

FATHOMS

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

GCT - NOV 95

VSAG

Victorian Sub-Aqua Group. Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne. 3001 Australia



Cover photo:

This colourful photo of Sant Khan was taken by Des Williams on VSAG's 1994 trip to the Solomons & Vanuatu

The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group was founded in 1954 and has continued as a strong and active diving club since that time. It is incorporated as a non profit company and has no commercial affiliation with any organisation.

VSAG is committed to the preservation of independent diving freedom. It believes that divers must take a responsible attitude toward the protection and preservation of the marine environment but as a general rule is opposed to legislative measures that place prohibitive limitations and restrictions in diving activities.

Local diving is organised on a bi-monthly basis, generally out of participating member's boats. This is supported by weekend camps, charters to more remote locations and annual overseas trips. The club has a considerable investment in diving equipment.

Regular functions provide an opportunity for members, friends and families to socialise. Each month VSAG meets at North Melbourne Football Club where bar facilities are available prior to and after the General Meetings. Visitors are very welcome - smart casual wear essential.

FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

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Next General Meetings:

Bells Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!
Thursday 19th October 1995
Thursday 16th November 1995

Next Committee Meetings:

Tuesday 24th October - Doug Catherall's home
Tuesday 21st November - Bob Scott's home

Editorial submissions to:

Mick Jeacle
5 Down Close
Frankston Vic 3199
Tel: (059) 71 2786 (h)
9541 1880 (w)

V.S.A.G. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A.C.N. 004 591 575

PRESIDENT:

John Lawler
7 Cloris Avenue,
Beumaris, 3193.
Telephone: 9589 4020 (H)
(059) 75 7100 (W)

SECRETARY:

Sant Khan
36 Belmont Ave,
Kew, 3101.
Telephone: 9817 3214 (H)
9276 3150 (W)

TREASURER:

Doug Catherall
2133 Patterson Ave,
Burwood, 3125.
Telephone: 9888 7774 (H)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Mick Jeacle
5 Donn Close,
Frankston, 3199.
Telephone: (059) 71 2786 (H)
9541 1880 (W)

SOCIAL SECRETARY:

Chris Llewellyn
4 Bahen Close,
Eltham North, 3095.
Telephone: 9431 1650 (H)
9464 1599 (w)

SAFETY OFFICER:

Pat Reynolds
14 Nurla Court,
Frankston, 3199.
Telephone: 9789 1092 (H)

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Des Williams
14 Dorrington Crt,
Dingley Village, 3172.
Telephone: 9551 3201 (H)
9597 0777 (W)

VICE PRESIDENT:

Don Abell
80 Liston Street,
Burwood, 3125.
Telephone: 9889 4415 (H)
9288 6548 (W)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY:

Chris Llewellyn
4 Bahen Close,
Eltham North, 3095.
Telephone: 9431 1650 (H)
9464 1599 (w)

ASSISTANT TREASURER:

Andy Mastrowicz
15 Soudan Road,
West Footscray, 3012.
Telephone: 9318 3986 (H)
9301 2410 (W)

ASSISTANT EDITOR & POINTS SCORER:

Bob Scott
1 Donn Close
Frankston, 3199
Telephone: (059) 712206 (H)
9706 7100 (w)

PROPERTY OFFICER:

Gerry Devries
16 Vinter Avenue,
Croydon, 3136.
Telephone: 9725 2381 (H)
015 324 608 (w)

S.D.F. DELEGATES:

Des Williams
John Lawler
Leo Maybus

EDITORIAL



Welcome to this bumper edition of FATHOMS, my first as the newly elected Editor.

I know you have all heard this before but right upfront I would like to reiterate the words of John Golding (as I could not put it better myself) in reminding you all of the role of FATHOMS.

“ FATHOMS is the communication life line of VSAG. it aims to keep members informed of club activities and other matters relevant to diving interests. it provides a forum by which members can express their views, report on club activities and attempt to be humorous. it also provides a statement to

non members of what VSAG is all about, through its distribution to dive shops, other dive clubs, various other people and institutions including the State Library. Most importantly it chronologically records the history of our great club”.

In this edition you will read the first of many VSAG diver profiles. This concept was drawn up by Chris Llewellyn and for this idea and initiative I thank him. Please complete these profiles when called upon to do so as I am sure they will provide fascinating reading for many future issues.

One disturbing feature highlighted in this issue is that some 22 members have not paid their subs. for the current year. The prompt receipt of these funds is vital if the club is to continue with present standards, to which we have become accustomed. To his end I mainly refer to the cost of producing FATHOMS which amounts to approximately \$450 per issue, including postage. It would be greatly appreciated if those members concerned would kindly address this ‘oversight’ at first opportunity.

In the past, contributors of articles could probably be counted on one hand. This is a shame, as I am sure everyone of you could put pen to paper at least once an annum to share with your fellow members a cherished dive experience or even a fantasy tale. I do not feel a touch of the guilt when I request a greater input from members who do not submit articles as I have always considered it my duty to contribute and have done so on many occasions in the past. I do not propose to "pad out" the magazine in future editions for the sake of those members who are not prepared to contribute. Where necessary I propose to personally write to those members whom I believe could ably assist in this area and I know I can count on full cooperation in this regard.

