

# **Rock Lobster Fishery Management Recreational Fisher Questionnaire**

**October 2009**



**This questionnaire may be downloaded and completed on line at  
[www.fishing.tas.gov.au](http://www.fishing.tas.gov.au).**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

A review of the management of the Tasmanian rock lobster fishery has now commenced, and a management plan needs to be implemented before the current management plan, *the Fisheries (Rock Lobster) Rules 2006* expire in February 2011. Along with the development of legislation, strategic policy will be developed and documented to help guide the broad direction and decision making for the fishery for now and into the future.

The review of the management plan, including the development of any policy proposals, provides several opportunities for public input. This questionnaire signals the commencement of direct input from the recreational sector in the review process.

Whilst this questionnaire focuses on recreational rock lobster fishing, in mid-November wider community comment on the fishery will be undertaken with the release of a discussion paper about the strategic (broad) directions for the rock lobster fishery. Individuals and organisations, including fishing associations are encouraged to obtain a copy of the discussion paper from the contact details in the last section of this questionnaire.

During 2010 management proposals will be developed. Feedback from both the questionnaire and the strategic directions discussion paper will be considered before drafting and releasing a further discussion paper on proposed management options and policy by April 2010. After receiving input, the Department will then draft a new management plan (i.e rules) for the fishery, which then will undergo the statutory 60 day consultation period in the latter half of 2010. The new management plan will take effect on 1 March 2011.

During the development of management proposals the objectives of the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995*, which includes principles of sustainability, fair access, economic development and the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between Government, the community and industry will need to be considered.

### **Purpose of this questionnaire**

This questionnaire seeks your feedback on some of the broad issues the fishery is facing. It also is an opportunity for you to raise issues not detailed specifically within the questionnaire.

Some questions seek details about your fishing activities or attitudes to fishing. This will assist in gaining an understanding of the views and potential impacts on recreational fishers when developing future management proposals. The questions are not framed in a way to provide any statistical estimation of recreational catch.

This questionnaire is an important source of information for the Department and the respective Fishery Advisory Committees to consider when developing proposals aimed to meet the current and future challenges of the fishery.

The personal information such as your address and details about your specific fishing activities will be treated confidentially. Summary information may be published, however this information will not be attributed to any particular person.

### **How do I keep informed of further developments during the review?**

By submitting this questionnaire, you will be kept informed of future consultation periods and information forums. The preferred method is email contact, however if you do not provide email, future notifications for the release of consultation papers will be sent by mail. No further general mailouts to recreational fishers will be made unless they are registered, however the Department will continue to place notifications in newspapers, and on its web-site. Individuals and associations may also register their details at any time at the contact details in the last section of this paper.

### **Where to send the completed questionnaire**

Refer to the instructions on the last page where, and how to send it.

**Completed Questionnaires must be received by the Department by Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009.**

## **B. CHALLENGES FACING THE FISHERY**

This section briefly discusses some issues relating to the fishery.

### **State-wide legal size lobster and catch rates**

Recent fishery assessment reports for the Tasmanian rock lobster fishery by the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) indicates concern about the trend of declining stock levels state-wide and in particular assessment areas. After the introduction of quota management for the commercial fishery in the mid 1990's, there was a decade of improving rock lobster stocks. Since 2006, there has been a continuous decline in the overall state-wide stock level of legal size lobsters and projections indicate that this trend will continue. There have also been similar trends in other lobster fisheries in Australia.

### **Highly regionalised recreational effort in the East and South East**

Around 60% of the state-wide recreational rock lobster catch is taken on the east and south east coast of Tasmania (area 1,2 & 3 refer map in section 2). Given the state-wide decline in rock lobster catches and the importance and the relative easy access of this region to recreational fishers, this region may warrant targeted management responses to help maintain a reasonable satisfaction level for the average recreational fisher.

