**Application for assessment of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery for approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999***

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# Introduction

This submission meets the requirements for assessment of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery under [Part 13 and/or Part 13A of] the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act).

This submission has been produced to enable the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to assess the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery management arrangements against the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition* and the requirements set out in relevant sections of the EPBC Act.

# The fishery

## Description of the fishery

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| The Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery spans the length of the Victorian coast and is divided into two separately managed fishing zones: the Western Zone, which extends from the South Australian border to Apollo Bay, and the Eastern Zone, extending from Apollo Bay to the New South Wales border (Figure 1). These zones are managed separately due to different growth and productivity rates across the state. The Victorian Government has jurisdiction over the commercial Rock Lobster Fishery in Commonwealth waters adjacent to Victoria under an Offshore Constitutional Settlement Arrangement with the Commonwealth Government.    **Figure 1**. Extent and spatial structure of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery.  The fishery supports both commercial and recreational fishing. All fishing activities are managed under the provisions of the Fisheries Act 1995, the Fisheries Regulations 2019, Victorian Rock Lobster Fisheries Management Plan 2024 and other legislative instruments. Commercial rock lobster fishers must hold a Rock Lobster Fishery Access Licence and recreational rock lobster fishers must hold a valid Recreational Fishing Licence unless they are exempt.  A summary of the key elements of the fishery is summarised in Table 1.  **Table 1.** Key elements of the Rock Lobster Fishery.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Aspect of fishery** | **Commercial Fishery** | **Recreational Fishery** | | **Access to fishery** | Entry limited to holders of a Rock Lobster Fishery Access Licence  2 operators per licence (no limits on crew) | Recreational Fishery Licence (unless exempt)  Unlimited entry  Season registration via smartphone app. | | **Allowed fishing method/equipment** | Baited pots | Hand capture and hoop nets | | **Management zones** | Eastern Zone and Western Zone | Eastern Zone and Western Zone only for the purposes of recreational catch reporting | | **Primary method of control** | Total Allowable Commercial Catch and individual transferable quotas | Daily bag limit: 2 lobster  Possession limit: 4 lobster in, on or next to Victorian waters | | **Method of monitoring** | Quota Management System  VMS  Daily electronic catch reporting  Random inspections | Digital reporting system  Random inspections for recreational catch | | **Secondary controls** | Legal minimum length  Gear restrictions  Closed seasons | Legal minimum length  Gear restrictions  Closed seasons |   **Table 2**: Key elements of the commercial fishery\*.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Commercial Fishery** | | | |  | ***Western Zone*** | ***Eastern Zone*** | | **Zone boundary** | Longitude 143º40’E  Longitude 140º57.9’E  Latitude 40ºS | Longitude 143º40’E  Longitude 150º20’E  Latitude 39º12’S | | **Maximum number of licences** | 71 | 32 | | **Maximum number of licences per boat** | Not limited | Not limited | | **Total number of quota units per zone** | 3633.48[[1]](#footnote-1) | 1000 | | **Total number of pots in zone** | 5162 | 2073 | | **Maximum number of pots per boat** | 140 | 120 | | **Minimum number of pots to activate licence** | 20 | 15 | | **Minimum quota holding per licence** | 10 units | 5 units | | **Maximum quota holding per licence** | No maximum | No maximum |   \* Information presented is accurate at time of declaration of this management plan and subject to change in accordance with the Fisheries Act 1995 and Fisheries Regulations 2019. |

## Fishing methods and gear

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| **Commercial Fishery**  In the commercial fishery, rock lobsters can only be harvested using pots. Pot design and size is specified in the *Fisheries Regulations 2019*. Pots must have only one entrance, one chamber and at least one escape gap of a regulated size (Figure 2).  ***Southern Rock Lobster (crayfish) Fishing***  **Figure 2.** Diagram of Victorian commercial rock lobster pot.  Pots may be transferred permanently, or for one licensing period, between Rock Lobster Fishery Access Licences within a zone.  The overall number of pots in the fishery is limited to 5162 in the Western Zone and 2073 in the Eastern Zone. No more than 140 pots in the Western Zone and 120 pots in the Eastern Zone can be fished from a commercial rock lobster fishing boat at any one time.  Licence holders must have a minimum of 15 and 20 pots to operate in the Eastern Zone and the Western Zone, respectively. A licence holder can own quota without pots but cannot operate in the fishery unless these minimum requirements are met.  **Recreational Fishery**  Rock lobsters can be collected by hand (SCUBA, snorkel and hookah are permitted) or with hoop nets. No more than two hoop nets are allowed per person.  A hoop net is a cylindrical net open at the top, consisting of one or two hoops not exceeding 77 centimetres in diameter and with a drop of up to 50 centimetres. Hoop nets must have a label, which remains above the surface of the water, displaying the recreational fisher’s full name and place of residence (Figure 3).    **Figure 3**. Diagram of recreational hoop net.  Consistent with the rock lobster closed season, from 15 September to 15 November, hoop nets cannot be used, set or immersed in any marine waters other than Port Phillip Bay, Western Port, Gippsland Lakes or in any inlet. |

## Target and byproduct species

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| The fishery specifically targets Southern Rock Lobster (*Jasus edswardsii*). The target stock is considered sustainable and is not overfished, as outlined in the [*Status of Australian Fish Stocks Report 2023*](https://fish.gov.au/Archived-Reports/2023/Southern%20Rock%20Lobster%20(2023).pdf) and the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery [stock assessment reports](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/stock-reports). Despite this, stock rebuilding is a primary management focus to improve efficiencies and protect biomass against broader ecosystem changes. The annual TACC setting involves consultation with key stakeholders and is supported by fishery dependent and fishery independent data. The new harvest strategy is precautionary and uses key performance indicators as determinants for setting the annual TACC. Catches for eastern rock lobster (ERL) are included in annual TACC for the Eastern Zone but there has been very little reported catch over the long-term. No other Victorian commercial fishery can retain rock lobster catch.  An ecological risk assessment (ERA) was recently completed as part of the development of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan 2024. The risk assessment for bycatch, byproduct and TEP species is based on findings from FRDC Project No 2017-082 “Ensuring monitoring and management of bycatch in Southern Rock Lobster Fisheries is best practice”. This research did not identify any bycatch, byproduct or TEP species under high risk from the impacts of the operations of this fishery. Bycatch is low and consists of mostly berried females and undersized rock lobster.  Byproduct includes octopus, leatherjacket, wrasse (bluethroat and unspecified), and crabs along with smaller quantities of other finfish and other species retained for bait purposes. Rock Lobster fishers are required to report all byproduct and bycatch in catch and effort reporting. In addition, bycatch and byproduct are recorded as part of the on-board observe program and fixed-site survey program.  All retained and discarded catch data for the target species is presented in Appendix 1; Byproduct data is presented in Appendix 2; and all non-target species discard data is presented in Appendix 3.  Legislative provisions require operators to report all interactions with threatened, endangered, or protected species (TEPS). Reported interactions are considered very low with no reported interactions in last three years. All TEPS interactions are presented in Appendix 4.  All commercial fishing effort is further summarised in Appendix 5.  In the recreational fishery, bycatch is controlled by very targeted gear types used. Hand collection method while diving creates no risk to bycatch. Similarly, collapsible hoop nets are considered a very low risk to bycatch. |

## Value of the fishery

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| The most recent estimated valuations of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery was carried out by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) for 2021/22 financial year. During this period, total production in the Fishery was 286 tonnes and valued at $13,615,000 (Tuynman and Dylewski (2022). This value is significantly lower than the historical average of over $20,000,000, due to disruptions in trade activity to China. Almost all Southern Rock Lobsters caught in Victoria are, historically, exported to China.  Link to ABARES data: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/fisheries/fisheries-and-aquaculture-statistics> |

