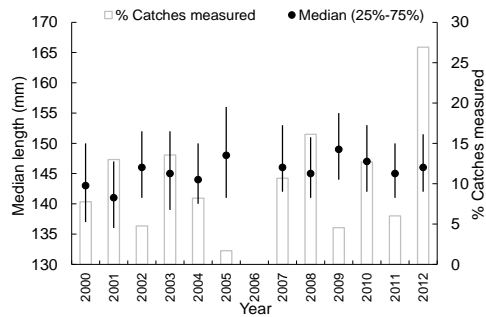
Freycinet and Bicheno – Blocks 25 to 29A



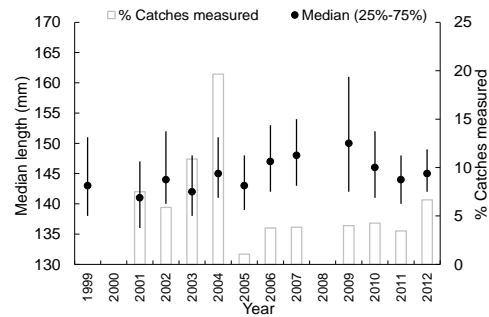
Cap: ?
Catch to date: 1 t
CPUE to date:
Mean catch (2000-2012): 74 t

Fishery condition:
Suggested catch for 2013: ?
Suggested management changes:

Sub-block 27D
Wineglass Bay to the Friendly Beaches



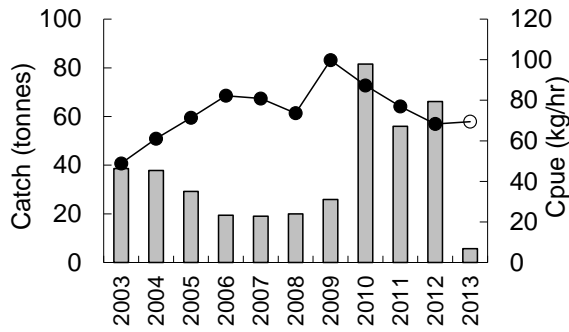
Sub-block 29A Long Point to Templestowe Beach



FRAG Comments

Nil

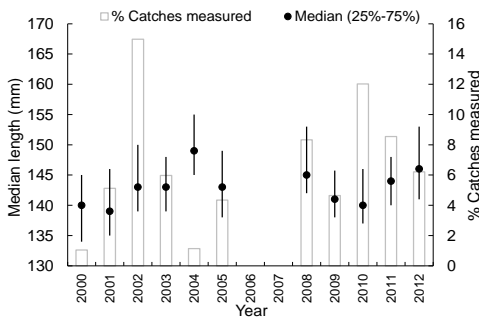
North East – Blocks 29B to 31



Cap: ?
Catch to date: 6 t (5 t from 31A)
CPUE to date: 69 kg/hr
Mean catch (2000-2012): 50 t (34 t from 31A)
Fishery condition: depleted
Suggested catch for 2013: ?
Suggested management changes:

Sub-block 31A Eddystone Point to Musselroe

Changes in median length probably reflect the proportion of fish caught under different size limits more than recruitment variation or fishing mortality



FRAG Comments

Block 30B & C – the TACL Board decided to have a 5t limit at a 145mm size limit, access will be by permit with some parameters including collection of R&D information, 100% catch sampling, It will be open to all divers who will be asked to apply for a permit.

The key issues are to return the area to the fishery after closure in an orderly way, a controlled re-opening will maximise the results of having the area closed.

The closure was in place;

1. The translocation project was allowed to progress undisturbed.
2. To determine if an area is closed will it recover?

Outcomes –

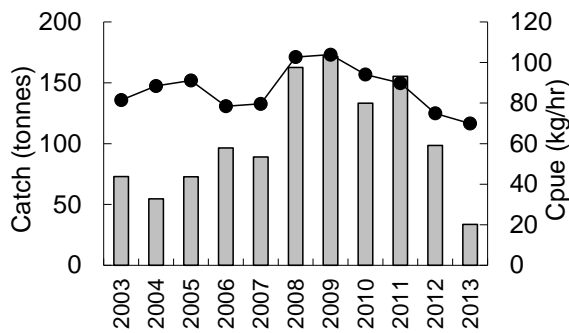
Recommendation for Block 30B & C, general support for 2 tonnes at 145mm, all catches to be logged.

