



ScallopRAG

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Resource Assessment Group

FISHERY ASSESSMENT REPORT – Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery

Update for 2004

In March 2003 the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) declared the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO). A condition placed on the granting of this approval was that areas be closed to fishing by 30 June 2005.

Industry was concerned that because areas closures were required by the Department of the Environment and Heritage as a condition of approving the scallop fishery as a WTO, and because of closures required under the South-East Regional Marine Plan, excessive numbers of areas might be lost to the fishery. The DEH were informed of these concerns and, to prevent such an occurrence, agreed to alter the former condition on spatial closures and re-state it as a recommendation.

More generally, in order to keep conditions at a higher level and leave the more detailed actions as recommendations, the number of conditions imposed on the fishery was reduced to three and other former conditions were re-stated as recommendations for work to be undertaken in relation to the fishery. The revised conditions on the WTO approval adopts a more contemporary approach which involves having the standard conditions relating to complying with the management plan, advising DEH of any significant changes and reporting progress attached to the WTO, and dealing with the other current conditions as recommendations.

The 2004 season opened on May 1 and closed on December 20. The total (whole) weight of scallops fished was 420,282 kg. At the start of the season only small amounts of scallops were taken from the Central Zone. Most fishing occurred in Tasmanian waters where scallops were of better quality (and therefore more acceptable to the market). Towards the end of the season more Central Zone scallops came on to the market and at this time their condition was comparable with that of Tasmanian scallops. There were still some problems with marketing the catch because of competition from imported scallops.

A further survey of the closed area east of Flinders Island was carried out in March 2004 (Hadden et al. 2004). Areas included in the survey that had been commercially fished the previous season (strata 1 – 3) were found to contain few scallops but the beds were not completely exhausted and trashing rates were less than 20%. A small

area of scallops, with low population density and a trashing rate less than 20%, was also found in stratum 5b

There was little evidence for recruitment derived from spawning in 2003. However, a dense and extensive bed of small scallops was identified in an area between strata 4 and 5a. These scallops could be fishable in 1 – 2 years, depending on growth rate.

The weight of scallops taken from strata 1 – 3 during 2003 was 1,453 tonnes. The estimates of scallop biomass from the 2003 survey were between 1,457 tonnes and 2,615 tonnes. The actual catch was therefore consistent with the estimated biomass, particularly given the fact that not all the fishable scallops were taken.

References

Haddon M., Semmens J.M. and Harrington, J. (2004). Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Survey, March 2004. FRDC Project No. 2003/017, Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, Taroona Tasmania.