

Supplementary Submission to the National Rick Lobster Management Group

22 February 2018

By email

CRA2 NZRFC Response

Good afternoon all

I am very mindful that we were in a situation where the NRLMG could not agree on a recommendation to the Minister in CRA2 with a wide degree of difference between all sector groups. Like we were at the extreme end calling for the fishery to be closed. Industry were were at the other end for economic reasons and Maori while not defined were sitting in the middle.

This was not looking to be a good look for the NRLMG We recognise that the option to close was not officially on the table, but it would be remiss of all of us, that given the current status of this fishery that we could be looking at closure as a real outcome if we cannot halt the current decline.

We would like to acknowledge the new position offered by the commercial sector and supported by Maori. This is a huge step and we recognise this. But in our view the fishery is now at a stage where we must focus on what is best for the fishery.

Meanwhile we were advised at the meeting that closure was not on the table, so we altered our position in line with our previous discussions to support a TAC of 191.5tonnes. We did this based on the best science presented. Plus we

noted the recreational allowance of 50tonne down from 140tonnes in the advice was in keeping with what we are currently experiencing in the fishery.

Incidentally this position was also support by the SFC/ LegaSea fisheries management committee in their submission.

We remain concerned that the current CPUE is 0.253 point just .003 off tumbling. We note that in the BoP the CPUE appears to have been strengthened by the reopening of Astrolabe Reef after the RENA grounding, with commercial regaining access to the imposed exclusion area. Without this added bonus who knows where the fishery might be.

This said the science only supports 80tonne based on the spawning stock biomass. However we believe this is biased and should include all legal size lobsters at risk of capture and not just the spawning stock as done. The spawning stock biomass at 18. or 18.5 is still below the soft limit of 20.0. When we add in males, the vulnerable stock biomass in the 2017 stock assessment is just 5% of unfished levels, which is below the 10.0 hard limit for closing the fishery. Or even at looking at the refined numbers the available bio-mass is probably half way between, still sitting right on the hard limit. Which is why we recommended the position we did as reports indicate the limit could be as low as 5.0 in areas of the north-western part of the fishery including the Hauraki Gulf and Gt Barrier.

We have reviewed our position and looked seriously at the 100t on the table offered by both commercial and Maori. We note the suggested 34ton allowance for recreational and would argue against this when the best research indicates 41tonne. We clearly supported the notion of 80tonne although 50tonne was up for discussion not 34tonne.

If commercial want to support a lower option than they offered at the last meeting, we recognise this as they, accepting the realisation in recognising the dire situation this fishery is in. But it cannot be made conditional on our allowance being cut.

We wish to make it very clear in the advice paper that recreational do not accept that acceptance of any reduction in our allowance, in any way reflects acceptance of a 'proportional share'.

In seeking comment from the SFC their position remains unchanged from that contained in their submission. Clearly we all want to support a rebuild in this fishery within 10 years. But, even at 100tons I remain cautious in accepting this is possible. Likewise if the CPUE drops to below 0.25 and its not far off it. We will still be in trouble, leaving the Minister no option but to consider further cuts or closing the fishery.

Therefore based on the available science and best stock assessments our position remains; that while we still have wide support to close the fishery. All pots and divers out of the water. Our fall back position remains.

In recognising the economic impact on commercial fishers, our supported alternative position remains in support of a TAC of 191.5tonnes with a TACC of 80tonnes.

In doing so we would ask that the Minister applies more resources towards combating the illegal catch and not just allow the current limited compliance observation continue in this fishery. The ability to get HFO's and CO's to sea on the water in both DOC and private vessels should be considered and supported.

With the ever increasing number of small lobsters being caught, we would also ask that MPI and commercial consider fitting pots with a smaller mesh size bottom liner

to reduce the potential for incidental mortality by tail crushing of small lobsters as these pots are dragged over the rails.

My final comment is that we also ask Maori customary harvest to support the rebuild by stipulating the current amateur regulations and MLS when issuing all customary permits in this fishery.

In closing we support in CRA2 option 4, with a TAC 191.5tonnes with a TACC of 80tonnes.

We thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Your aye

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