Meeting on the 10th May to agree on the details, all divers will be advised to apply for a permit to fish, TACL will then advise DPIPWE who will then issue permits.

Block 31A – previous discussion was to leave this block uncapped, the view now is to consider a building block cap for 2014.

Northern Zone

North West - Block 5



Cap: ?

Catch to date: 34 t

CPUE to date: 70 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 105 t

Fishery condition: stocks depleted

Suggested catch 2013: 75 t

Suggested management changes: reduce the catch

Notes:

- Catch rates are headed downwards
- No change in size distribution

FRAG comments:

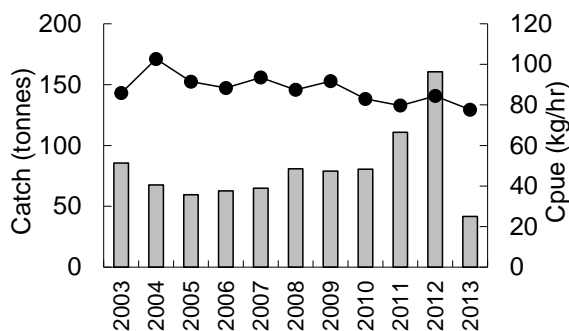
Divers have noted that the fishery has diminished with the quota too high and the size limit too low.

A study undertaken by Tasmanian Seafoods, show a large % of old low quality fish. There was discussion on how the shell's have been aged and tested, and could the depressed catch rate be due to diver trends.

The TAC is set at 83t, there is some concern and will be watched closely. The ideal size limit will be discussed at the dive meeting on the 10th May.

Action - Block 5 - Propose to review the cap when it reaches 60t

North West NOT Block 5 (Blocks 47, 48, 49)



Cap:

Catch to date: 42 tonnes

CPUE to date: 78 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 80 t

Fishery condition: catch rates heading down

Suggested catch 2013: ?

Suggested management changes: reduce the catch

Notes:

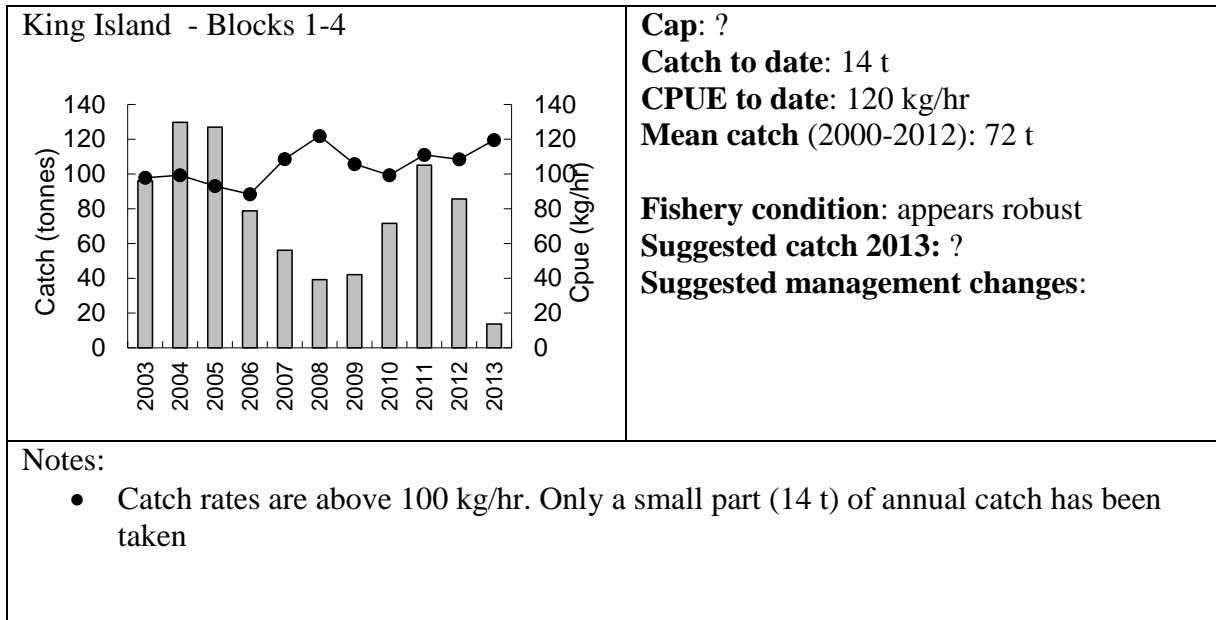
- Catch rates from prime fish areas such as Albatross Island have been reduced.
- increased stocks as a result of 5mm reduction in LML from 125 mm in 2012
- catch rates heading downwards after 160 tonne catch in 2012 – increased stock now reduced