# Management regime

## Description of the management regime

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| This fishery is managed under the [*Fisheries Act 1995*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/fisheries-act-1995/103)*,* [*Fisheries Regulations 2019*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/fisheries-regulations-2019/006), the [*Fisheries (Fees, Royalties and Levies) Regulations 2017*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/statutory-rules/fisheries-fees-royalties-and-levies-regulations-2017) and the [Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan 2024](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1077075/Victorian-Rock-Lobster-Fishery-Management-Plan-2024-.pdf). Links are included in each of the titles above.  The Fisheries Act 1995 is the overarching legislation governing fisheries management in Victoria. The Fisheries Regulations 2019 provide specific regulations pertaining to the rock lobster fishery including both the commercial and recreational fisheries.  The Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan 2024 (the Management Plan) specifies the policies, management objectives and strategies for managing the rock lobster resource in Victorian waters under the requirements of the Fisheries Act 1995 and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.  Incorporated in the Management Plan is a harvest strategy which provides the structured framework for assessing the status of a fishery and a set of rules to determine the annual catch limits. The three biological stock performance indicators in this strategy include egg production, standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE), and the pre-recruit index (PRI). The strategy includes a limit reference point (LRP) based on egg production; threshold reference point based on the PRI; and target reference points based on biomass.  The harvest control rule sets a TACC that implements an exploitation rate which starts at zero at the LRP and then increases linearly to a maximum level as biomass increases. The TACC is also capped, hence when biomass exceeds the level at which the TACC cap is reached, the exploitation rate decreases. This relationship is depicted in Figure 4. A key principle underlying the harvest strategy is that as the stock rebuilds, more conservative exploitation rates will be adopted. This ensures that the risk of future stock declines is significantly reduced.    **Figure 4:** Conceptual relationship between exploitation rate and the stock status indicator (standardised CPUE). The exploitation rate rises from 0 at the CPUE LRP proxy to its maximum value. It then remains at this maximum value until the TAC cap is reached after which it declines. This decline is because no further TAC increases are permitted but the stock continues to increase. |

## Consultation processes

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| The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) undertakes consultation with a variety of stakeholders in developing or changing fisheries management arrangements. These consultation principles are outlined in Section 3A of the Fisheries Act 1995. As such, it is a legislative requirement that the VFA meets a required level of consultation.  All items currently under consultation are placed on the VFA’s website ([Current Consultation link](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/operational-policy/fisheries-consultation/current-consultation)) in addition to being sent directly to key stakeholders. When consultation is finalised, the results of the consultation, including all public submissions, are published on the VFA’s website ([Completed Consultation link](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/operational-policy/fisheries-consultation/completed-consultation)).  The Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Resource Assessment Group (RLRAG) also meets quarterly to discuss scientific items affecting this fishery and provide recommendations to the VFA. This group is made up of commercial stakeholders, recreational stakeholders, Aboriginal Victorian representatives, and fishery science experts. Meetings are not open to the public but minutes are published on the VFA website ([RLRAG Minutes](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/rock-lobster-resource-assessment-group)).  The Rock Lobster Fishery undergoes a significant consultation process in setting the annual TACC. The stock assessment and application of the harvest strategy are reviewed thoroughly by the RLRAG which then submits a recommendation to the VFA based on this review. Prior to setting the TACC, the VFA releases all proposed arrangements for a four-week public consultation, which includes concurrently running five commercial stakeholder forums at different ports around the state. All submissions, and discussions at these forums, are considered in finalising the TACC for the upcoming season. |

## Performance against objectives, performance indicators and performance measures

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| Incorporated in the Management Plan is a harvest strategy which provides the structured framework for assessing the status of a fishery and a set of rules to determine the annual catch limits. The three biological stock performance indicators in this strategy include egg production, standardised catch per unit effort (CPUE), and the pre-recruit index (PRI). The strategy includes a limit reference point (LRP) based on egg production; threshold reference point based on the PRI; and target reference points based on biomass.  The harvest control rule sets a TACC that implements an exploitation rate which starts at zero at the LRP and then increases linearly to a maximum level as biomass increases. The TACC is also capped, hence once biomass exceeds the level at which the TACC cap is reached the exploitation rate decreases. This relationship is depicted in Figure 4. A key principle underlying this harvest strategy is that as the stock rebuilds, more conservative exploitation rates will be adopted. This ensures that the risk of future stock declines is significantly reduced.  The annual stock assessment, harvest strategy and the strategy’s application to the setting of the TACC, is reviewed annually by the RLRAG, following which the RLRAG submits a recommendation to the VFA which is considered in the VFA’s internal review of the harvest strategy.  The most recent stock assessment can be found at the following: [VFA Rock Lobster Stock Assessment Reports](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/stock-reports). |

## Controlling the level of harvest

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| Commercial rock lobster harvest is controlled by setting an annual TACC in each zone based on the harvest strategy. The TACC is allocated across individual quota units in each zone. Individual quota units can be temporarily or permanently transferred between rock lobster access licences specific to that particular zone. Byproduct species are subject to limits defined within the Fisheries Regulations 2019 and can only be caught using equipment specified under the Rock Lobster Access Licence class section.  TACCs are set in consultation with all relevant stakeholders including undertaking an annual review by the RLRAG. A stock assessment is completed annually to inform the future management of the fishery, including setting TACCs, and to inform the application of the harvest strategy.  Fishers must not exceed the quota attributed to that licence, thereby controlling the level of total harvest. Fishers are also subject to closed seasons. Females must not be harvest between 1 July and 15 November inclusive. No rock lobster must be harvested between 15 September and 15 November inclusive, and lobster pots must not be set during this time.  Recreational rock lobster fishing is control by management of a catch limit of 2 per day and possession limit of 4 rock lobsters; closed seasons consistent with the commercial fishery; and gear restrictions. Recreational fishers are also required to report all rock lobster quota via the recreational reporting app. The figure is considered as part of the annual stock assessment and harvest strategy review. |

