Summary of outcomes from abalone Industry workshop

Eden Fisherman's Club, Feb 24 2011

Attendance. A total of 17 fishery Shareholders and divers attended the meeting, with apologies being received from several Shareholders. Two IINSW representatives also attended the meeting.

General summary. The meeting commenced with a summary of the GPS, Depth and Measuring logger programs being run by the Abalone Council of NSW. This included advice that all divers could request an archived copy of the original file downloaded from their loggers, and a Google Earth file summarising information about their logged dive events. All 2010 data is currently being downloaded from loggers, and audit of the program by IINSW is expected in March, and IINSW representatives confirmed the contracts for this service would be renewed for 2011-12.

IINSW representatives provided a summary of current Management issues. The meeting discussed the recent bust of abalone thieves and the lack of successful indictable offence prosecutions, management of the commercial fishery, indigenous and recreational catches. The meeting reached a general consensus of supporting an increase in access to the resource by all stakeholders, and more specifically, an increase to the recreational bag limit, when the commercial TAC again reaches 120-130 t, hopefully in 2012-13. The meeting noted the recreational bag limit was dropped soon after the commercial TAC was dropped to 130 t (i.e. before Marine Park closures of ~6.5 t) by the TAC Committee, and no recreational contribution to stock assessment in recent years.

The final part of the meeting involved consideration of commercial fishery objectives, appropriate for inclusion in the Management Plan when revised and in TAC setting, and an Industry TAC position for 2011-12. This included discussion of an appropriate spatial distribution of catch, through consideration of information about stocks in different areas and where additional TAC could be caught. The main outcomes of the meeting are described below, and summarised in the attached Table describing the Industry position regarding the 2011-12 spatial allocation of TAC.

Region 1. The meeting unanimously supported the opening of the closed areas in Region 1. There was strong support for the implementation of a separate quota in Region 1 to spread catch.

Region 2. The meeting unanimously supported the recommendation not to close Region 2. The meeting discussed the need for agreement with IINSW on an appropriate distribution of catch within the region for the remainder of the year, to allow Industry to communicate and achieve that.

2011-12 TAC position. The meeting reached a general consensus on a 110 t TAC recommendation for 2011-12, with a mid-year review. Some comments suggested much higher TAC, while others suggested reaching 110 t more slowly. The recommendations from the meeting about the distribution of catch, through consideration of information about stocks in different areas, and where additional TAC could be caught, are included in Table 1.

Size limits. Many comments were made about the need for further changes to size limits, and particularly variable size limits, as is done in all other states abalone fishery. Comments were also made about the need for stability in size limits, particularly to assess past changes, and the need for greater certainty about future directions with size limits.

General comments on stock conditions and the fishery. There was unanimous agreement in the meeting on the enormous improvement in abalone stocks throughout the fishery in 2010. The 'unbelievable' amount of weed on the bottom, and return of appropriate habitat for abalone, was also noted. Stocks appear to be recovering most strongly south of Eden, although there are large sections of coast north of Bermagui, where very little or no catch has been taken because of the very limited TAC. Catch rates have still been increasing significantly to record levels in areas where fishing has been concentrated. The meeting discussed the difficulties of getting processors to pick up abalone from many areas north of Bermagui.

Table 1. TAC allocation table from February Industry Workshop for 21 areas. The table displays, for each area, past catches by calendar year to 2010, catch rates and the average weight of individual abalone for 2010, proposed TAC allocations for 2011/12 and the increase from 2010 calendar, catch review points and summarised comments from the Industry meeting. Note, area catches will be reviewed quarterly, out-of session by the MAC, and decisions considered for any area outside its pro-rata review point (i.e. the MAC will provide advice about plans for future catches from any area if, for example, first quarter catch is above 25% of the full year review point).