FRAG Comments

There is some concern, leave cap at 100t.

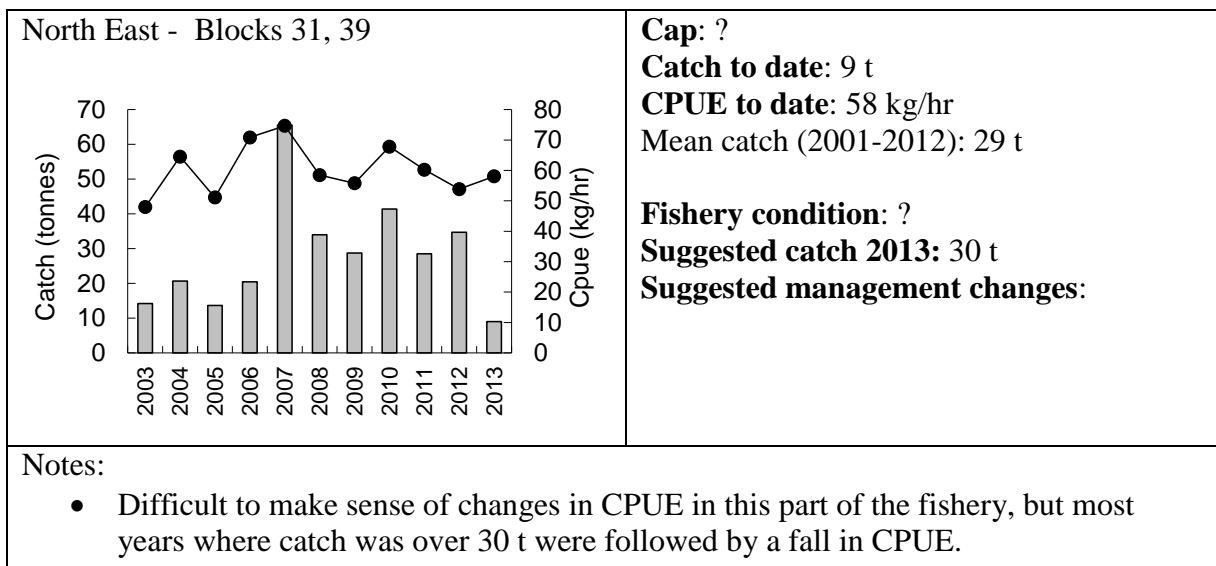
Block 49, 8 tonne has been taken under the ‘Shell Study project’ by removing the older poor quality fish in a controlled area; the project is expected to yield another tonne.

Research at the end of the project will show whether the biomass returns to a healthy fishery.



FRAG comments

95t to 118t from West Coast

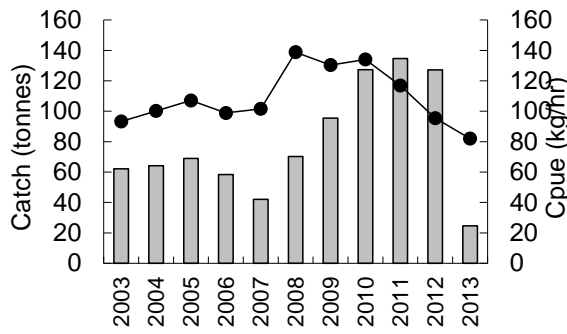


FRAG Comments

Nil

Central Western Zone

Couta Rocks – 6A, 6B, 6C



Cap: = CW TAC (101.5 t)

Catch to date: 25 t

CPUE to date: 82 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 101 t

Fishery condition: catch rates falling sharply => falling stock levels

Suggested catch 2013: ?