## Harvest strategy

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| All parts of the fisheries are managed under the recently implement Rock Lobster Fishery Harvest Strategy, Section 7 of the Management Plan. This Management Plan replaced previous iterations, which also included harvest strategies, and is formally reviewed every five years. Unlike the previous harvest strategy, that focused on setting a constant exploitation rate to enable stock rebuilding, the foundation of this harvest strategy is based on establishing a clear rebuilding target to be achieved within a defined timeframe. As the stock rebuilds, more conservative exploitation rates will be adopted to increase the resilience of the fishery.  For the purposes of understanding total harvest across the fishery, an assumed recreational catch of 6 tonnes is applied to each zone. This replaces the nominal percentages in the previous plan and is based on data obtained through the Victorian Recreational Rock Lobster Reporting Program. Details of this program, including annual assessment reports, can be found [here](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/featured/old/tagging-of-recreationally-caught-rock-lobsters/history-of-the-program).  The harvest strategy incorporates three biological stock performance indicators, which are in setting the TACC:   1. Egg Production 2. Standardised CPUE 3. Pre-recruit index   The reference points provide the benchmarks of performance that define acceptable levels of impact on the stock (Sloan et al. 2014). This fishery utilises three key reference points, as outlined in the Management Plan and summarised below:   1. **Limit Reference point (LRP):**   The fishery egg production compared to the pre-fishing stock is the indicator used to assess performance against the LRP. The LRP is set to 20 percent of the unfished level of egg production.   1. **PRI Threshold Reference Point**   The Pre-Recruit Index (PRI) is determined using data from the fixed-site surveys and on-board observer program and is averaged, weighted by region. The thresholds are set at the 40th percentile of a normal distribution fitted to the PRI during a reference period of 2008 to 2022. The thresholds for each zone are:   * 1.67 undersize per pot lift in the Western Zone * 0.25 undersize per pot lift in the Eastern Zone  1. **Target Reference Point (TRP)**   The TRP has been set at 28 percent and 28.8 percent for the Western Zone and Eastern Zone respectively. A comparison of CPUE with model estimated biomass levels was used to obtain a CPUE proxy for the target reference point. This was calculated to be 1.20 and 0.86 kg/pot lift for the Western Zone and Eastern Zone respectively  A stock rebuilding time frame of 20 years has been set for this fishery. This long time frame is appropriate given the long generation time of lobster and consistent with standards such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard which requires a rebuilding time frame that is the lesser of 20 years or 2 generations.  **Commercial Harvest Control Rule**  The TACC is set using a CPUE-TACC table in conjunction with a harvest control rule (Tables 3 & 4). The harvest control rule (HCR) regulates the rate at which the TACC can increase and decrease in response to CPUE changes. The HCR also implements the shift to more conservative exploitation rates over time and draws on the secondary PRI indicator to prevent TACC increases when undersize abundance is low. The formal harvest control can be divided into the following parts and is outlined in Section 7.6 of the Management Plan. The HCR can be summarised as follows:  **Part 1**: Ensure Egg Production Limit Reference Point is met. If this decision rule is not met, the TACC will be determined using the rock lobster fishery model to ensure that the TACC returns the egg production to above the limit reference point within two years with a 90 percent probability  **Part 2**: Determine the TACC according to the following conditions:  The fishery will move to the next CPUE band (and possibly a higher TACC) if:   1. the standardised CPUE is in a band higher than in the previous season;   **AND**   1. the PRI (rounded to two decimal places) is at or above the threshold level of 1.67 undersize per pot lift for the Western Zone or 0.25 undersize per pot lift for the Eastern Zone.   *\* One-jump rule: the TACC can only be progress through one step per year.* |
| **Table 3:** *The TACC (t) corresponding to each CPUE band for the* ***Eastern Zone****. The steps indicate a progression towards a more precautionary HCR with lower exploitation rates which will be adopted as the stock rebuilds.* *Red indicates when the fishery is closed, orange where the exploitation rate is increasing, and blue a capped TACC. If the HCR indicates a shift to a cell containing an arrow, the step will be increased and the TACC will be taken from the new step used.* |
| **Table 4:** *The TACC (t) corresponding to each CPUE band for the Western Zone. The steps indicate a progression towards a more precautionary HCR with lower exploitation rates which will be adopted as the stock rebuilds.* *Red indicates when the fishery is closed, orange where the exploitation rate is increasing, green a constant exploitation rate and blue a capped TACC.* *If the HCR indicates a shift to a cell containing an arrow, the step will be increased and the TACC will be taken from the new step used.*   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **CPUE** | **Step 1** | **Step 2** | **Step 3** | **Step 4** | **Step 5** | | <0.25 | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | | 0.250 - <0.275 | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | | 0.275 - <0.300 | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | | 0.300 - <0.325 | **5** | **4** | **4** | **3** | **3** | | 0.325 - <0.350 | **15** | **13** | **12** | **10** | **9** | | 0.350 - <0.375 | **27** | **24** | **21** | **18** | **16** | | 0.375 - <0.40 | **40** | **36** | **32** | **28** | **24** | | 0.40 - <0.425 | **55** | **49** | **43** | **38** | **32** | | 0.425-<0.45 | **71** | **64** | **56** | **49** | **42** | | 0.45 - <0.475 | **89** | **79** | **70** | **61** | **53** | | 0.475<-0.50 | **108** | **97** | **85** | **75** | **64** | | 0.50 - <0.525 | **129** | **115** | **102** | **89** | **76** | | 0.525<-0.55 | **151** | **135** | **119** | **104** | **89** | | 0.55 - <0.575 | **175** | **156** | **138** | **120** | **103** | | 0.575<-0.60 | **200** | **178** | **157** | **138** | **118** | | 0.60 - <0.625 | **227** | **202** | **178** | **156** | **134** | | 0.625<-0.65 | **236** | **227** | **201** | **176** | **150** | | 0.65 - <0.675 | **245** | **236** | **224** | **196** | **168** | | 0.675<-0.70 | **245** | **245** | **232** | **217** | **186** | | 0.70 - <0.75 | **245** | **245** | **245** | **229** | **215** | | 0.75 - <0.80 |  | **245** | **245** | **245** | **230** | | 0.80 - <0.85 |  |  | **245** | **245** | **245** | | 0.85 - < 0.90 |  |  |  | **245** | **245** | | >= 0.90 |  |  |  |  | **245** | |

## Recovery strategies for overfished stocks

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| The current Harvest Strategy, embedded within the Management Plan, implements a stock rebuilding strategy within clearly defined timelines and capped TACCs. Comparative to previous strategies that focused on maintaining exploitation rates, as the stock rebuilds under the current strategy, more conservative exploitation rates will be adopted to increase the resilience of the fishery.  The most recent stock assessment report outlines the application of the harvest strategy for each zone, based on the most recent full-season dataset (season 2023/24). Summarised, the results of each zone are as follows:  **Western Zone**   1. Part 1: The 2023/24 egg production level is estimated at 22.4% of unfished levels. 2. Part 2: TACC Determination    1. CPUE decreased from 0.79kg/pot-lift in 2022/23 to 0.78kg/pot-lift in 2023/24. This remains in the same 0.75-0.80 CPUE band.    2. The combined PRI was 1.82 in 2023/24 and remains above the threshold level   Result: The Western Zone remains in the CPUE band 0.75-<0.80. This gives a TACC of 245t in 2025/26.  **Eastern Zone**   1. Part 1: The egg production level is considered to be above the 20% Limit Reference Point. Hence this part of the rule has been met. 2. Part 2: TACC Determination    1. The standardised CPUE increased from 0.48kg/pot-lift in 2022/23 to 0.60kg/pot-lift in 2023/24. This corresponds to a higher 0.60 -< 0.65 band.    2. The combined PRI was 0.02 in 2023/24. This is a significant reduction that is well below the threshold level.   Result: The Eastern Zone remains in the same CPUE band as the PRI is below the threshold level.  In response to the consecutive years of the PRI being below the threshold level, review of the harvest control rule is triggered. This review was conducted by the RLRAG on 3 July 2025, with the following recommended outcomes:   1. An increased focus on expanding the spatial extent of data collection, likely achieved through increased activity in the Lakes Entrance region. 2. A revised voluntary pot sampling program to enhance representative data collection. 3. An increase in the number of voluntary participants in the zone, noting that this was an element of the fee relief package currently in place. 4. No further management response at this time, other than to reconsider the data collected in 12 months.   Detailed minutes of this meeting are publicly available on the VFA’s website: [RLRAG webpage](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/rock-lobster-resource-assessment-group) |

## Enforcement of the management arrangements

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| Enforcement of the Fishery is managed under a variety of arrangements. These include inspections at-sea, at-landing and at fish processors; vessel monitoring systems (VMS) which are required on all rock lobster vessels; as well as other compliance operations. The VFA’s Community Engagement & Major Crime team is responsible for the compliance of all Victorian fisheries.  Inspections form part of the cost recovery arrangements outlined in the Fisheries (Fees, Royalties and Levies) Regulations 2017. Targets for inspections are specified annually and cost recovered under these arrangements.  The commercial fishery has a very high rate of compliance, recording an average rate of 94%. All offending that occurred is considered to be minor administrative errors.  The recreational fishery has a recent compliance rate of 85%, considered over the past five seasons. The highest detected offences include:   1. Exceeding the catch limit 2. A failure to register on the reporting program (noting it is a requirement to register each season prior to fishing for rock lobster) 3. Failing to tail clip (noting it is a requirement to tail clip all recreationally caught rock lobster within five minutes or 50 metres of landing).   The VFA completes an education program at the commencement of every recreational rock lobster season (16 November) reminding fishers of their requirements relating to this species. This extends to events, in-field inspections, social media posts, and emails to the recreational rock lobster fisher database. |

## Mitigating impacts on the wider ecosystem

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| An ecological risk assessment (ERA) was undertaken in 2022 to inform the development of the Management Plan. The assessment method was based on the National Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Reporting Framework for Australian Fisheries (Fletcher et al. 2002) and the results are summarised in the Management Plan.  The framework was developed in response to Australia’s National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (Australian Government 1992). Development of the ERA involved input from the Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan Review Steering Committee. Risks associated with the fishery were identified, then scored according to the potential consequence of that risk and the likelihood that the risk may occur. The risks were then categorised into risk ratings (low, moderate, high, extreme) to help prioritise the importance of each risk.  Performance of this strategy will be evaluated annually by the Victorian Rock Lobster Management Advisory Committee and RLRAG. |

