



Victorian Rock Lobster Committee (VRLC) Meeting #3 – 4 November 2022

Location: Zoom Meeting

Chairperson's Summary

This was the third meeting of the Victorian Rock Lobster Committee.

Key items discussed included:

- Draft Code of Conduct
- Employment of Rock Lobster Executive Officer
- Report on a Rope-less Gear Trial
- Lattice Energy

Draft Code of Conduct

- The VRLC reaffirmed its position that voluntary adoption of the Code of Conduct provides the best opportunity for industry to demonstrate its commitment to reducing interactions with threatened or endangered species to Government agencies.
- The VRLC noted that the VFA will not regulate the Code of Conduct but rather responsibility would fall on individual licence holders to adhere to the code.
- The VRLC noted that the consultation process with rock lobster licence holders on the draft Code of Conduct has ended with no feedback from industry.
- The VRLC noted that some, not all amendments suggested by DELWP would be incorporated into the Code of Conduct.
- The VRLC agreed to insert a statement in the Code of Conduct that the non-use of commercial fishing equipment by recreational rock lobster fishers greatly reduces the risk of whale entanglements.

Employment of Rock Lobster Executive Officer

- The VRLC reaffirmed its commitment to employ a suitably qualified executive officer for the rock lobster fishery with the role to commence 1 December 2022.
- The VRLC noted that industry members have provided in-principle support for a voluntary levy to help fund the position, subject to the final levy amount being fair and reasonable.
- Following consultation with industry members, VRLC members reaffirmed their request that Wayne Dredge, Chair of the VRLC, commence as the executive officer in the short term as a contractor, developing the framework, workplan, funding opportunities, strategic goals, etc of the VRLC and fishery, with the intention to employ an executive officer in 12-24 months' time.
- The VRLC noted that the Chair is agreeable to undertaking the executive officer role in the short term, subject to the ongoing support of licence holders.
- The VRLC requested that a 12-month budget and work plan be developed for the executive officer position, for approval by the VRLC at its next meeting.

- The VRLC agreed that a communique from SIV or the VRLC to all licence holders advising of the VRLC's short- and long-term plans for the executive officer role should be sent to licence holders in December 2022.

Rope Less Gear Trial

- The VRLC was provided with a further update on the rope-less gear trial that is being conducted by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in Tasmania.
- The VRLC noted:
 - a) The rope-less gear used as part of the trial is the best technology currently available.
 - b) The rope-less gear works reasonably well; however, it is both cost prohibitive and not operationally viable for commercial RL fishing due to time and reliability concerns.
 - c) The VFA and DELWP on-board observers of the trial concurred with Gary's assessment.
- The VRLC agreed that industry participation in the trial demonstrates its commitment to work in partnership with government agencies to mitigate the risk to protected and endangered species.
- The VRLC agreed to discuss and consider any further advancements in commercial fishing equipment that may be more cost effective and practical in the future.
- Chair VRLC to review the outcome of a similar trial of rope-less commercial fishing equipment in British Columbia and provide the VRLC with an update.

Lattice Energy

- The VRLC discussed the \$100,000 Lattice Energy grant previously provided to SIV and a range of options for investment in the RL fishery.

Next meeting: 1 December 2022,

Wayne Dredge
VRLC Chair