Tas Seafood Council to Deputy PM on seismic testing

Since March 2018, the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council has invested significant time to better understand the operations and impacts of three separate seismic survey proposals to the West of King Island.

Our conclusions are:

1) Seismic activity poses a significant and unknown threat to our commercial fishing industry and broader marine ecosystem. This view is supported by recently published research conducted by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), which shows seismic in fact impacts larvae, plankton and adults of a diverse range of species, including rock lobster.

2) The consultation process employed by the gas and oil industry is completely inadequate, with a minimalist 'tick box' approach being adopted by most companies.

TSIC has clearly articulated our concerns about the impacts of seismic activity, as well as the poor consultation practices employed by the gas and oil industry, to state and federal politicians.

Our next meeting is with the Deputy Prime Minister in late January.

When our legitimate concerns are presented to the gas and oil industry, they are essentially ignored and met with comments such as that stated by 3D Oil "the potential impacts from the [3D Oil Ltd seismic] survey on all fish and invertebrates, and on their commercial catchability, have been assessed as having negligible to minor impacts, which are localised and short-term".

Furthermore, gas and oil proponents only need to mitigate any 'perceived' risks to 'As Low As Reasonably Practical" (ALARP). ".This flies in the face of the fishing industry, which manages its renewable resources for both now and the future with a far more precautionary approach.

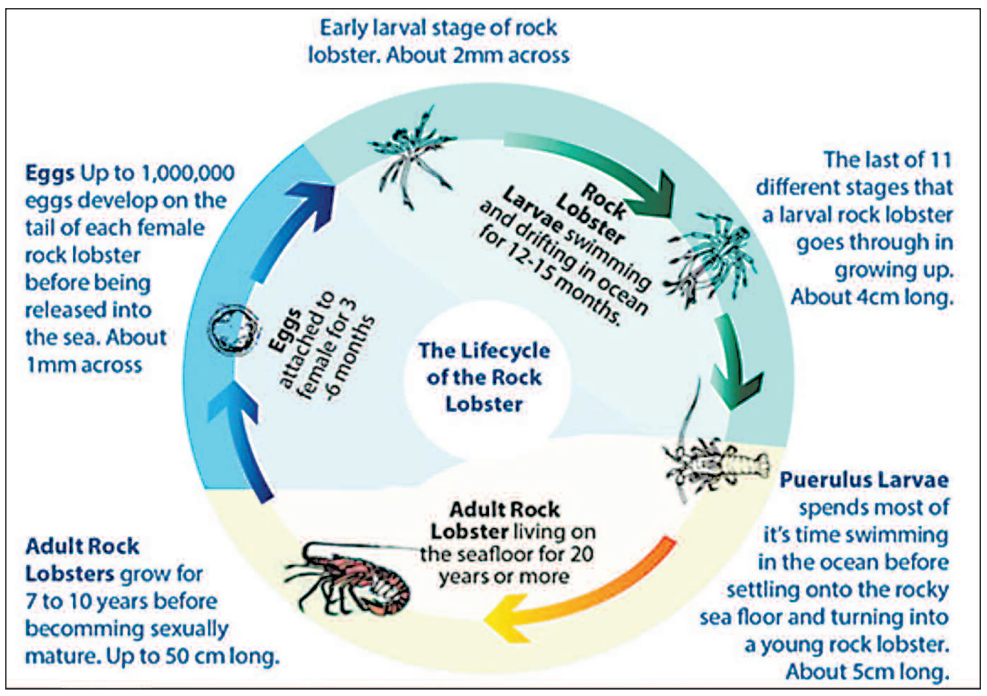
When respected scientists openly state in the media "fishers are wise to be concerned [about seismic surveys", we should all be able to agree that seismic testing has a far greater impact on the marine environment than previously thought.

If this can be achieved, then we have a greater chance of properly managing our marine environment, in the interests of all stakeholders.

If you too are concerned, I would love to hear from you. Alternatively, you are able to voice your concerns through the national regulator NOPSEMA.

— Julian Harrington, Chief Executive
Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council

Seismic surveys a grave threat to lobster, crab and scallop eggs: TRLFA



Lobster have a long and complex lifecycle.
The adult mate and the females carry eggs for 3-5 months. Larvae hatch and swim in the open ocean for 18-24 months, during which they undergo numerous moults and 11 changes.The puerulus stage settles and moults into the juvenile stage. Juveniles mature and become adults after 4-5 years.

"The proposed timeframe for the 3D survey also directly aligns with the time of year when female rock lobsters in the area release their eggs.
This could threaten a whole generation of lobsters from that area.This all means that the real effects on fisheries may not be known for some considerable time following a survey event.
The fishing industry will be left to endure the effects well after 3D Oil have left the scene," says TRLFA CEO John Sansom.

While there is an appreciation of the need for petroleum exploration in the interests of Australia, there remain significant concerns to the fishing industry regarding the effects of seismic testing on the marine ecosystem.

The published statement from 3D Oil Ltd regarding fish and invertebrate deaths and effects on eggs/larvae virtually dismiss any concerns from people who derive their livelihoods from the sea.These comments reflect a lack of understanding of the very real concerns these hard working people have. They are also dismissive of peer reviewed science.

Research has established that seismic testing can have detrimental effects on rock lobsters and is believed to have caused significant mortality in commercial scallop beds in Bass Strait.

More recent research published in leading science journal Nature Ecology and Evolution has found that marine seismic surveys used in petroleum exploration could cause a two to three-fold increase in mortality of adult and larval zooplankton.