### **Sharing the rock lobster resource**

The number of individuals with recreational fishing licences has doubled over the last decade, with around 20,000 individuals holding at least one type of recreational rock lobster licence. In 2008/9 this comprised of around 17,500 pot licences, 9000 dive licences and 5500 ring licences. The total recreational catch, however does not necessarily follow the same magnitude of variation as indicated by licence numbers, as individuals participate at different levels depending on individual circumstances and seasonal effects etc.

Statistically designed phone/diary surveys provide estimates of the total recreational catch every two years. The most recent survey of the recreational rock lobster fishery (2006/7 fishing season\*) - indicates that around 20,000 individuals landed an estimated 135,275 lobsters or around 135 tonne was landed. This equated to around 8 % of the total catch allocation (commercial and recreational) for that year (1693.5 tonnes). The average recreational catch was 1.2 lobsters per fisher day.

Monitoring of recreational participation and catches will continue, and the information periodically assessed in terms of sustainability and resource sharing. The views expressed in the questionnaire, may assist in developing ways to prepare for future adjustments that spread the resource fairly amongst the recreational sector.

\* This is the last published survey, a survey for the 2008/9 season is being finalised.

### **Possession limits for non fishers**

The spirit of recreational fishing revolves around catching your own fish. Currently the rules allow a licenced recreational rock lobster fisher to possess 10 rock lobster, or a person who is not the holder of a recreational lobster licence to possess 5 rock lobsters without a receipt. This mechanism allows some fishers to take large numbers of lobsters, leaving less lobsters available for other recreational fishers. In addition, in some circumstances this can be abused by "off loading" substantial numbers of lobsters as acts of goodwill or indeed for sale or barter\*\*. There is some merit in continuing to allow some "gifting" and sharing of recreational catch, however it needs to be within the spirit of recreational fishing.

\*\*The sale or barter of any recreational caught fish is illegal for both the provider and the receiver.

### **Catch rates for different methods**

Generally, recreational fishers using pots have only one “shot” with their pot per day. Divers, on the other hand, have the ability to swim over greater areas of reef and continue their fishing activity which increases their potential to successfully take their daily bag limit. This is reflected in the results of the surveys that indicate recreational divers are approximately twice as successful as potters in regard to their average daily catch (2.2 versus 0.9 rock lobster respectively).

### **Increasing sea urchin barrens**

The long spined sea urchin (*Centrostephanus*) is impacting some reef systems on the east coast of Tasmania by grazing on the seaweed. This then creates extensive barrens that no longer support the same numbers and diversity of fish species. This sea urchin has few native predators in Tasmania, but studies have shown that large rock lobsters (greater than 140 mm carapace length) predate on this urchin and may be successful in helping control the spread of these urchin barrens. With the prediction that these waters will continue to warm into the future, it is expected that these urchins and their associated impacts may become more and more common. The Department is considering proposals to protect large lobsters to combat the risks of extensive urchin barrens forming on the East Coast. This will be a targeted response possibly prohibiting the take of large lobsters in the area from Eddystone Point to Cape Pillar in the south. A maximum size of 130, 135, 140 or 145 mm may be considered.

## C. FISHING ACTIVITY AND ATTITUDES

### 1. Other than recreational rock lobster, what are your other interests in the fishery?

- Commercial                       other Recreational fishing     Aboriginal fishing  
 Charter operator                 Community member             Fish processor/retailer  
 Conservation                       Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. What is your age grouping

- less than 16 years old             16 to 25 years                       26 to 40 years  
 41 to 60 years                       above 60

### 3. What method or combination of methods do you use to go lobster fishing?

- Lobster pot                           Cray rings                           SCUBA  
 Hookah (surface provided air)     Snorkel

### 4. What is the main fishing method you used last season ? (indicate one method only)

If you did not fish last season indicate what is your expected main method for the 2009/10 season.

- Lobster pot                           Cray rings                           SCUBA  
 Hookah (surface provided air)     Snorkel

### 5. Generally, how many lobsters would need to catch to consider that you have had a good days recreational fishing using the following methods?

a) when using a lobster pot?