## National policies, plans and strategies

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| These plans remain not applicable to this fishery, consistent with the previous EPBC Export Approval Assessment. As outlined in the Management Plan, the Fishery’s management is consistent with these arrangements. |

## Changes since the previous assessment

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| **Electronic Logbooks (Vic-eCatch)**  On the 1 April 2020, the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery moved to a new electronic logbook system, Vic-eCatch. Reporting under this system includes catch, effort, legal discards, animals in berry, females caught in closed season, unsized, dead and bycatch (retained for sale, bait or discarded). Electronic logbook reporting is legislated under Regulation 95 of the Fisheries Regulations 2019.  **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**  Vessel Monitoring System is now a requirement for all Rock Lobster Access Licences. This is stipulated under Regulation 77 and Division 2 of Part 17 of the Fisheries Regulations 2019. All vessels operating under a Victorian Rock Lobster Licence must have VMS system installed; and that system must be working at all times when operating under this licence from when the vessel departs a port or mooring area for the duration of that trip.  Under special circumstances justifying the authorisation, the VFA can issue an exemption to carry out a fishing trip without a working VMS unit.    **Recreational Reporting Program**  In 2017/18, the VFA introduced the Recreational Rock Lobster Tagging Program trial. This program required all recreational rock lobster fishers to tag and report details of their catch. This program has since moved to a permanent requirement, legislated under Regulation 374 of the Fisheries Regulations 2019. The program is now entirely digital, removing all plastic tag usage. It requires the recreational fishers to download an app and create an account; register an intent to fish for rock lobster annually; and record sex, length, zone and species of every recreationally caught rock lobster. This provides valuable annual recreational data and is the key research used to determine the assumed recreational harvest tonnage of 6 tonnes in each zone. This amount replaced the notional percentages applied in the previous management plan.  Details of the program can be found here: [Recreational Reporting Program](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/featured/old/tagging-of-recreationally-caught-rock-lobsters). |

# Monitoring and data collection

## Data collection, data validation and data monitoring programs

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| The data collection program incorporates a range of fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data.  **Fishery-dependent data**   1. Commercial catch and effort data   Data collection from this method includes location, pot depth, total pot lifts, number and weight of lobsters caught, number of undersize, number in berry, number of dead lobsters, and weight and number of byproduct and bycatch.  Standardisation of the CPUE of legal-sized lobsters is the primary determinant underpinning the stock assessment and setting the TACC.  The requirement for fishers to report daily has been in place since 1978. Logbooks were submitted monthly until 2020, after which they were replaced by electronic reporting.   1. Voluntary pot sampling   Fishers can voluntarily participate in measuring catch in a defined number of pre-determined pots. Specifications of pot selection are outlined, and pots are determined prior to hauling to avoid biases. This data supplements the data collected by on-board observers and has the potential to greatly improve the spatial and temporal coverage of data collected across the fishery, provided there is sufficient participation. The current strategy, and a logbook example, is outlined in Appendix 6.   1. Wildlife interaction data   Consistent with the requirements under the EPBC Act, all interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species must be reported. This is completed as part of the electronic logbook reporting (Vic-eCatch).   1. Recreational catch and effort reporting program data   Data from the Recreational Reporting Program has been used to determine the assumed recreational catch now considered in the harvest strategy. Data continues to be collected annual under this compulsory reporting program.  **Fishery-independent data**   1. On-board observer sampling   The on-board sampling program has been operating since 2004. Data is collected at sea, including the length, sex, colour, shell hardness and reproductive condition of rock lobsters, and the length and number of bycatch species. This program is a core data input to determine the pre-recruit index considered in the stock assessment and harvest strategy application.   1. Fixed-site surveys   Fixed-site surveys have been conducted on an annual basis in the Western Zone since 2002 and in the Eastern Zone since 1996. The surveys are conducted at the same times and sites each year, with eight sites in the Western Zone and three sites in the Eastern Zone. The escape gaps of the pots are closed to retain a higher number of undersize rock lobsters. This is important since the number of undersize animals is an indicator of the potential recruitment to the fishery, one to three years into the future. Alongside the observer program, these surveys are a critical data input to determine the pre-recruit index.  Undersize lobsters are tagged as part of the tag and recapture program, under which 2,500 to 7,000 lobsters are tagged each year. When recaptured, the tagging data provides important information on the growth and movement of rock lobsters. Approximately 12 to 14 percent of tags have been returned, mostly by commercial fishers.   1. Puerulus Monitoring Program   The program has been operating since 1994. It recently changed from using crevice collectors to basket collectors due to basket collectors offering a simpler and more cost-effective method. This data is considered alongside the stock assessment model but is not a core input into the model. |

# Stock assessments

## Key target and byproduct species

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| This fishery undergoes an annual stock assessment, which includes analysis against stock performance indicators and limit reference points outlined in the current harvest strategy. The harvest strategy uses a standardised catch rate, egg production levels, pre-recruit abundance and a set of decision rules to determine the TACC for each zone in the fishery. The most recent stock assessment report, completed for the 2023/24 season, can be found here: [Stock assessment reports](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/stock-reports).  The most recent stock assessment report outlines the application of the harvest strategy for each zone, based on the most recent full-season dataset (season 2023/24). Summarised, the results of each zone are as follows:  **Western Zone**   1. Part 1: The 2023/24 egg production level is estimated at 22.4% of unfished levels. 2. Part 2: TACC Determination    1. CPUE decreased from 0.79kg/pot-lift in 2022/23 to 0.78kg/pot-lift in 2023/24. This remains in the same 0.75-0.80 CPUE band.    2. The combined PRI was 1.82 in 2023/24 and remains above the threshold level   Result: The Western Zone remains in the CPUE band 0.75-<0.80. This gives a TACC of 245t in 2025/26.  **Eastern Zone**   1. Part 1: The egg production level is considered to be above the 20% Limit Reference Point. Hence this part of the rule has been met. 2. Part 2: TACC Determination    1. The standardised CPUE increased from 0.48kg/pot-lift in 2022/23 to 0.60kg/pot-lift in 2023/24. This corresponds to a higher 0.60 -< 0.65 band.    2. The combined PRI was 0.02 in 2023/24. This is a significant reduction that is well below the threshold level.   Result: The Eastern Zone remains in the same CPUE band as the PRI is below the threshold level. The TACC remains at 21 tonnes for the 2025/26 season.  In response to the consecutive years of the PRI being below the threshold level, review of the harvest control rule is triggered. This review was conducted by the RLRAG on 3 July 2025, with the following recommended outcomes:   1. An increased focus on expanding the spatial extent of data collection, likely achieved through increased activity in the Lakes Entrance region. 2. A revised voluntary pot sampling program to enhance representative data collection. 3. An increase in the number of voluntary participants in the zone, noting that this was an element of the fee relief package currently in place. 4. No further management response at this time, other than to reconsider the data collected in 12 months.   Meeting minutes for this review are located here: [RLRAG Meeting Minutes](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/commercial-fishing/commercial-fisheries/rock-lobster/rock-lobster-resource-assessment-group) |

## Indicator species

|  |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

## Distribution and spatial structure of key stocks

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| Southern Rock Lobster is the target species, and its distribution and spatial structure is well known. As the species is distributed continuously across southern Australia, the population is considered as a single biological stock. Southern Rock Lobsters have extensive larval dispersal and can be found to depths of up to 150 metres, with most of the catch coming from inshore waters less than 100 metres deep. The determination of stock status is based on the percentage of egg production relative to the unfished level. Consistent with previous assessments, the *Status of Australian Fish Stocks Report 2023* considers this single stock to be sustainable ([Link to report](https://fish.gov.au/Archived-Reports/2023/Southern%20Rock%20Lobster%20(2023).pdf)).  In Victoria, the abundance of rock lobsters reduces from West to East reflecting a decreasing area of suitable rocky reef habitat. |

