

WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER MANAGEMENT PLAN

**824. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the finalisation of the western rock lobster management plan and the forthcoming rock lobster season, commencing 15 January 2013.

- (1) Can the minister explain why the total allowable commercial catch in zone C will be approximately 30 per cent less than in other zones?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the long-term historical catch comparison between zones A and B and zone C is approximately 50–50?
- (3) Given that there is no change in the TACC for each zone in the new western rock lobster management plan, does the minister acknowledge that zone C rock lobster fishers will be significantly disadvantaged financially relative to fishers in northern zones?
- (4) Will the minister explain how the new rock lobster harvest strategy was determined by the Department of Fisheries?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The TACC for zone C is not 30 per cent less than that for the other two zones. The zone C TACC is 2 557 tonnes and the combined TACC for zones A and B is 2 997 tonnes. This means that zone C's TACC accounts for 46 per cent of the total TACC, while those for the two northern zones account for 54 per cent. These figures were proposed by the Western Rock Lobster Council having regard to the maximum sustainable catch for each zone recommended by the Department of Fisheries.
- (2) The long-term historical average catch split between zone C and the northern zones is approximately 50–50. However, this varies on a year-to-year basis according to the abundance of legally available lobsters in each zone. Zone C has historically experienced more significant year-to-year catch variations than the two northern zones because puerulus settlement, which affects lobster abundance three to four years hence, is subject to greater fluctuations than in the north of the fishery.
- (3) Under input controls, fishers' proportion of the total annual rock lobster catch was determined by the abundance of legally available lobsters in their zone of access. The relative financial return to fishers in each zone varied accordingly. As the 2013 TACCs were set based on the abundance of legally available lobsters in each zone, any difference in the relative financial return to each zone is consistent with what has occurred in the past. However, this is the TACC that was recommended by the Western Rock Lobster Council. As the recommendation fell within the sustainability guidelines for the fishery, I agreed.
- (4) The department released a discussion paper in March on a possible harvest strategy for the fishery. Public meetings were held at various locations to get feedback from fishers, licensees and investors in the industry. The proposed harvest strategy was based around a precautionary management approach that also provided industry with a degree of flexibility to consider marketing or other industry issues. The Western Rock Lobster Council subsequently agreed to use the broad principles contained in this discussion paper as the basis for setting TACCs for 2013, pending the development of a longer-term harvest strategy. The 2013 TACCs reflect the position adopted by the Western Rock Lobster Council.