

## SITUATION REPORT

MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup> 2019

### A CONSIDERATION OF THE NRLMG RECOMMENDATION TO INCREASE THE CRA 4 TAC AND TACC FROM APRIL 2019

The CRAMAC 4 Chairman and NZ RLIC personnel were told on March 7<sup>th</sup> that [REDACTED] has further consolidated its opposition to the NRLMG-recommended CRA 4 TACC increase.

We were also told that two major players – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] – have committed their support to the [REDACTED] position – no TACC increase from April 2019.

CRAMAC 4, and by association the NZ RLIC, are obliged to put forward an alternative view. At a well-attended annual general meeting in December 2018, the CRA 4 industry gave a solid mandate to the CRAMAC 4 Executive Committee to support the recommended TACC increase. That mandate was reflected in submissions made during statutory consultation by both CRAMAC 4 and the NZ RLIC. It is worthy of note that both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] endorsed those submissions at the time. They have since resiled from that support.

We are informed that this consortium of CRA 4 quota share owners intends to directly request the Minister to decline the TACC increase on the basis of their concern as to the current status of the stock. The only information we are aware of in support of that concern is an observation that at the end of January 2019 – with two full months of the fishing year still to run – there was 'a large quantity' of CRA 4 ACE still uncaught. It is clearly the opinion of the consortium that the observed 'undercatch' is a consequence only of low stock abundance.

To our knowledge the consortium has not provided any new science, or fisheries data, in support of their opinion – they were guided to their position by reports of one shed (processor/exporter) not being able to get ACE caught. One other shed also relates stories of some fishermen allegedly unwilling or unable to catch their ACE and wanting to hand ACE back to the shed.

In summary – a cluster of CRA 4 quota share owners are now opposing the NRLMG-recommended 2019/20 TACC increase and will formally convey that message to the Minister.

That cluster/consortium comprises four entities owning a total of 32.3% of the CRA 4 quota shares. They are a minority interest in the context of share ownership and in the numbers of CRA 4 quota share owners (94 in total).

#### **The status of the stock:**

A new CRA 4 Management Procedure was put in place in 2017 to ensure the stock is maintained above the agreed reference level with a 92% probability.

- Its operation resulted in a substantial TAC and TACC reduction from April 2017 - a TAC decrease from 592 to 484 tonnes, and a TACC decrease from 397 to 289 tonnes.
- Monitoring information suggests that lobster abundance in CRA 4 has increased in recent years.
- Guided by the operation of the CRA 4 Management Procedure you increased the CRA 4 TAC from 484 to 513.8 tonnes and TACC from 289 to 318.8 tonnes from April 2018.
- Informed by the same procedure in December 2018, the NRLMG recommended a new CRA 4 TAC from April 2019, incorporating a 61.2 tonnes TACC increase.

That recommendation is made based on verified fishery performance indicators from October 2017 to September 2018 inclusive (the 'offset year'). The performance of the fishery will be critically reviewed

again in November 2019 and the CRA 4 Management Procedure again operated to guide decisions for the 2020/21 fishing year.

### **The apparent rationale for the consortium submission:**

A measure of uncaught ACE at the end of January in any rock lobster fishing year cannot be a reliable method of assessing stock abundance. A scan of the FishServe ACE registries for CRA 4 or most other CRA areas for the past five fishing years shows relatively large quantities of ACE still to be used as at the end of January. For example -

For the fishing year to date ended January 2019: 17.40% of the CRA 4 TACC was uncaught.  
14.05% of the CRA 6 TACC was uncaught

For the fishing year to date ended January 2018: 10.10% of the CRA 4 TACC was uncaught.  
14.55% of the CRA 6 TACC was uncaught

In almost every fishing year the available ACE has been exhausted by the 31 March cut-off date – other than for relatively small amounts owned by a small number of individuals. We have sought the views of fishery participants – a number have suggested that poor ACE management within season is a factor in those circumstances. One of the consortium participants also holds significant investment in CRA 6. They have not drawn attention to any concerns about CRA 6 stock abundance.

### **The CRAMAC 4 Submission:**

The CRAMAC 4 Executive Committee stands by their mandated submission in support of the Minister endorsing the NRLMG-recommended TACC increase from April 2019. The Committee respects the opinions of the consortium now opposing that recommendation but again notes they comprise a minority view and bring no compelling fisheries information to support their submission. The science supports the majority CRA 4 industry position.

If the majority of CRA 4 quota share owners and fishermen were to confirm no confidence in the status of the stock, CRAMAC 4 would be first in line to see the Minister and request no change to the TAC/TACC. On three occasions since 2004 we have voluntarily facilitated the reduction of CRA 4 commercial catch limits and agreed the most conservative Management Procedure options.

In response to the concerns expressed to us by the consortium, CRAMAC 4 has provided an ACE shelving opportunity to all CRA 4 Quota Share Owners to gauge their 'confidence' or otherwise in the current state of the stock – only a minority (including the consortium) have to date expressed their doubts. A minority in numbers and in terms of quota shares owned.

CRAMAC 4 has separately this week surveyed all CRA 4 fishermen. The majority of respondents to date have reconfirmed their support for the operation of the CRA 4 Management Procedure and for the recommended TACC increase.

We encourage the Minister to endorse the NRLMG recommendation that you agree to Option CRA4\_02, which is to apply the current CRA 4 management procedure and increase the TAC by 44.2 tonnes, increase the TACC by 61.2 tonnes, and reduce the other mortality allowance by 17 tonnes.

Yours sincerely

CRA 4 Rock Lobster Industry Association Inc. (CRAMAC 4)

*Graham Olsen*

Chairman