

Brief summary of the reasons underlying the WCRL SWG West Coast rock lobster TAC recommendations for the 2020/21 season

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Summary

This document provides a brief summary of the reasons underlying the West Coast rock lobster Scientific Working Group's TAC recommendations for the 2020 season.

A TAC of 837t (a 22.8% reduction of the 2019/20 TAC) was decided by the Minister for the 2020/21 fishing season, taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry, the highly depleted status of the West Coast Rock Lobster Resource (currently ~2% of pristine levels), and lower-than expected resource status indicators (taken from the Press release at the time).

Since 2017 when Exceptional Circumstances were declared, TAC recommendations for the West Coast rock lobster have not been based on the application of an OMP, but rather on the most recent updated assessments, combined with a series of constant catch projections to inform on predictions of resource recovery by 2025. The table below shows both the SWG TAC recommendations as well as the final TAC set by the Minister at the time.

	SWG TAC recommendation	Final Minister's TAC decision
2017	790t	1924t
2018	1084t*	1084t
2019	640t	1084t
2020	549t	837t

* This was the first part of a planned two step reduction

2020/21 TAC recommendations

As a result of administrative issues, an updated assessment was not conducted during 2020.

The following updated information was used to inform the TAC 2020 recommendations.

- a) Somatic growth rates were near identical to those assumed for the projection conducted in 2019.
- b) FIMS data: no FIMS analysis was conducted in 2019 (administrative problems).
- c) CPUE data: these were the same or slightly lower than those for 2018 (except for A5+6) [a major cause of more pessimistic appraisal made in 2020 compared to 2019]
- d) Poaching:
 - TRAFFIC data:* these data showed a downward trend in this component of poaching over the last decade. The current annual level of this component of poaching was conservatively assessed to be 500t (compared to 318t used in projections in 2019).
 - Compliance data:* these data were not analysed (administrative problems). A coarse summary of these data indicated a near reversal of the downturn from 2017 to 2018 in the extent of poaching indicated for 2019.

Considering the above information, the Scientific Working Group recommended a TAC of 549t for the 2020/21 season. This corresponded (as per the last two years) to a 50:50 split of the resource productivity to harvest and to the recovery of what is an extremely depleted resource.

An effort reduction strategy was again proposed to assist in reducing poaching, which has been one of the major contributors to the depleted status of the resource.