ROCK LOBSTER AND GIANT CRAB NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2015

Catch Update

Statewide: Catch is 340.8 tonnes. This represents 32.4% of the TACC leaving 709.9 tonnes to be caught.

Catch Cap Area: Catch is 51.9 tonnes, leaving 67.9 tonnes to be caught.

These figures are not fully complete as all daily catch records for August have not yet been processed.

Translocation

The TRLFA is calling for expressions of interest for the translocation of 100,000 lobsters for the 2015/16 season. This is the second stage of the current three year program funded by industry. It is envisaged that this part of the project will be completed by April 2016. Anyone with any interest should contact the TRLFA Executive Officer before September 30.

East Coast

At this stage the Minister’s proposals to introduce changes to the Rock Lobster Management Plan that are designed to restrict the recreational catch are out for public comment. The consultation period ends on the 3rd of September. A review process of the submissions to the management plan changes will then take place before a report is sent to the Minister. The Minister is expected to make an announcement in October in time for any new regulations to be in place for the start of the recreational season in November. The TRLFA has submitted its recommendations to DPIPWE and will also take part in the review process through its membership of CFAC.

Scalefish Fishery Management Plan

The TRLFA has also made a submission to the proposed amendments to the Scalefish Fishery Management Plan. The proposed amendments related largely to the recreational fishery and commercial scalefish fishery. TRLFA comments were restricted to species that were common to the rock lobster fishery and the other sectors. The TRLFA supported proposals for Blue Grouper and Striped Trumpeter and proposed an increase to the octopus possession limit from 100 kilograms to 250 kilograms.

Port Meetings

State-wide port meetings will be conducted in October. Ports and Dates are:-

October 1 – Eaglehawk Neck and Triabunna.          October 7 – Launceston.
October 2 – Port Huon.                               October 13 – Strahan.
October 5 – Hobart.                                  October 14 - Stanley
October 6-Bicheno and St Helens.                    October 15 – King Island
Venues and times will be notified closer to meeting dates. Please take the opportunity to have your say on the issues of the day or raise your concerns on any other matter that affects your business.

**PST's**

Another algal bloom causing a Biotoxin incident occurred on the East Coast in August. This forced the closure of the rock lobster fishery in the Maria Island Biotoxin Region that extends from Marion Bay to Wine Glass Bay. High levels of PST detected in shellfish species required the testing of lobsters in the area under the protocols of the Tasmanian Biotoxin Management Plan. Federal Government regulations require the fishing season to close while testing is conducted. The season was closed in the area from midnight Friday the 7th August. Rock lobster for testing were collected from the affected area on the morning of Monday the 10th August and delivered to IMAS for dissection and preparation and sent to Sydney for testing. Results on Wednesday the 19th revealed elevated levels of PST present but under the maximum permitted level. As toxin levels in shellfish tests continued to remain over the permitted maximum, more rock lobsters testing was required and so under the management plan the rock lobster season remained closed. DPIPWE notified industry that the season would not reopen before the scheduled closure on August 31. While these closures are inconvenient to fishers in the area, food safety protocols that protect our export markets and reputation are too valuable to jeopardise.

On the positive side we are learning all the time from testing samples and hope that in the near future we will be able to be more predictive of outbreaks and particularly take up and depuration rates for lobsters that will enable us to restrict closures to the absolute minimum. The FRDC research project currently under way and other research involving “on the spot” testing should also deliver outcomes that will assist in minimising the effects of these outbreaks. The TRLFA will shortly approach other affected sectors for a conversation on a collaborative approach to dealing with cross sector issues relating to PST issues.

The TRLFA greatly appreciates the help of our sample collectors that have significantly reduced the costs to industry. A big thankyou to Simon Willey, Chris Bailey, Reggie Gray and Deb Gardner for their assistance.

**TRLFA Board Elections**

At the last TRLFA general meeting in May, members voted to support a motion to have all future Board elections conducted by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. In moving towards implementation of the directive, the Board has discussed the issue and plans to ask the members to consider further extension of the proposal to include the possibility of two yearly Board appointments and /or half Board elections annually. To enable wider discussions of these considerations, the Board proposes to hold election of office bearers as usual at this November’s Annual General Meeting. The Board plan to discuss the proposal at the November meeting with a view to vote on a complete package in May next year for implementation at next year’s AGM.

**Changes at TSIC**

Chief Executive at TSIC, Neil Stump has “called it a day” and retired from his position effective from August 31. Neil has held the position for nine years and prior to that was president of the organisation. Neil’s involvement in the fishing industry has extended over 30 years and, as most of our members will remember, included nine years as President of the TRLFA. Neil’s demonstrated loyalty and commitment to the fishing industry over this period has earnt him great respect from industry and the organisations he has been associated with. TSIC’s former Project Manager Julian Harrington has been appointed as the new CE. The TRLFA welcome the appointment. In his previous role Julian has demonstrated a genuine understanding of industry, the challenges it faces and a willingness to achieve positive outcomes for the industry.

