

# **Victorian Central Zone**

**Greenlip Abalone**

**Total Allowable Catch**

**Submission for the 2009 – 2010 Fishing Season**



**Produced by**

**Victorian Abalone Divers Association Inc.**





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## Summary

In November, 2006 the Victorian Abalone Divers Association Inc. (VADA) conducted surveys of Greenlip abalone stocks, along sections of the Victorian Abalone Central Zone. These surveys covered extensive areas of recognised greenlip habitat, and involved timed collections, collection of length frequency information as well as length of first maturity data of the greenlip abalone at each location. Included in this process photographic evidence of the habitat that the abalone are in.

The survey was undertaken in order to complete the requirements of the Victorian Abalone Fishery Management Plan which in agreement between the industry and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) agreed to set the greenlip Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) at zero while the DPI undertook research into the greenlip stocks bi annually.

What became obvious during the collection of the information was that the legal minimum length of 130 mm was not appropriate to adequately protect the greenlip abalone from over exploitation from both the commercial and recreational sectors

If there is a major recommendation that comes from this research it is that the Legal minimum length for harvesting of greenlip abalone be increased to provide adequate protection to the greenlip abalone. These recommendations are in line with similar legal minimum lengths that are applied in other States that commercially harvest greenlip.

Throughout the 2008-2009 season additional information has been collected from the catches of commercial divers. This information includes the length frequency, weight and recovery information.

Additionally, there appears to be a number of divers specializing in the catching of the greenlips. This has seen a number of divers consolidate the catching of the Greenlip quota to be able to supply to their markets. Market prices for the large Greenlip abalone have consistently been higher than those for Blacklip and exceeded the black lip beach price by up to \$15. Per kilogram.

VADA is recommending the continuation of commercial harvesting of Greenlip Abalone for the 2009 – 2010 fishing season in the Central Zone of Victoria. To allow for further research to be undertaken VADA will not be recommending a further increase of TACC for the Central Zone for the following season.

## Major Information

### Catch rates

Weight of the larger abalone varied between 400 grams and 900 grams. With the catch rates shown in the timed collections this would put the catch rates at between 40 and 90 kilograms per hour.

### Spread

The area that greenlip abalone are found are diverse and quite extensively spread along the Victorian coast.

While the areas surveyed were from Torquay to Waratah Bay, it is known that they extend significantly further to the Western areas of Victoria.

### Quantities

VADA has surveyed divers who traditionally fished greenlip abalone, as well as current divers as to their observations. The compiling of this information indicates at this time the greenlip abalone stocks could maintain a sustainable annual greenlip TACC of between 2380 kg and 10,200 kg.

### Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG)

The spread of the virus known as Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) continues to spread in an easterly direction in the CZ, with the virus front currently in the vicinity of Johanna Beach. There has been no further spread westerly since December, 2007 when it reached the large areas of sand at the Discovery Bay Marine Park at Cape Bridgewater.

The AVG virus has not affected any Greenlip abalone areas or beds that are relied upon in the calculations to make up the total of the recommended Greenlip TACC.

# LML Recommendations

## Spatial management LML's

The Victorian Abalone Divers Association Inc. is and continues to be committed to spatial management of all abalone stocks in Victoria. This involves ensuring that abalone are harvested at a spatially applicable size for the biology of the animal and the environments that they exist in.

During the surveys it became very obvious that the animals in all but one of the 20 locations surveyed would not be adequately be protected from over exploitation by commercial or recreational divers at a LML of 130mm. This is an indication that there is a need to ensure that all greenlip abalone are protected adequately to ensure continued future growth of the resource.

The suggested sizes indicate that between 30 and 40 % of abalone <sup>(Ref 1)</sup> will be available for commercial harvest. The increased LML is consistent with abalone sizes commercially harvested in other states as well as obtaining a premium market size.

Taking this into account, VADA believes that there should be at least 2 different size zones for the harvesting of greenlip abalone.

1. For the areas West of Point Nepean an appropriate LML of 145 mm would be applicable.
2. For areas East of Point Nepean an appropriate LML of 150 mm would be applicable.
3. VADA believes that these LML's should apply to all harvesters of abalone, including recreational and commercial
- 4. The larger LML of 145 mm for Greenlip abalone be applied to commercial abalone divers via a Fishery Notice for the Central Zone.**
- 5. An agreed solution to the recreational Greenlip LML be resolved through consultation over the next 6 months.**
6. Commercial divers voluntarily agreed to work to larger size limits for areas East of Point Nepean.

# Greenlip Total Allowable Catch Recommendations

The Victorian Abalone Divers Association Inc. recognizes that a conservative approach should be taken to returning greenlip abalone to being commercially harvested.

VADA intends to continue to develop the research into all greenlip abalone stocks over the next few years to further refine the amounts of commercial TAC that can be sustainably allocated annually. This will include the development of decision rules to sustainably rise and / or fall the Greenlip TACC as needed.

As such VADA makes the following recommends for the greenlip abalone TACC for the 2009 – 2010 fishing season, VADA firmly believes that this amount is very conservative, and is certainly a sustainable allocation that can be maintained annually while further research is undertaken.

7. The greenlip abalone TACC for the Central Zone be set at 3,400 kg's. Or 100 kg's per Central Zone greenlip units (34).

## References

- 1. An Assessment of Greenlip Abalone populations in Victoria**

*Harry Gorfine and Cameron Dixon October, 1998.*

- 2. Victorian Central Zone Greenlip Abalone Total Allowable Catch Submission for the 2008 – 2009 Fishing Season**

*Victorian Abalone Divers Association Inc. (VADA) December, 2007*