Area			Catch (t)				Catch decline (%)	Catch rate ($kg.h^{-1}$)	Av abalone weight (g)	Proposed TAC allocation (t)		Annual Review point (t)	
Area	**Sub-zone**	**Nth pt**	**'00, '01 average**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2010/(00,01)**	**2010**	**2010**	**increase from 2010**	**2011/12 catch**	**2011/12**	**Industry comment**
1	A-E	Tweed	3.9	0.2	1.0	**0.5**	13	**31**	**377**	0	**0.5**	3	Catch well below sustainable, access issues
2	F-J	Port Stephens	0.9	1.0	0.0	**0.0**				0	**0.0**	1	Should be opened
3	K-M	Kiama	16.6	2.1	0.7	**2.1**	13	**32**	**307**	0	**2.1**	3	Catch well below sustainable, access issues
4	N	Ulladulla	4.5	0.9	0.6	**1.6**	36	**26**	**297**	0	**1.6**	3	Catch increased 2010, mainly 1 diver
5	P	South Brush	10.9	3.7	3.9	**5.4**	49	**31**	**301**	0	**5.4**	6	Catch needs to be spread within area
6	Q	Batemans	6.5	0.1	1.2	**0.0**				0	**0.0**	2	Well below sustainable, access issues, no more allocation until evidence of fishing
7	R-S	Moruya	10.1	0.9	4.4	**1.0**	10	**40**	**303**	0	**1.0**	2.5	Well below sustainable, access issues, mainly 2 divers, no more allocation until evidence of fishing
8	T	Narooma	17.4	4.4	4.1	**2.8**	16	**36**	**303**	1	**3.8**	4.5	Additional allocation dependent on truck pickup
9	U1-U3	Bermagui	32.8	4.4	9.3	**6.8**	21	**32**	**294**	1	**7.8**	8	Catch rate and sizes increased, small increase
10	U4-V2	Bunga	18.0	3.7	8.3	**6.3**	35	**30**	**311**	0.65	**6.9**	8	Catch rate and sizes increased, small increase
11	V3-W1	Barounda/ Moon Bay	19.2	7.7	8.3	**7.1**	37	**26**	**307**	0.65	**7.7**	8	Catch rate and sizes increased, small increase
12	W2-X1	Wallagoot/ Turingal	15.2	5.5	6.7	**6.7**	44	**28**	**311**	0	**6.7**	7	Catch increased in 2010, catch rate not increased as much compared to fishery
13	X2	Long Beach	9.1	3.0	2.9	**3.1**	34	**25**	**305**	0	**3.1**	4	Catch rate not increased as much compared to fishery
14	Y11-Y21	Eden	24.3	7.7	6.1	**9.6**	40	**30**	**300**	0	**9.6**	10	Catch increased in 2010, no further for now
15	Y22-23	Saltwater	14.7	5.5	3.9	**6.2**	42	**32**	**298**	1	**7.2**	8	Catch rates and sizes increased
16	Y24	Bittangabee	17.4	5.2	5.5	**5.7**	33	**32**	**302**	1	**6.7**	7	Catch rates and sizes increased, urchin removals
17	Y31	Green Cape	17.9	5.9	6.3	**8.6**	48	**34**	**295**	0	**8.6**	9	Catch increased in 2010, no further for now
18	Y32	City Rock	10.3	4.4	4.0	**3.6**	35	**37**	**298**	1	**4.6**	5	Catch rates and sizes increased
19	Z1-3	Wonboyn	14.2	6.6	7.6	**4.3**	30	**41**	**346**	2	**6.3**	7	1 t Black Head, 1 t elsewhere
20	Z4	Saltlake	23.3	10.3	5.2	**5.6**	24	**44**	**323**	3	**8.6**	9	Catch rates and sizes increased
21	Z5	Howe	17.4	13.0	9.0	**8.7**	50	**45**	**317**	3	**11.7**	12	Catch rates and sizes increased
	Total		304.4	96.4	99.1	**95.7**	31			14.3	**110.0**		