This poses a grave threat to any rock lobster, giant crab and scallop larvae within one kilometer of the testing apparatus.

These are very real concerns to the fishing industry.

The proposed timeframe for the 3D survey also directly aligns with the time of year when female rock lobsters in the area release their eggs. This could threaten a whole generation of lobsters from that area.

This all means that the real effects on fisheries may not be known for some considerable time following a survey event.

The fishing industry will be left to endure the effects well after 3D Oil have left the scene.

The fishing industry is facing three proposals (including 3D Oil) for seismic testing in the area ranging from west of Cape Jaffa in South Australia to west of Strahan off the West Coast of Tasmania.

Some of these surveys will overlap.

This overlapping brings up the question of cumulative effects of seismic blasting on marine organisms.

The area concerned is a known rock lobster larvae convergence zone where larvae are carried by ocean currents through their larval cycle for between 18 months and two years before they are ready to settle on rocky reef as a fully formed lobster.

The natural mortality of lobster larvae is very high.

Any survivors will now have to run the gauntlet of seismic testing to live – no pressure in that!

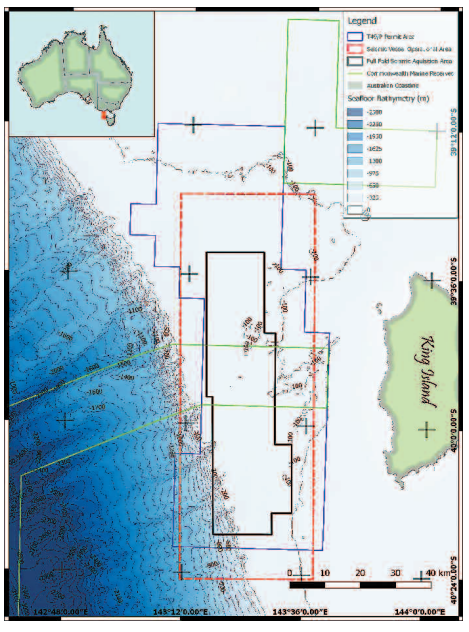
The one thing is becoming increasingly clear is that seismic testing has far more effect on the marine ecosystem than previously thought.

In a recent ABC radio interview, the Tasmanian fishing industry was accused of being "obstructive" in regard to the consultation process being adopted by 3D Oil Ltd. Is there any wonder?

—John Sansom, CEO
Tasmanian Rock Lobster
Fishermen's Association Ltd

Dorrigo 3D Marine Seismic Survey

September and October 2019



Activity Details

3D Oil Limited is proposing to undertake a 3D marine seismic survey in Oil and Gas exploration permit T/49-P, located in Commonwealth waters with vessel operations at least 18km west of King Island. The area of operation covers approximately 4,350 km^2, including 1,580 km^2 in which seismic data (output of acoustic energy) would be acquired. It is estimated that the survey will take no more than 35 days to complete.

3D Oil is currently engaging with stakeholders in the area (local communities, fishery representatives, regulatory bodies) to explain and provide information on the project, understand their issues and concerns and work with relevant stakeholders to mitigate any effects of the survey.

An Environment Plan (EP) is being prepared using the best available science to assess and to manage the potential impacts associated with the survey. If this EP is accepted by the Commonwealth regulator NOPSEMA, the survey is planned to start in September 2019 and be completed by October 31, 2019.

Sound effect on fish and invertebrates

The EP will assess and discuss potential impacts to local fish and invertebrates (e.g. lobster, crab, abalone, squid) species, including larvae/eggs. Fish can respond differently to seismic sound depending on whether they have a swim bladder. The potential impacts from the survey on all fish and invertebrates, and on their commercial catchability, have been assessed as having negligible to minor impacts which are localised and short-term. No cases of fish or invertebrate death have been reported from seismic surveys to date. Fish and invertebrates are expected to recover once the survey is completed. The potential impact on fish eggs/larvae have been found to be negligible when compared with the natural mortality rates for fish.

Activity impacts on marine users

Seismic surveys are designed, planned and executed to prevent potential conflicts with other marine users. The seismic vessel sails slowly (~4.5-5 knots) and has limited manoeuvre capabilities due to the length of the towed cables. One or more support vessels escort the seismic vessel to maintain a safe distance between the towed array and other vessels.

Although the potential exists for short-term inconvenience and disruption to patterns of fishing, early stakeholder engagement and consultation with individual fishermen aim to limit spatial interference to the lowest levels possible. Through consultation, 3D Oil seeks to identify any fishermen affected by the planned survey ahead of time so 3D Oil can provide early notification of survey commencement and daily advice during survey operations to prevent spatial interference.

Ongoing Consultation

Stakeholder engagement to date has included consultation with State and Commonwealth government departments; Commonwealth, Victorian and Tasmanian fishing industry associations; Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV); Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC), individual State and Commonwealth fishers, the VFA, DPIPWE and AFMA.

Survey information has been provided through face-to-face meetings, emails, letters and phone calls. 3D Oil seeks to understand fishing industry concerns and seeks positive outcomes whereby the survey is completed safely and the disruption to fishing activity is minimised.

3D Oil wishes to work with the fishing industry to minimise any impacts and appreciates fishers who have taken the time to provide feedback to date. 3D Oil encourages other individual fishermen to provide information on any areas or times of importance to their fishery, such that impacts can be minimised further.

For further information or to discuss potential impacts contact:
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