Suggested management changes: reduce the catch

Notes:

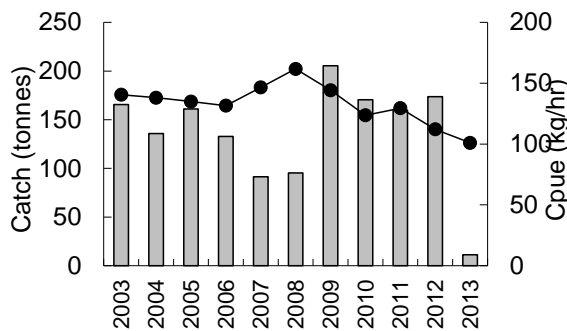
- TAC 25% caught, catch rates have dropped continuously since 2010
- CPUE seemed stable when catch was 60-70 tonne p.a.

FRAG Comments

There is concern, to be discussed at the next FRAG.

Western Zone

Granville Hbr, Sandy Cape Blocks 6D, 7, 8



Cap: ?

Catch to date: 11t

CPUE to date: 101 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 138 t

Fishery condition: catch rates falling =>reduced stock levels

Suggested catch 2013: ?

Suggested management changes: reduce catch

Notes:

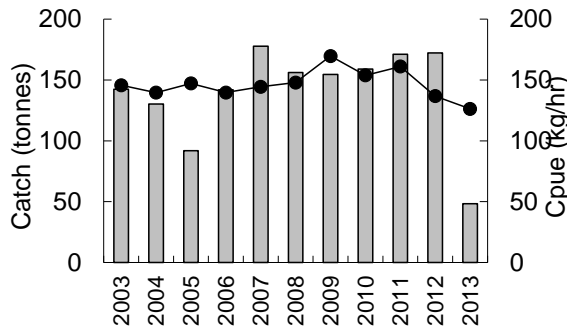
- Catch rates have fallen almost continually since 2008.
- Changes in size distribution uninformative

FRAG Comments;

Motherboats cannot bring fish back between January and March; reports of fish being weak and stressed. There is an un-confirmed report of water temperature being 21d, with the South West corner recorded at 19d.

Recommend to AbFAC a cap of 135t

South of Strahan – Block 9



Cap: 186 t ?
 Need to confirm
Catch to date: 48 t
CPUE to date: 126 kg/hr
Mean catch (2000-2012): 159 t

Fishery condition: catch rates falling?
Suggested catch 2013: 186 t
Suggested management changes: reduce the catch

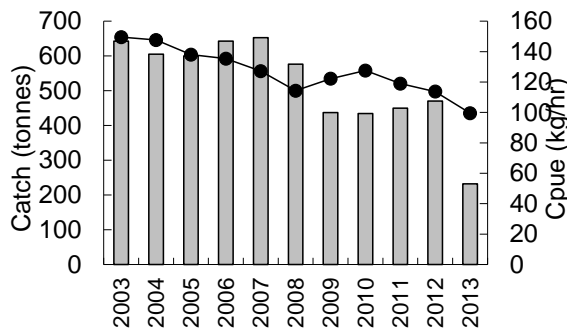
Notes:

- Catch rates are lower than previous years. Is this a temporary aberration caused by poor weather or similar (?), or is it a sign that levels of catch are too high?

FRAG Comments

General discussion on weather being a factor, the first quarter of the fishing year is the end of the summer fishing season six months from end of previous year. Craig has incorporated the information from the ‘weather buoy’. The fishery is market driven with divers occasionally working in unfavourable conditions.