**Clean Green**

SRL Executive Officer Ross Hodge will attend the TRLFA November general meeting and deliver an update on the Clean Green program. There is now some funding available to assist in offsetting the cost of training for new members and update sessions for current members. There has been a significant increase in membership of Clean Green in South Australia in the last 12 months. Since that State relinquished responsibility for vessel
safety management to AMSA, fishers have joined seeking to minimise costs associated with Vessel Safety Management Plans and audits. AMSA currently requires that vessel safety management plans for class 3 vessels be in place by June 2017. Ross will be seeking to organise training and updates for Tasmania at the meeting. Anyone interested may register that interest by contacting the TRLFA Executive Officer.

**Ozzie Holiday**

A television program featuring the Tasmanian rock lobster fishery was screened on free to air TV on the 15th of August. The program was a part of the TRLFA’s social license program. For those who missed the program a link is on the TRLFA website. The TRLFA sincerely thanks those who took part in the program, namely: Glen Jager, Warren Jager, Michael Hardy, Max Hardy, Torsten Schwoch, Troy Rainbird, Clive Perryman, Donna Whitehouse Summers and Caleb Gardener. Without the generosity of those people donating their time the program would not have been possible. The TRLFA also thanks our co-sponsors of the program, Sunderland Marine and the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Processors Association.

**48 Hour Rule**

There have been a number of complaints to Tas Police and DPIPWE Compliance Section concerning incidences of fishers exceeding the 48 hour rule. The rule (73) states that a holder of a fishing license (rock lobster) must not, in state waters, set a rock lobster pot for a continuous period exceeding 48 hours. The rule continues stating that the fisher is not guilty of an offence if gear cannot be retrieved because of: adverse weather, breakdown or vessel damage, illness or incapacity of fisher. The fisher must notify a fisheries officer in writing within 48 hours of the pot being set that the gear cannot be retrieved and the reason why. The fisher must then within 48 hours of giving initial notice advise a fisheries officer of arrangements to retrieve gear and retrieve the gear in accordance with any directions given by a fisheries officer. The rule further states that there is no offence if the pot/s are not baited or have a bait holding device or the fisher has written approval to do so from a fisheries officer or permit from DPIPWE. The rule was made to facilitate genuine reasons for a fisher who is unable to retrieve his gear within 48 hours. It is an offence to exceed this time period and there are significant penalties associated with breaching this rule. Please ensure that you have retrieved your gear before the 48 hour period is up.

**Victoria Dock Bridge Maintenance**

Tasports advise that:

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of issues and incidents with the automation process for the Victoria Dock Bridge operations which have led Tasports to approving a maintenance project to improve the bridge opening system. This project will commence on Monday 14th September and plans to be finalised by Friday the 18th. During this time there will be intermittent disruption and one full day of closure. It has been identified that these works needs to be done prior to the peak tourism season so as to ensure operational efficiency during that time.

- **Monday 14 September**, remediation will commence. This will involve replacing the main control system. Testing the new system will require opening and closing the bridge, therefore traffic interruptions will be experienced intermittently for short periods of time. 
  
  *Vessel access will be limited on this day.*

- **Wednesday 16 September**, re-wiring the sensors will take place. This involves working in and underneath the middle section of the bridge via the access hatch. *The bridge will be closed to all pedestrian, vehicle and vessel traffic for a maximum period of eight hours (9-5pm).*

- Works on the bridge control cabinet will continue for the remainder of the week.

- The current 7am openings for vessels will not be impacted.
These works have been instigated due to a number of safety incidents that have occurred during operation of the bridge. Updating the system is imperative to keeping both staff and members of the public safe.

Any queries should be directed to Philippa Gwynne T 6222 6024 M 0417 519 335 or E Philippa.Gwynne@tasports.com.au

**Celebration**

The TRLFA turns 30 this year! The Association was incorporated in September 1985. To celebrate the anniversary the TRLFA plan to hold an informal “get together” following the AGM in November at the Wrest Point Casino. All past and present members are welcome to attend and share some memories with nibbles and a drink or two.

**Invitation**

PhD student Annalise Rees recently spent some time on board the fishing vessel “Climax” documenting life on board a fishing boat. The documentation was not graphs and data but a collection of sketches and drawings of the artist’s impression of life on board. Annalise is having an exhibition of her work at the Entrepôt Gallery (Tasmanian College of Arts) in Hunter Street from the 28th of September to the 10th of October. The Gallery opens from 10 am – 5 pm Mon to Fri and 11 am – 3 pm Sat & Sun. Annalise extends an invitation to all to attend.

**Contact**

The TRLFA secretary has asked for more email contact details from members. There is still a significant section of the membership that have not provided their email addresses. While we are aware that there are some who do not have email contact the TRLFA would appreciate those of you who do to supply your details. Simply send an email to trlfa.secretary@gmail.com. We also have a number of email addresses that “bounce” when correspondence is forwarded. If you have changed your email address could you please contact the Secretary at the above address.

**Other Dates**

**TRLFA General and AGM – November 4 at Wrest Point Casino Hobart.**

**Seafood Directions – 25/27 October Perth WA.**

John Sansom  
Executive Officer  
0427 477 284