



Chairperson's Summary

Victorian Rock Lobster Committee (VRLC) Meeting #13 – 17 December 2024

Location: Zoom Meeting

Management Plan

- It was recently confirmed that Minister Dimopolous had endorsed the Rock Lobster Management Plan following the VFA removing the harvest rule for the recreational sector.
- The committee expressed dissatisfaction with the process, whereby the Steering Committee were not provided with an opportunity for input on the major change made by the VFA.
- The Committee considered how best to elevate their concerns.
- There was further discussion regarding the committee's dissatisfaction at the VFA not providing reasons for rejecting the RLRAG's recommendation for 'point of landing' (rather than 7 days) reporting of catch by the recreational sector. Recreational catch data accuracy/reliability to inform fisheries management remains an issue.

Vic RL MSC Pre-assessment Report

- SRL Ltd provided a copy of the Victorian Rock Lobster Fishery MSC Pre-assessment Report to the VRLC. The committee was asked not to distribute this confidential document further.
- The Pre-Assessment Report was funded by SRL Ltd / FRDC to provide an initial scorecard against MSC criteria without committing the industry to pursuing full MSC certification.
- The committee discussed the strengths and weaknesses highlighted in the report.
- A lack of available data to inform several criteria may pose issues if industry decides to pursue a full assessment. There would need to be a commitment from the VFA to provide all necessary information to the assessors.

GVP Model Working Group - Update

- Members of the working group expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of the proposed model to financial viability and management of the rock lobster industry.
- It was suggested that the RL industry could consider forming a separate fund in case they decide to challenge the proposed model from a legal perspective.

Alternative Bait Trials

- Chris Gillies introduced himself as the owner of Offshore Biotechnologies and presented a bait alternative being developed overseas.
- Members of the committee were invited to take part in a small trial to gather initial data in Australia.

AVG Transmission Risk Study

- It was noted that a lack of relevant information may lead to a pre-cautionary approach to managing risk associated with lobster fishing gear potentially acting as a vector for AVG.
- The group discussed the need for empirical research to prove or dis-prove the potential for certain fishing gear types to act as a vector.

SRL Ltd – additional R&D funding

- The SIV CEO confirmed that the \$15K/annum of R&D levy contributions from industry (above the recommended 0.25%) collected by the VFA is given to SRL Ltd to be added into consolidated R&D funds.
- The VRLC did not identify an issue in continuation of the additional R&D funding on the basis that SRL Ltd has supported research relevant to the Victorian SRL sector despite the State's relatively small R&D fund contribution compared to Tas and SA.

Lobster National Peak Body Update

- The group discussed that a National Peak Body would need corporate governance experience on the Board, independence and resources to fund staff/activities.
- The Western Rock Lobster peak body has not supported the two proposals put forward to date.
- There has been talk of a national workshop to continue discussions – to be confirmed.

Wayne Dredge
VRLC Chairperson