South West – Blocks 10, 11, 12A

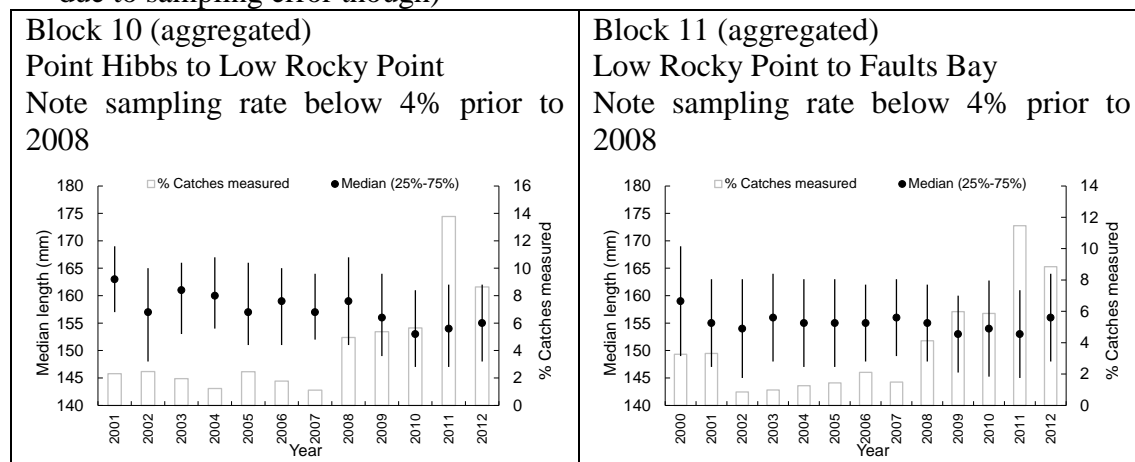


Cap: ?
Catch to date: 232 t
CPUE to date: 99 kg/hr
Mean catch (2000-2012): 550 t

Fishery condition: catch rate problem needs addressing => falling stock levels
Suggested catch 2013: 458 t
Suggested management changes: requires catch reduction

Notes:

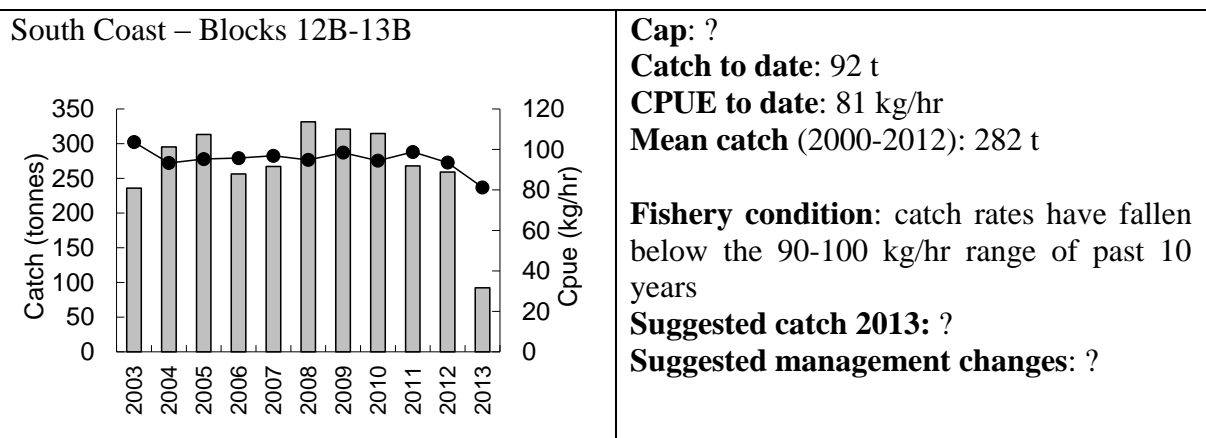
- CPUE reduction can no longer be explained adequately by changes in fishing practices caused by double-up diving, or processor demand for small catches
- Only logical explanation is reduced stock levels
- Median size of fish has increased against trend implying reduced recruitment (may be due to sampling error though)



FRAG comments:

Catch rates are falling, and this could be due to divers doubling up.