- do not use a pot     1             2             3             4             5             not so concerned about catch

b) when using a ring?

- do not use a ring     1             2             3             4             5             not so concerned about catch

c) when diving for lobsters?

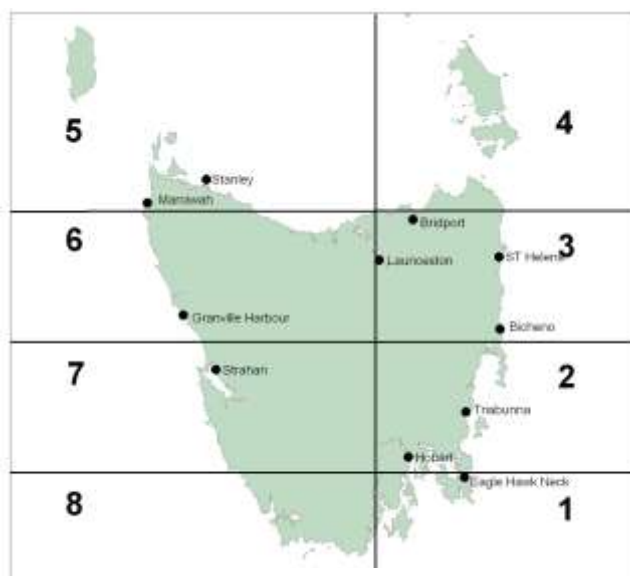
- do not dive for lobsters     1     2             3             4             5             not so concerned about catch

### 6. Your major fishing Area

Referring to the Map, what area do you generally undertake the **majority** of your rock lobster fishing in? (other questions relate to this choice)

If you can not separate it to a single area, you may indicate two areas.

- Area 5             Area 4  
 Area 6             Area 3  
 Area 7             Area 2  
 Area 8             Area 1



MAP OF ROCK LOBSTER AREAS

**7. In the area you nominated in question 6, over the past 4 years have you noticed...**

a) A change in legal size lobsters?

- Have seen a decrease                       Still catching about the same  
 Have seen an increase                       Unsure or not able to comment

b) A change in the number of undersize lobsters ?

- Have seen a decrease                       Still catching about the same  
 Have seen an increase                       Unsure or not able to comment

Comments about your knowledge and observations about rock lobster stock levels in the area (s) you fish:

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**8. What do you think is a fair and reasonable number of rock lobsters a recreational licence holder should be able to take each season?**

- Less than 10     10 to 25     26 to 50     51 to 100     more than 100

**9. What do you consider is a fair and reasonable bag limit for the following:**

- a) For the area you nominated in Section 2                       1     2     3     4     5  
b) For the east and south-east (areas 1, 2, 3 in the map) :  1     2     3     4     5  
c) For recreational divers:                       1     2     3     4     5  
d) For all recreational pot fishers:                       1     2     3     4     5  
e) For users of recreational cray rings:                       1     2     3     4     5

Comments relating to catch numbers and bag limits

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**10. How many lobsters do you think somebody who is not a licence holder should be able to possess without a receipt of purchase?**

- None     1     2     3     4     5

Why do you have this view or have any other comments?

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## D. VIEWS ON MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Pro-active management measures need to be considered from time to time to prepare the fishery (both in terms of the stock and participants) to adapt to current and future challenges. The rock lobster review will need to consider the latest fishery assessments, the risks of the formation of urchin barrens on the east coast, and resource sharing between and within sectors. In addition the findings of the recently released report on the vulnerability of the rock lobster fishery to climate change impacts and adaptation response options need to be considered.

In December 2008, the Minister responded to the declining stock indicators mentioned in the previous section, by reducing the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for the current commercial season. Further reductions may be required. Given the stock trends for the fishery, management options may need to be considered for the recreational fishery (as well as the commercial sector).

At this stage there are no firm proposals to address these issues. We are particularly interested your views relating to the challenges raised previously and your views on possible management measures.

