

ABALONE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING OF 27 SEPTEMBER 2007

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The Abalone Management Advisory Committees held its first meeting for 2007 on 27 September 2007 at the Merimbula Pambula Golf Club.

All industry and DPI Committee members were in attendance at the meeting. It was advised that the recreational, conservation and indigenous positions are vacant, however some nominations are being processed. Numerous abalone stakeholders attended the meeting as observers.

Representatives of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Water Resources attended the meeting to outline its Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for the NSW abalone share management fishery and to explain the revised Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries and the reporting and information requirements under the new agreed process

It was noted at the meeting that certain industry members have pursued matters through other forums, as they believe these matters have not been dealt adequately through the MAC process. These matters were not discussed in depth at the meeting to ensure that these external enquires were not compromised.

A general summary of the discussed issues are provided below:

1. Administrative and Management Issues

Many of the Agenda items related to these issues. Matters traversed at the meeting included: -

- DPI's financial reporting, with industry seeking an expansion of the details within the budget papers tabled at the meeting. The Industry members also expressed a view that under the current circumstances, there is a difficulty in meeting the approved management fee charges;
- Better synchronise of the meeting dates of the AbMAC and the TACC;
- Compliance management covering rewards management and improvements in data availability on illegal catch levels;
- The DPI's consultancy currently being undertaken by ACIL into the 'Economic Productivity and Business Analysis for the NSW Abalone Share Management Fishery'.

2. The Special Abalone Recovery Group (SARG)

An update on the progress of the SARG was provided to the Committee. It was noted that the SARG are to provide recommendations directly to the Minister on issues relating, but not limited to; minimum size limits of abalone, finer scale management and specifying options to rebuild the sustainability of the abalone fishery. The Committee will have the option to comment on the recommendations made by the SARG prior to them being forwarded to the Minister.

3. Structural Adjustment

Discussion on structural adjustment focussed on Industry's concerns on the cancellation of an 'inactive' endorsement. The NSW DPI member gave background on the development and implementation of the share management framework, indicating that the policy for share management provides the mechanism to adjust the number of endorsements in the fishery. Expanding on the background, the DPI member advised that if a fishing business holds the minimum shareholding required to be eligible for an endorsement, that endorsement will be issued (subject to eligibility, suspension or cancellation of endorsement provisions listed under NSW legislation).

It was also noted that the current legislation does not provide for the issuing of a 'diver entitlement', as requested by industry members of the Committee.

4. Finer Scale Management

It was also noted that a structured fishing discussion paper based on finer scale management for fishing in Regions 1 and 2 is being developed in co-operation with Industry and the DPI. It was agreed any recommendations from this action should be progressed through the final report of the SARG. However, Industry continued to express concerns about the management arrangements, which had led to the closure of the R1 and R2 fisheries and sought an early decision for a reconsideration of the closure.

Positive discussions arose on options to increase the sustainability of the fishery. The Committee supported an increase in minimum size limit south of Wonboyn to 117mm.

5. Proposed Regulation Amendments

Numerous proposed amendments to the *Fisheries Management (Abalone Share Management Plan) Regulation 2000* were tabled. The proposed amendments were the result of the recently approved Abalone FMS, to achieve consistency with the other share management fisheries and complement the recent licensing reforms. The Committee supported the majority of the proposed amendments but Industry had reservations as to the processes DPI applied in development of the regulatory changes.

The Committee recognised the importance for both Industry and the Department to work more collaboratively to achieve the maximum sustainable yield for the abalone fishery.

6. Conclusions

As this AbMAC meeting was the first for nearly 2 years, the outcomes through the Industry motions as would be expected represented a raft of issues, which have generated concerns over that period. There appeared to be at the meeting a level of cooperation, the approach of applying a 'line-in-the-sand' to address the more recent attitudinal patterns was seen as the way to move issues forward. The next AbMAC meeting is to be scheduled on the 6 November, prior to the next SARG meeting to primarily discuss the recommendations proposed by SARG.



Mr Warren Martin

Chairperson of AbMAC

MOTIONS CARRIED AT ABMAC MEETING 27 SEPT 2007

3.1 UPDATE MARINE PARK BUYOUT PROGRESS

Motion: Industry Representatives

DPI to provide information detailing how estimates of reef alienation were calculated including data, and how shareholders were selected for buyout. Concern over an inappropriate buyout of shares and the need for an independent process. There was also an inappropriate consultation with the industry representatives of the AbMAC over the policy and process associated with the marine park buyouts. Application of that process needs to be clearly defined, agreed and articulated for future Marine Park buyouts.

3.3 STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Motion: Industry Representatives

Industry seeks an assurance that if an endorsement were not active (i.e. quota has been transferred) then the endorsement will not be cancelled

Motion: Industry Representatives

AbMAC would like to be consulted on the ACIL Tasman Report upon completion of the draft report, including identification of previous consultation with industry

4 SPECIAL ABALONE RECOVERY GROUP

Motion: Industry Representatives:

Commercial minimum size limit south of Wonboyn increased to 117 mm by January 2007, with potential for a staged increase/decrease in the future. Protocols on amending the size limit to be agreed by the AbMAC. Furthermore, fishers fishing south of Wonboyn must prior report to their processor.

5 UPDATES-RESEARCH

Motion: Industry Representatives

Industry expresses concern on (1) lack of science for Region 1 closure; (2) poor stock assessment and consultation with the implementation for Region 2 closure; and (3) the lack of adherence to the requirement under the FMS in relation to the opening and closing of areas.

Motion, Industry Representatives

Industry requests every endeavour should be made to open Regions 1 and 2 by November 1 with a cap of 20 tonne. Fishing to be conducted using data loggers.

6 MANAGEMENT UPDATE-MANAGEMENT CHARGES/EXPENDITURE

Motion: Industry Representatives.

Industry does not have the capacity to pay the management fees and charges. Industry representatives do not believe that cancelling shares for non-payment of fees is acceptable

Motion: Industry Representatives

Industry request details from DPI as to how the Marine Park and the recreational subsidies are calculated.

7 PROPOSED REGULATION AMENDMENTS

Motion: Industry Representatives

For any future proposed amendments to the AbSMP, the AbMAC would like to be consulted, as there had been no consultation with AbMAC when an amendment occurred to the AbSMP in August 2006.