Action - Ian to write up for the Minister, re caps



Notes:

- Small median size of fish implies increased reliance on recruits, which in turn means increased levels of risk of sudden downturn if the South Coast continues to produce high levels of catch.

FRAG Comments:

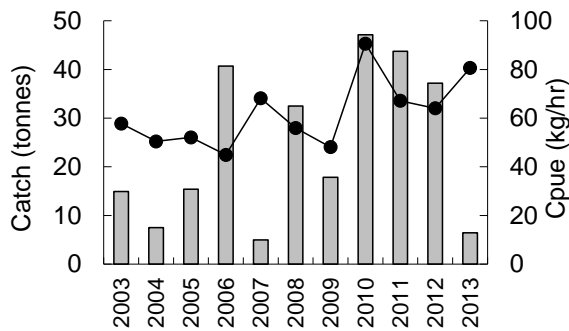
Should we include the south coast in the size limit increase (145mm), which may protect the fishery, but may not come under the ‘2 year rule’. Due to logistical and biological information, the size limits on the South and West Coast should be the same at 145mm.

Propose to increase the size limit by 3mm (143mm) for all areas in the Western Zone for June 1, 2013 and an increase in 2014 by another 2mm (145mm) on 1st June 2014.

AGREED by majority.

Bass Strait Blacklip Zone

Furneaux Group – Blocks 32 to 38



Cap: ?

Catch to date: 6 t

CPUE to date: 81 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 22 t

Fishery condition: fish-down of stock build-up following size-limit reduction

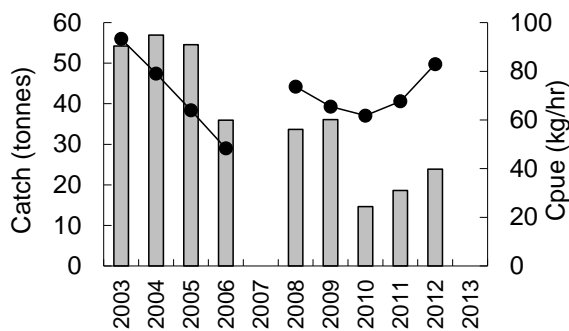
Suggested catch 2013: ?

Suggested management changes:

Notes:

- Cap 20% caught, CPUE has risen against expectations

Bass Strait Islands – Blocks 50 to 56



Cap: 30 t

Catch to date: <1 t

CPUE to date: 750 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 25 t

Fishery condition: insufficient catch for assessment.

Suggested catch 2013: ?

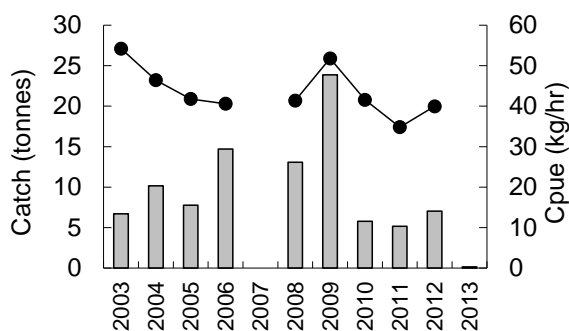
Suggested management changes:

Notes:

FRAG Comments

Nil

Central North – Blocks 42 to 46



Cap: ?

Catch to date: 0.15 t

CPUE to date:

Mean catch (2001-2012): 8 t

Fishery condition: ?

Suggested catch 2013: ?

Suggested management changes:

Notes:

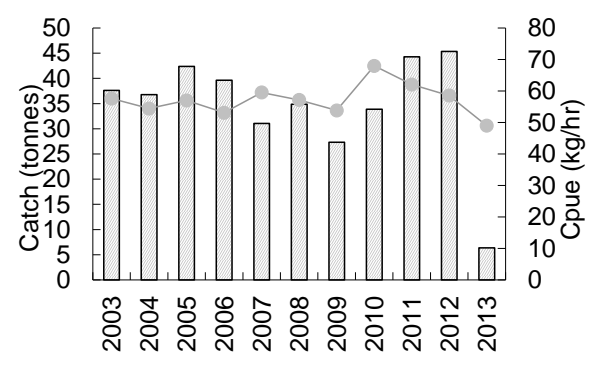
- Low catch rates, poor recovery.