## Estimates of total removals

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| --- |
| Logbook data recording is required for every day of commercial fishing. This is recorded using electronic reporting. This data includes extensive reporting requirements for lobster catch, as noted in the section above, while also requiring bycatch and byproduct data. This information is outlined in Appendix 1, and Appendix 2. Non-target bycatch is further presented in Appendix 3.  The harvest strategy uses limit reference points, threshold reference points and target reference points to manage the stocks, as describer in the Harvest Strategy section above. The application of the harvest strategy’s harvest control rules determines the annual TACC.  Total catch has not exceeded TACCs with the exception of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 seasons. In each of these seasons, quota carryover arrangements allowed uncaught quota from the previous season to be caught in the following season in addition to the TACC. These extraordinary provisions were allowed to account for the extreme impact on markets caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is outlined in Appendix 5.  In addition, total recreational harvest has been recorded since this the introduction of the recreational reporting program. Despite an assumed recreational catch of 6 tonnes per zone in the harvest strategy, based on the program’s peak recorded harvest in 2018/19, each zone has recorded well below this level in recent seasons. The 2023/24 season summary can be found here: [Recreational Reporting Program](https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/featured/old/tagging-of-recreationally-caught-rock-lobsters). |

# Bycatch

## Bycatch composition

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| --- |
| Bycatch is a required component of daily electronic reporting and, previously, logbook reporting. Bycatch is reported as retained for sale, retained for bait, or discarded. Bycatch for this fishery is summarised in Appendix 2. In addition, the observer program described above records all bycatch and is considered a fishery-independent bycatch monitor. In addition, it serves as a data verification tool.  Bycatch amounts are considered very low for this fishery, as outlined in Appendix 3. No bycatch species is considered high risk from Rock Lobster Fishery operations (Leon et al. 2020). The highest recorded bycatch species have remained consistent since this research. |

## Risk assessment on the effects of fishing on bycatch

|  |
| --- |
| An ecological risk assessment (ERA) was undertaken to inform the development of the Management Plan. The assessment method was based on the National Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Reporting Framework for Australian Fisheries (Fletcher et al. 2002). As outlined in the Management Plan, the risk assessment for bycatch, byproduct and TEP species is based on findings from FRDC Project No. 2017-082 (Leon et al. 2020).  This research did not identify any bycatch, byproduct or TEP species under high risk from the impacts of the operations of the Southern Rock Lobster Fisheries (SRLF). However, some species of bycatch in the SRLF are also target or bycatch species in other fisheries or may be exposed to other environmental impacts. Therefore, this may result in cumulative impacts. |

## Bycatch mitigation measures

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| --- |
| Not applicable |

## Indicator bycatch species

|  |
| --- |
| Not applicable |

## Management actions

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| --- |
| Not applicable |

# Protected species and threatened ecological communities

## Fishery impacts on protected species and communities

|  |
| --- |
| Protected species interactions is a mandatory reporting requirement for this fishery, including age of species, applicable fishing gear, fishing stage (setting, retrieving etc.), type of interaction and animal fate. This reporting requirement has now been incorporated into the electronic reporting app, Vic eCatch. In addition, all interactions are recorded and reported as part of the observer monitoring program.  The VFA works closely with the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), the department responsible for managing marine mammals, in response to any interactions. This includes emergency responses and annual meetings to review interactions and response planning.  There are several Victorian marine mammal protected areas that provide further protection, including legislated restrictions on boating activities (outlined on the [DEECA wildlife website](https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/whales-dolphins-and-seals/protected-areas)). These areas include the following:   1. Logan’s Beach, Warrnambool, whale protection exclusion zone. 2. Ticonderoga Bay dolphin sanctuary zone. 3. Six key seal Victorian seal breeding colonies, including Seal Rocks, Cape Bridgewater, Rag Island, The Skerries, Kanowna Island and Lady Jula Percy Island.   The VFA produces annual Protected Species Interaction reports which includes an internal review of all incidents across each fishery. All incidents presented in Appendix 4 have been reviewed in collaboration with DEECA and have contributed to ongoing mitigation measures noted below. All recorded incidents are considered to be rare incidental fishing interactions.  Interactions with protected species have been very low since 2018 and since 2022, there have been no interactions recorded for this fishery (Appendix 4). The VFA considers the reductions in interactions to be the result of the following:   1. The number of active vessels in the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery has decreased by over 50% since the introduction of quota in 2001 (Figures 5 and 6). During this time the total number of pot-lifts to catch the annual TACC has decreased from 1,115,000 to 230,000 pot-lifts (reduction of approximately 80%). Reductions in the total number of pots set across the season and ongoing recorded efficiencies across the commercial fleet have significantly reduced the risk of interaction with TEPS. 2. The VFA’s ongoing education program with commercial operators has been in place for several years now. Mitigation and reporting methods are discussed annually at commercial port meetings with licence operators, including minimising soak times and reducing excess float lines. 3. A new industry code of practice was recently implemented following a joint review between the VFA, DEECA and Seafood Industry Victoria ([link](https://www.siv.com.au/uploads/9/8/7/7/98771034/siv_rock_lobster_code_of_conduct_-_final_printing_artwork.pdf)). This code of conduct stipulates removing excess slack in pot ropes and reducing soak times are critical to minimising interactions. 4. Whales Entanglements are listed as ‘Emergency events’, under the State Emergency Act, in Victoria empowering DEECA, in collaboration with the VFA, to prioritise a rapid response. |

## Mitigating risks to protected species

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| As described above. |

## CITES-listed species

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| Not applicable. |

# Ecosystem

## Ecosystem management actions

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| Impacts on ecosystems were considered in the ERA developed as part of the Management Plan. This is consistent with research in this fishery indicating a very low impact on broader ecosystem elements (Leon et al. 2020). Primary impacts are likely to come from pot loss and float and line entanglements. The management arrangements maintain input controls relating to total pot usage in the fishery, greatly reducing risks associated with pots. In addition, the VFA works closely with the DEECA (Vic) to provide regular education to fishers and review ongoing research improvement opportunities.  As outlined in the Appendix 4, there have been not TEPS interactions in the last three years. |

## Management responses

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| --- |
| As above. |

## Marine bioregional plans

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| --- |
| This fishery does not operate within a current Marine Bioregional Area. |

# Research

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| --- |
| 1. [FRDC 2019-114: Giant Crab Enhanced Data Collection](https://www.frdc.com.au/project/2019-114)   Despite focusing on the Giant Crab Fishery, this project has also extended to include Southern Rock Lobster and Crystal Crab species. This project involved the development and testing of 3D camera technology and modelling system used to collect and analyse length-frequency data, gender and individual species identification. The project is in its final stages with the report currently being developed.   1. Larval Dispersal Model   A project is currently underway to determine larval dispersal patterns for southern rock lobster. This aims to provide critical understanding of key sources of larvae for southern rock lobster stocks.   1. [FRDC Project 2017-082: Ensuring monitoring and management of bycatch in Southern Rock Lobster fisheries is best practice.](https://www.frdc.com.au/project/2017-082)   Research to provide critical understanding of bycatch risk associated with this fishery (Leon et al. 2020). |

# Progress against current Conditions

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| --- |
| Not applicable |

# **References**

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Leon, R., Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies University of Tasmania (2020). Ensuring monitoring and management of bycatch in Southern Rock Lobster fisheries is best practice. FRDC Project 2017-082. Canberra, May. CC BY 3.0.

Sloan, S. R., Smith, A.D.M., Gardner, C., Crosthwaite, K., Triantafillos, L., Jeffries, B. and Kimber, N (2014) National Guidelines to Develop Fishery Harvest Strategies. FRDC Report – Project 2010/061. Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia, Adelaide, March. CC BY 3.0

Tuynman, H and Dylewski, M 2022, Australian fisheries and aquaculture statistics 2021, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, ABARES, Canberra, December, DOI: https://doi.org/10.25814/amdt-x682. CC BY 4.0.

Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan 2024

# Appended Data Tables

**Please include data for each of the last 5 years. Additional data may be necessary where the fishery has been inactive or operating atypically.**

## APPENDIX 1 – Retained catch data and discards catch data (target species)

## APPENDIX 2 – Retained catch data (non-target species)

## APPENDIX 3 – Discards catch data (non-target species)

## APPENDIX 4 – Protected species interaction data

## APPENDIX 5 – Fishing effort

## APPENDIX 6 – Voluntary Pot Sampling Program

## APPENDIX 1 – Retained & Discard Catch Data (Target species)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Financial Year** | **Retained** | **Legal Discards** | **Dead** | **Undersized** | **Berry** | **Closed Season Female** | **Retained**  **(kg)** |
| **2020/21** | 266,377 | 13,028 | 35,706 | 200,610 | 40,510 | 12,960 | 282,724.26 |
| **2021/22** | 267,113 | 10,537 | 27,241 | 187,555 | 39,132 | 12,313 | 270,049.28 |
| **2022/23** | 248,840 | 9,410 | 22,476 | 141,344 | 32,053 | 6,113 | 260,388.63 |
| **2023/24** | 243,799 | 7,692 | 15,429 | 173,228 | 41,690 | 6,962 | 258,115.09 |
| **2024/25** | 246,841 | 10,073 | 25,530 | 162,339 | 32,385 | 4,413 | 260,429.12 |

APPENDIX 2 – Retained catch data (Byproduct species)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Financial Year | Species | Catch Number |
| 2020/21 | All Other, saltwater | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Bluelined Leatherjacket | Less than 150 |
| 2020/21 | Cod, Southern Rock | Less than 400 |
| 2020/21 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 200 |
| 2020/21 | Crab, Hermit | Less than 300 |
| 2020/21 | Crab, Spider | Less than 100 |
| 2020/21 | Crab, velvet | 465 |
| 2020/21 | Cuttlefish | Less than 15 |
| 2020/21 | Eastern Rock Lobster, Nu | Less than 150 |
| 2020/21 | Eel, Conger | 13 |
| 2020/21 | Flathead, dusky | Less than 50 |
| 2020/21 | Gurnard, Butterfly | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Gurnard, Spiny | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 774 |
| 2020/21 | Leatherjacket | 8378 |
| 2020/21 | Ling, Rock | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Magpie perch | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Morwong, Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Mullet, red | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Mulloway | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Octopus | 2783 |
| 2020/21 | Octopus, Maori | 2275 |
| 2020/21 | Octopus, Number of (seve | less than 20 |
| 2020/21 | Octopus, Pale | less than 10 |
| 2020/21 | Parrotfish | Less than 50 |
| 2020/21 | Queen snapper | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Red Rock Cod | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Rock lobster, Eastern | less than 20 |
| 2020/21 | Sergent baker | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, Draughtboard | less the 650 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, Other(Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 100 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, School and Gummy | less than 10 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, gummy | 53 |
| 2020/21 | Shark, school | less than 10 |
| 2020/21 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 450 |
| 2020/21 | Snapper | 2058 |
| 2020/21 | Sweep | less than 20 |
| 2020/21 | Trumpeter, Striped | Less than 5 |
| 2020/21 | Wrasse, Unspecified | Less than 100 |
| 2020/21 | Wrasse, blue throat | 2964 |
|  |  |  |
| 2021/22 | Australian salmon | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Baler shells | less than 20 |
| 2021/22 | Bluelined Leatherjacket | less than 250 |
| 2021/22 | Cod, Southern Rock | less than 250 |
| 2021/22 | Cod, Unspecified | 134 |
| 2021/22 | Crab, Spider | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Crab, velvet | 121 |
| 2021/22 | Cuttlefish | 41 |
| 2021/22 | Eastern Rock Lobster, Nu | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Eel, Conger | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 396 |
| 2021/22 | Leatherjacket | 6579 |
| 2021/22 | Ling, Rock | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Magpie perch | less than 10 |
| 2021/22 | Morwong, Jackass | Less than 50 |
| 2021/22 | Morwong, banded | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Mullet, red | less than 10 |
| 2021/22 | Octopus | 1534 |
| 2021/22 | Octopus, Maori | 1729 |
| 2021/22 | Perch, Ocean | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Periwinkle | Less than 50 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 50 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, Other(Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, School and Gummy | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, gummy | 88 |
| 2021/22 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 200 |
| 2021/22 | Snapper | 1468 |
| 2021/22 | Wrasse, Unspecified | Less than 300 |
| 2021/22 | Wrasse, blue throat | 1718 |
|  |  |  |
| 2022/23 | Australian salmon | Less than 20 |
| 2022/23 | Bluelined Leatherjacket | Less than 100 |
| 2022/23 | Cod, Southern Rock | Less than 100 |
| 2022/23 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 100 |
| 2022/23 | Crab, velvet | Less than 150 |
| 2022/23 | Cuttlefish | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Eel, Conger | less than 20 |
| 2022/23 | Halfbanded Seaperch | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 1678 |
| 2022/23 | Knife jaw | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Leatherjacket | 3339 |
| 2022/23 | Magpie perch | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Morwong, Jackass | 13 |
| 2022/23 | Octopus | 1536 |
| 2022/23 | Octopus, Maori | 1091 |
| 2022/23 | Perch, Ocean | Less than 20 |
| 2022/23 | Periwinkle | Less than 20 |
| 2022/23 | Red Rock Cod | Less than 20 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Bronze Whaler | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, gummy | 81 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, school | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | 211 |
| 2022/23 | Snapper | 759 |
| 2022/23 | Trumpeter, Striped | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Whelk Unspecified | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Wrasse, blue throat | 2154 |
|  |  |  |
| 2023/24 | Baler shells | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Bluelined Leatherjacket | Less than 50 |
| 2023/24 | Cod, Sleepy | less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Cod, Southern Rock | 157 |
| 2023/24 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 300 |
| 2023/24 | Crab, velvet | 246 |
| 2023/24 | Cuttlefish | less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Eel, Conger | less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Eel, southern shortfin | less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 2625 |
| 2023/24 | Leatherjacket | 7015 |
| 2023/24 | Ling, Rock | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Magpie perch | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Morwong, Jackass | Less than 50 |
| 2023/24 | Morwong, Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Morwong, banded | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Octopus | 931 |
| 2023/24 | Octopus, Maori | 783 |
| 2023/24 | Perch, Ocean | Less than 50 |
| 2023/24 | Queen snapper | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Redfish, Bight | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Sergent baker | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 50 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, broadnose | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, gummy | 90 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, school | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 350 |
| 2023/24 | Snapper | 12467 |
| 2023/24 | Sweep | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Trevally, silver | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Trumpeter, Bastard | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Wrasse, Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Wrasse, blue throat | 1408 |
|  |  |  |
| 2024/25 | Bluelined Leatherjacket | Less than 50 |
| 2024/25 | Boarfish, Long-Snouted | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Cod, Southern Rock | Less than 100 |
| 2024/25 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 450 |
| 2024/25 | Crab, Hermit | Less than 50 |
| 2024/25 | Crab, velvet | Less than 350 |
| 2024/25 | Cuttlefish | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Eel, Conger | Less than 100 |
| 2024/25 | Gurnard perch, Common | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 1496 |
| 2024/25 | Leatherjacket | 3880 |
| 2024/25 | Ling, Banded | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Ling, Rock | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Morwong, Jackass | Less than 100 |
| 2024/25 | Mosaic Leatherjacket | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Octopus | 1882 |
| 2024/25 | Octopus, Maori | 1314 |
| 2024/25 | Perch, Ocean | Less than 100 |
| 2024/25 | Perch, barber | Less than 50 |
| 2024/25 | Redfish, Bight | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 20 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, broadnose | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, gummy | 60 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, saw | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, school | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Shells | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 200 |
| 2024/25 | Snapper | 1265 |
| 2024/25 | Sweep | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Trumpeter, Striped | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Wrasse, blue throat | 914 |