### ***11. If management measures are needed to be applied for stock sustainability or to share the resource what measures would you be more supportive of?***

- |   |                                |                                   |                                   |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Reduced recreational bag limit                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Reduce the length of the recreational season    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Targeted management to specific areas           | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Introduce recreational boat possession limits   | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Limit amount of recreational pots on a vessel   | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Review the minimum size                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Start season later for all recreational fishers | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Start season later for recreational divers      | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |
| Introduce localised area closures               | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree |

Other suggestions, comments and information supporting your views:

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### ***12. Reducing the threat of long spined sea urchins forming extensive barrens on the East Coast.***

a) Do you have an understanding about the potential impacts of long spined sea urchin?

- Yes       No       Need more information

b) Would you be supportive of introducing a maximum size limit for rock lobster for the east coast of Tasmania (between Eddystone Point and Cape Pillar) in an attempt to slow down the spread and extent of these urchin barrens?

- Agree       Not sure       Disagree       Need more information

c) *If the above measure was introduced for the area mentioned what impact would you say it may have on your recreational fishing experience with the following maximum sizes?*

- i. 130 mm  very little or none  a small amount  adverse  unsure
- ii. 140 mm  very little or none  a small amount  adverse  unsure
- iii. 145 mm  very little or none  a small amount  adverse  unsure

d) *Would you be supportive of other measures to help build up lobster numbers to slow down the spread of these urchin barrens?*

- yes     no     possibly with more information

Comments and other suggestions regarding reducing the risks of urchin barrens using large lobsters

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**13. Other Issues that you consider important not discussed in this paper**

Using a number ranking (with 1 being the most important issue) list the topics of most concern to the fishery (you do not have to rank any)

- Catches are not what they used to be.
- Competition with other recreational rock lobster fishers
- Competition with recreational divers
- Amount of recreational pots set
- Handling of soft shelled fish
- Handling of berried females
- Commercial fishers setting pots in holiday periods
- Commercial fishers setting pots around holiday areas
- Competition with commercial fishers
- Large numbers in fishing parties taking large numbers of lobsters
- Recreational exceeding bag limits



## CONTACT DETAILS

Mr    Mrs    Ms    Other (*please specify*)

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ First Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Street/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Recreational licence number (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

## REQUEST FOR STRATEGIC POLICY PAPER

If you have not received a discussion paper on strategic policy and would you want one mailed out please indicate below? This paper will be available in mid November. These can also be down loaded from [www.fishing.tas.gov.au](http://www.fishing.tas.gov.au).

Yes                       No

## INFORMATION FORUMS

Would you be interested in attending an information forum to gain further information about the rock lobster fishery? It is aimed to hold these around March/April 2010. Please note that the Department only has capacity to deliver a limited number of forums.

Yes                       No

If yes, what area would best suit you?

Hobart     St Helens     Launceston     Burnie

Other, location: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE ISSUES FACING THE ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY, AND INFORMING US OF YOUR VIEWS

## E. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING QUESTIONNAIRES

Please ensure that you submit your questionnaire to DPIPWE by the **18 December 2009**.

Responses can be submitted to DPIPWE in the following ways:

- via email to [fishreview@dPIPWE.tas.gov.au](mailto:fishreview@dPIPWE.tas.gov.au)
- via fax to (03) 6223 1539, marked "rock lobster questionnaire"
- Internet based: DPIPWE website at [www.fishing.tas.gov.au](http://www.fishing.tas.gov.au)

If you need to post this questionnaire, refer over leaf.

You may make this questionnaire into a packaged enveloped, by folding the entire questionnaire at the divider lines below, and keeping the address at the front.

Once folded, tape edges together.

Place stamp where indicated, and post.

AFFIX  
STAMP  
HERE

Rock Lobster Review  
Wild Fisheries Management Branch  
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment  
GPO Box 44  
HOBART TAS 7001