FRAG Comments

Nil

Greenlip

Furieux Group – Blocks 32 to 38



Cap: 42 t
Catch to date: 9 t
CPUE to date: 47 kg/hr
Mean catch (2000-2012): 39 t

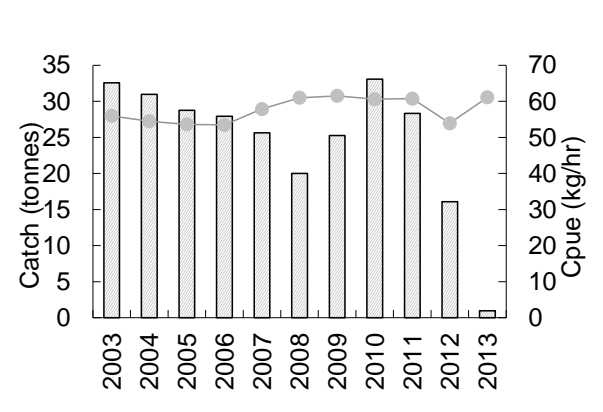
Fishery condition: ?
Suggested catch 2012: 42 t
Suggested management changes:

Notes:

FRAG Comments

Suggest increase the cap from 42t to 47t.

King Island – Blocks 1 to 4



Cap: ?
Catch to date: 1 t
CPUE to date: 61 kg/hr
Average catch (2000-2012): 25 t

Fishery condition: reduced stock levels
Suggested catch 2012: 20 t
Suggested management changes:

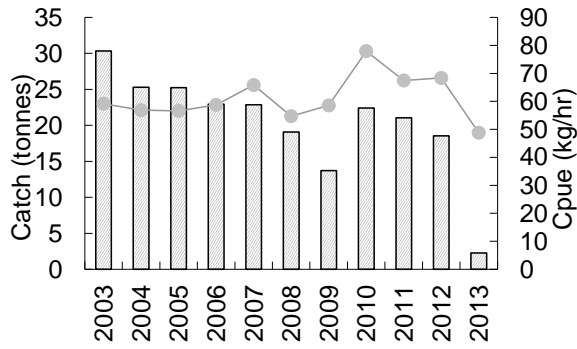
Notes:

- Catch rates fell in 2012 after only 16 tonnes taken, stock levels much reduced from previous years, recommend catch kept below 20 tonnes

FRAG Comments

Reduce the cap from 25t to 20t.

North West but not Perkins Bay



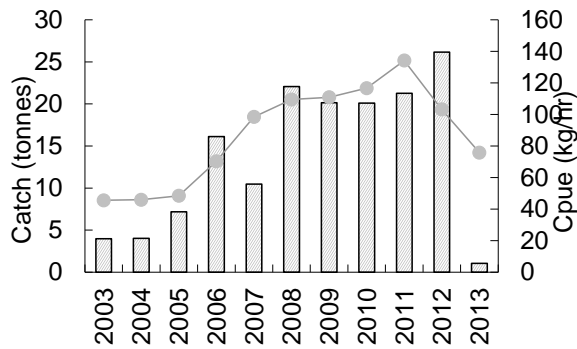
Cap: 18.5 t
Catch to date: 2 t
CPUE to date: 49 kg/hr
 Mean catch (2000-2012): 25 t

Fishery condition: stable fishery
Suggested catch 2013: 18.5 t
Suggested management changes:

Notes:

- Unknown effects on catch rates due to mixing of blacklip and greenlip effort and different methods of reporting same.