Aggregated – 2020 - 2025

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Species | Estimated Bait (kg) | Catch (kg) | calc\_kg | Catch Number |
| All Other, saltwater |  |  |  | Less than 5 |
| Australian salmon | Less than 50 |  | Less than 50 | Less than 50 |
| Baler shells |  | Less than 50 | Less than 50 | Less than 50 |
| Bluelined Leatherjacket | 176.1 | 115.4 | 359 | 474 |
| Boarfish, Long-Snouted | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Cod, Sleepy | Less than 10 |  | Less than 10 | Less than 10 |
| Cod, Southern Rock | 265.3 | 77.3 | 785 | 867 |
| Cod, Unspecified | 704.2 | 38.8 | 934 | 1023 |
| Crab, Hermit | Less than 10 |  | Less than 10 | 274 |
| Crab, Spider |  | Less than 5 | Less than 100 | Less than 100 |
| Crab, velvet | 64.2 | 189.1 | 437 | 1262 |
| Cuttlefish | 13.8 | 32.3 | 278 | 67 |
| Eastern Rock Lobster, Nu | 0 | 0 | 0 | 115 |
| Eel, Conger | 72 | 0 | 72 | 36 |
| Eel, southern shortfin | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 10 |
| Flathead, dusky |  |  |  | Less than 50 |
| Gurnard perch, Common | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Gurnard, Butterfly |  |  |  | Less than 5 |
| Gurnard, Spiny |  |  |  | Less than 5 |
| Halfbanded Seaperch | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Horseshoe Leatherjacket | 3782.1 | 34.1 | 4034 | 6969 |
| Knife jaw | 0 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Leatherjacket | 11701.2 | 408.4 | 18354 | 29191 |
| Ling, Banded | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Ling, Rock |  | 10.8 | 17 | 6 |
| Magpie perch | 2 | 5.2 | 9 | 10 |
| Morwong, banded | Less than 5 | Less than 10 | Less than 10 | Less than 5 |
| Morwong, Jackass | 26.09 | 60.4 | 86 | 133 |
| Morwong, Unspecified | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Mosaic Leatherjacket | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Mullet, red |  | Less than 5 | Less than 10 | Less than 10 |
| Mulloway |  |  |  | Less than 5 |
| Octopus | 9036.2 | 5821.7 | 24321 | 8666 |
| Octopus, Maori | 9500.2 | 4339.7 | 20990 | 7192 |
| Octopus, Number of (seve |  |  |  | Less than 50 |
| Octopus, Pale |  |  |  | Less than 10 |
| Parrotfish |  |  |  | Less than 50 |
| Perch, barber | Less than 50 |  | Less than 50 | Less than 50 |
| Perch, Ocean | 22.9 | 4.6 | 27 | 75 |
| Periwinkle |  | Less than 10 | Less than 10 | Less than 50 |
| Queen snapper | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Red Rock Cod |  | Less than 50 | 22 | 16 |
| Redfish, Bight | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | 6 |
| Sergent baker | Less than 5 | 0 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Shark, broadnose | Less than 50 | Less than 50 | Less than 50 | Less than 10 |
| Shark, Bronze Whaler | Less than 200 |  | Less than 200 | Less than 5 |
| Shark, Draughtboard | 110 | 0 | 110 | 680 |
| Shark, gummy | 799.6 | 674 | 1784 | 372 |
| Shark, Other(Unspecified |  | 5.7 | Less than 50 | Less than 5 |
| Shark, Port Jackson | 46 |  | 46 | 109 |
| Shark, saw |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Shark, school | 65.9 | 18 | 192 | 13 |
| Shark, School and Gummy | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 10 |
| Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 10 |  | Less than 10 | Less than 10 |
| Shells |  |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Sixspine Leatherjacket | 458.6 | 21.1 | 687 | 1280 |
| Snapper | 754.45 | 9509.8 | 11624 | 18017 |
| Sweep | Less than 5 | Less than 5 | 5 | 14 |
| Trevally, silver | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Trumpeter, Bastard | Less than 5 |  | Less than 5 | Less than 5 |
| Trumpeter, Striped | Less than 50 | Less than 50 | Less than 100 | Less than 10 |
| Whelk Unspecified |  | Less than 50 | Less than 50 | Less than 50 |
| Wrasse, blue throat | 5653 | 464.7 | 9349 | 9158 |
| Wrasse, Unspecified | 208.9 | 5.6 | 293 | 345 |

APPENDIX 3 – Discarded catch data (Non-target species)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Species | Catch Number |
| 2021/22 | Bluelined Leatherjack | Less than 10 |
| 2021/22 | Crab, giant | Less than 10 |
| 2021/22 | Crab, velvet | Less than 30 |
| 2021/22 | Eel, Conger | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Leatherjacket | Less than 50 |
| 2021/22 | Mullet, red | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Octopus | 11 |
| 2021/22 | Octopus, Maori | Less than 10 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 1,150 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 20 |
| 2021/22 | Shark, gummy | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Snapper | Less than 50 |
| 2021/22 | Wrasse, Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2021/22 | Wrasse, blue throat | Less than 50 |
|  |  |  |
| 2022/23 | Bluelined Leatherjack | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Crab, velvet | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Eel, Conger | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Horseshoe Leatherjack | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Leatherjacket | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Octopus | Less than 10 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 250 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 150 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Shark, gummy | Less than 5 |
| 2022/23 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 50 |
| 2022/23 | Snapper | Less than 100 |
| 2022/23 | Wrasse, blue throat | Less than 10 |
|  |  |  |
| 2023/24 | Bigeye Gurnard Perch | Less than 20 |
| 2023/24 | Bluelined Leatherjack | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Cod, Unspecified | Less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Crab, Hermit | Less than 110 |
| 2023/24 | Crab, velvet | Less than 100 |
| 2023/24 | Eel, Conger | Less than 20 |
| 2023/24 | Horseshoe Leatherjack | Less than 350 |
| 2023/24 | Leatherjacket | Less than 10 |
| 2023/24 | Octopus | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Octopus, Blue ringed | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Octopus, Maori | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 350 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, Port Jackson | 37 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 5 |
| 2023/24 | Shark, gummy | Less than 20 |
| 2023/24 | Snapper | Less than 20 |
| 2023/24 | Wrasse, blue throat | 23 |
|  |  |  |
| 2024/25 | Crab, Hermit | Less than 450 |
| 2024/25 | Crab, velvet | Less than 1,000 |
| 2024/25 | Eel, Conger | Less than 20 |
| 2024/25 | Gurnard perch, Common | Less than 50 |
| 2024/25 | Horseshoe Leatherjack | Less than 750 |
| 2024/25 | Leatherjacket | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Octopus | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Octopus, Maori | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Perch, Ocean | Less than 20 |
| 2024/25 | Perch, barber | Less than 100 |
| 2024/25 | Periwinkle | Less than 250 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, Draughtboard | Less than 550 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, Port Jackson | Less than 150 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Shark, gummy | Less than 5 |
| 2024/25 | Sixspine Leatherjacket | Less than 10 |
| 2024/25 | Snapper | Less than 50 |
| 2024/25 | Wrasse, blue throat | Less than 50 |

**Aggregated: 2021-2025**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Species | Catch Number |
| Bigeye Gurnard Perch | Less than 20 |
| Bluelined Leatherjack | Less than 20 |
| Cod, Unspecified | Less than 20 |
| Crab, Hermit | Less than 550 |
| Crab, velvet | 1119 |
| Eel, Conger | 30 |
| Giant Crab | Less than 200 |
| Gurnard perch, Common | Less than 50 |
| Horseshoe Leatherjack | 1078 |
| Leatherjacket | 156 |
| Mullet, red | Less than 10 |
| Octopus | 23 |
| Octopus, Blue ringed | Less than 10 |
| Octopus, Maori | 9 |
| Perch, barber | Less than 100 |
| Perch, Ocean | Less than 20 |
| Periwinkle | Less than 250 |
| Shark, Draughtboard | 2173 |
| Shark, gummy | 20 |
| Shark, Port Jackson | 267 |
| Shark, Wobbegong | Less than 10 |
| Sixspine Leatherjacke | Less than 50 |
| Snapper | 172 |
| Wrasse, blue throat | 77 |
| Wrasse, Unspecified | Less than 10 |

APPENDIX 4 – Victorian Rock Lobster protected species interaction data

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Species (number) Reported** | | | |  | **Age** | | | **Gear** | **Fishing Stage** | | | | |  | | | | | **Life status** | | | | **Animal fate** | | | |
| **Year** | **No. of fishers** | **Australian Fur Seal** | **Humpback Whale** | **Southern Right Whale** | **Whale, Unspecified** | **Total** | **Adult** | **Juvenile** | **Unknown (U)** | **Gear Code** | **Set (S)** | **Fishing (F)** | **Retrieval (R )** | **Unknown (U)** | **Hooked (H)** | | **Captured (C )** | **Entangled (E )** | **Other (O)** | **Alive (A)** | | **Dead (D)** | **Injured (I)** | **Released (R )** | | **Euthanised (E )** | **Taken to vet/shelter (S)** | **Disposed of (D)** |
| **2019** | **5** |  | 1 |  |  | **6** |  |  | 1 | RL |  |  | R |  |  | |  | E |  | 1 | |  |  | 1 | |  |  |  |
|  | 1 |  |  |  |  | 1 | RL |  | F |  |  |  | |  | E |  | 1 | |  |  | 1 | |  |  |  |
| 1 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | RL |  |  |  | U |  | | C |  |  |  | | 1 |  |  | |  |  | 1 |
| 1 |  |  |  |  | 1 |  | RL |  | F |  |  |  | | C |  |  |  | | 1 |  |  | |  |  | 1 |
|  |  | 1 |  |  |  | 1 | RL |  | 1 |  |  |  | |  | 1 |  | 1 | |  |  | 1 | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 | RL |  |  | R |  |  | |  | E |  | 1 | |  |  | 1 | |  |  |  |
| **2020** | **3** |  |  |  | id1 | **id1** |  |  | id1 | RL |  | F |  |  |  | |  | E |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| id1 |  |  |  |  | id1 |  | RL |  | F | R |  |  | | C |  |  |  | | id1 |  |  | |  |  | id1 |
| **2021** | **1** |  |  | id1 |  | **id1** |  | id1 |  | RL | S |  |  |  |  | |  | E |  |  | | id1 |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **2022** | **1** |  | id1 |  |  | **id1** |  | id1 |  | RL |  | F |  |  |  | |  | E |  | id1 | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **2023** | **nd2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | RL |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **2024** | **nd2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | RL |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **2025** | **nd2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | RL |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | **8** |  |  |  |  | **41** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| 1id, insufficient data to report because there are less than five licence holders (policy requirement to protect commercial confidentiality of data); |
| 2nd, no data obtained. |

APPENDIX 5 – Fishing effort

*Table 1: Eastern Zone catch, fishing effort, Catch per unit effort (CPUE), Active participants. (Quota Period: July to June).*

| **Fishing Year** | **TACC Set**  ***(tonne)*** | **Catch**  ***(tonne)*** | **Nominal Effort**  ***('000 pot-lifts)*** | **Nominal CPUE**  ***(kg/pot-lift)*** | **Standardised CPUE**  ***(kg/pot-lift)*** | **Mean Mass**  ***(kg/lobster)*** | **Active Licenses** | **Vessels** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2018/19 | 47 | 44.7 | 107 | 0.42 | 0.40 | 1.51 | 20 | 20 |
| 2019/20 | 40 | 37.1 | 94 | 0.39 | 0.36 | 1.51 | 17 | 19 |
| 2020/21\*\* | 40  (42.8) | 31.7 | 72 | 0.36 | 0.42 | 1.47 | 17 | 17 |
| 2021/22\*\*\* | 32  (33) | 20.7 | 53 | 0.38 | 0.48 | 1.36 | 14 | 15 |
| 2022/23 | 32 | 17.3 | 44 | 0.34 | 0.49 | 1.31 | 11 | 11 |
| 2023/24 | 21 | 18.2 | 40 | 0.46 | 0.60 | 1.42 | 11 | 11 |

*\*\* TACC of 40 t + 2.8 t of uncaught quota carried over from 2019/20 due to COVID market impacts in 2019/20*

*\*\*\* TACC of 32 t + 1 t comprised of 10% of uncaught quota for 2020/21.*

*Table 2: Western Zone catch, fishing effort, Catch per unit effort (CPUE), Active participants. (Quota Period: July to June).*

| **Fishing Year** | **TACC Set**  ***(tonne)*** | **Catch**  ***(tonne)*** | **Nominal Effort**  ***('000 pot-lifts)*** | **Nominal CPUE**  ***(kg/pot-lift)*** | **Standardised CPUE**  ***(kg/pot-lift)*** | **Mean Mass**  ***(kg/lobster)*** | **Active Licenses** | **Vessels** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2018/19 | 245 | 245 | 307 | 0.83 | 0.64 | 1.03 | 43 | 44 |
| 2019/20 | 246 | 225.6 | 270 | 0.80 | 0.67 | 1.04 | 42 | 44 |
| 2020/21 \*\* | 246  (264.3) | 255 | 284 | 0.88 | 0.68 | 1.03 | 38 | 37 |
| 2021/22\*\*\* | 246  (249.4) | 249.3 | 241 | 1.07 | 0.74 | 1.01 | 41 | 39 |
| 2022/23 | 246 | 246 | 213 | 1.18 | 0.78 | 1.05 | 38 | 36 |
| 2023/24 | 242 | 240 | 190 | 1.26 | 0.78 | 1.06 | 31 | 30 |

*\*\* TACC of 246 t + 18.3 t of uncaught quota carried over from 2019/20 due to COVID market impacts in 2019/20*

*\*\*\* TACC of 246 t + 3.4 t comprised of 10% of uncaught quota for 2020/21, plus uncaught quota of fishers impacted by the abalone virus.*

**Appendix 6 - Voluntary Sampling Program Instructions**

**Voluntary sampling strategy – Eastern Zone RL Fishery**

Declining lobster catch rates and fewer operators in the EZ in recent years has meant that the desired level of sampling has been difficult to achieve through the on-board observer program. A reduction in monitoring costs to help provide relief to fishers in the EZ, in the form of reduced licence fees, has also led to a reduction in the number of observer days.

This has resulted in less Length Frequency data creating greater assessment uncertainty, the need for more precautionary management action and increased delay in detecting fishery changes.

To overcome this data shortfall, a sampling strategy has been devised whereby all EZ fishers will be contacted and encouraged to become involved in a program to collect daily, rock lobster length data. Fishers will be asked to measure RL catch from approximately 10% of their pots each day, with the aim to collect 800 length measurements in total for the zone each season.

Success of this program requires a high level of participation, given the small number of fishers now operating in the EZ.

**Reporting Requirements**

* Record lobster catch from 10% of pots each day.
* To remove bias, pots to be measured must be selected before they are hauled.
* Record blank pots so that the number of pots measured can be determined.
* Pot information – date, location (block), depth
* Lobster information – Carapace length (mm), sex, maturity (females only), colour, shell.
* Round length down to nearest mm
* Post data in reply paid envelope at the end of each month

A close-up of a form

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

1. A structural adjustment program was undertaken in the Western Zone in 2008 that resulted in 14 licences, 366.52 quota units being permanently removed from the Western Zone Rock Lobster Fishery. The Initial Quota Order for the Western Zone was amended from 4000 quota units to 3633.48 quota units in accordance with the requirements of the Fisheries Act. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)