Perkins Bay – Blocks 48A



Cap: 20 t
Catch to date: 1 t (Black Reef)
CPUE to date: 76 kg/hr
 Mean catch (2000-2012): ? new fishing area

Fishery condition: appears stable
Suggested catch 2013: 20t from Black Reef/48A, 10 t from further east (Blocks 41-47)

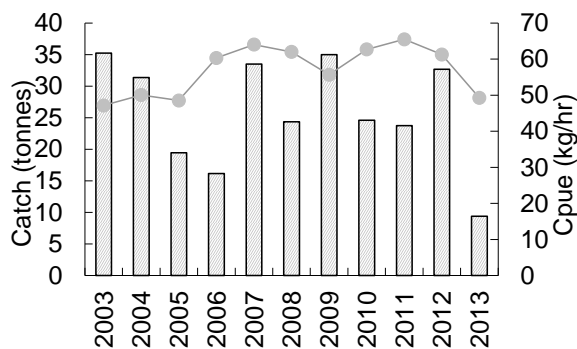
Notes:

- catch rates have fallen, 26 tonnes taken in 2012, possibly too much catch taken.

FRAG Comments

Nil

North East – Blocks 31, 39, 40



Cap: 23 t
Catch to date: 9 t
CPUE to date: 49 kg/hr
 Mean catch (2000-2012): 29 t

Fishery condition: stable fishery
Suggested catch 2013: 23 t
Suggested management changes:

Notes:

- Swan Island stocks reduced, catch rates much lower than at Cape Portland/Foster Islands

FRAG Comments:

Nil

8. Other Business

8.1 Climate change project

Milestone 2 – relationships between physical oceanography and production;

Findings that temperature increase is not an issue of productivity.

Greenlip are productive in warmer waters.

Extreme events may be detrimental.

High tidal flow areas are not a predictor of productivity.

Swell height is not necessarily a predictor of productivity.

Characterise dive units

Measure the productivity of each dive cell per zone.

Show early part of the year the fishing cells are more concentrated, whereas later in the year dive cells are spread out.

Dives per depth and month showed catch rates and getting lower through the year.

Kg per hour and per hectare, per hectare may be a better unit of measure in future.

8.2 Stress project

There were four treatments;

Landing, Sitting in continuous running water, Stacked in bins and periodically flushed, No flushing. All testing was completed over a 5 hour period with all handling terminated at the boat ramp. At the Margate processor, blood samples were taken over a period of 4 days.

Findings;

Running water test results were the best, the immune system shut down very quickly across all treatments and took a long time to restart. Water temperature at 12.5 degrees in the factory allowed abalones to recover quickly. Underwater blood tests showed the fish were under stress prior to collection. This could have been due to high swell and the fish 'holding on'. There were low mortalities in the blood taking.

The next phase is the blood lactate levels.

8.3 Centrostephanus Project

The next survey will be in September 2013 when a weather pattern occurs.

There is an overlap in the Rock Lobster and Abalone fisheries – does the commercial harvest of urchins have an impact on the ecosystem?

Currently waiting on the results from the Victorian project. Vince will forward when available.

Meeting closed at 2.29pm

Next Meeting FRAG #3 Tuesday 23rd July 2013

Action Items FRAG #2 2013

	Action	Responsibility
1	Development of target and limit reference points	IMAS: Malcolm Haddon, Craig Mundy and Dave Tarbath Ongoing – Dean, Paul, Joey - Meeting 10 th May to discuss.
2	Follow up funding with FRDC for Occupational Divers Course, based on FRDC People Development funding	TAC/IMAS: Dean Lisson and Craig Mundy Joey & Ian to put a proposal together
3	Finalisation of Block 5 report and presentation of results to FRAG	IMAS: Craig Mundy Ongoing
4	Information of processor/diver numbers and options for maintaining profitability/viability in these sectors	DPIPWE: Matt Bradshaw TACL to engage Bruce Felmingham in a review of the processing sector
5	Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process	IMAS: Craig Mundy Ongoing
6	Increase size limit to 140mm Partridge Is, Bruny Is, 14c & D	Matt & Dean to discuss boundaries
7	Close East Coast 4 to 6 months	FRAG Agreed 3 months Jan - Mar
8	Increase Size limit on Western Zone to 145mm from April 1, 2013	DPIPWE - Increase to 143mm July 2013. Increase 145mm July 2014
9	'Shell Study' article to be inserted in 'Fishing Today'	Completed, TACL to insert on website
10	Freycinet	TACL Txt to divers on 145mm size limit
11	Block 5, review cap at 60t	DPIPWE
12	South West -	Ian to write up for the Minister