Finally, it would be remiss of me if I did not on behalf of the committee and members of VSAG, extend to past Editor Des Williams our heartfelt gratitude for his term (and Past terms) as Editor. When I joined VSAG some 15 years ago Des was Editor. In those days Des set up the newsletter on an old Gestetner machine & roneod off the pages. He then bound the pages in the cardboard cover and attended to the posting to members as well. All this on a monthly basis. When compared to this the job today is not an arduous task at all. Thanks again Des, I hope you truly enjoy receiving your future Editions of FATHOMS in the mail.

Editor, Mick Jeacle

NON FINANCIAL MEMBERS

We regret to advise that the following members who had not paid their 1995/96 subscription of \$50 as at 26 September, are now reading their last FATHOMS unless payment is made by the November General Meeting (16 November).

Tony AUSTIN
Terry BROOKS
Igor CHRERNISHOV
Anthony FINNEGAN
Peter HARKIN
Bill HAYES
Mick JACKIW
Colin KAY
Brian LYNCH
Andrew MAYBUS
Leo MAYBUS

Noel ROBERTSON
Tony ROSSI
Paul SIER
Fiona SOLLY
Martin TALIANA
Paul TIPPING
Jim TURNER
David WARD
Mike WEBER
Sant KHAN
Sally STADDON

Note: Members who may not be able to pay the subscription at the present time should contact Treasurer Doug Catherall on 9888 7774 (hm)

Subscription barely cover the cost of FATHOMS, so please pay immediately.

V.S.A.G. PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1995

JOHN LAWLER PRESIDENT
21ST SEPTEMBER 1995

After the mammoth year which saw our club celebrate it's 40th year, 1995 has been somewhat of a steady as you go event, but none the less had some highs and a few concerns!

Applying a mathematical overview to the club's diving and social activities, some interesting conclusions can be made on members participation.

V.S.A.G. currently has 64 paid members. Of these 22% are regular divers, 38% are irregular divers. On a social basis 42% attend regularly and 18% irregularly. 39% of members never attend dives or attend social functions, however I'm sure they are with us in spirit!

As we move towards the year 2000 it will be very important for our club to build on the current membership, and with respect to the elder members, youth must largely form the main body of new members with a potential to carry on the affairs of VSAG.

I would like to touch on The Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria, or S.D.F.V. as this very important body is more commonly referred. I have been our Club's delegate to the S.D.F.V. for around five years now and during this time I've witnessed this group develop into a vital link between diving clubs and the Government in the main. We're very fortunate to have this group of caring, dedicated people who give a lot of spare time, and in some instances holiday time to attend seminars and enquiries on our behalf to ensure that all the things we as divers hold dear are not eroded or unreasonably removed by the power of Government and influence of groups with vested interested interest in looking after themselves and to hell with the rest! We see the S.D.F.V. repeatedly communicating with Government to clarify/rectify/seek adjustment to issues that have, and in fact more often than not do, effect the sport of Scuba Diving and Divers.

I take the liberty on behalf of V.S.A.G. to congratulate Darren Salter, Chairman, and the other members for their dedication and support of the Diving Fraternity. Our club

has had some very notable highlights during '95, starting off with some new additions to V.S.A.G. families. To Sally and Sant, Asha; to Rhonda and Chris, Blake; to Judy and Charles, Jane and very recently to Fran and David Machen, Joshua William. Congratulations to you all and let's hope we have some divers in these new additions to our world.

Another highlight came from the '94/95 Christmas trip to Forster/Tuncurry. Mick Jeacle, Barry Truscott and Alex Talay had the experience of a lifetime, when at 70ft and 30ft from the bottom they had a visit from a 14ft Great White Shark! The monster was not hungry, obviously but from this encounter came an excellent article by Alex in the Feb/March edition of Fathoms.

Easter was another great highlight and again this year we had another record attendance all put together expertly by Don Abell. Thanks Don. It's very hard to handle watching a Cray Fisherman dropping pots around Shellback whilst we sports divers are restricted to one cray each.

V.S.A.G. decided that the North Melbourne venue was not meeting our needs and for a while we used The Castle Hotel as our base. A visit to the Bells Hotel by members of the committee confirmed a suggestion by Alex Talay that this pub would be suitable for our meetings. I believe we probably now have the best "home" ever, in my time anyway. On your behalf I extend a big "thanks" to Bill Bell and his efficient staff for always having the room ready and for his friendly service.

On to the subject of Fathoms. It would be remiss not to mention Des Williams, who regrettably has chosen to step down as Editor. Des, both in his capacity as a Committee member and Editor, has always held V.S.A.G. very dear to his heart and over the many years his loyalty and absolute dedication to the club is immeasurable! Des will still remain on the committee and will provide continued input into the future activities. Des on behalf of V.S.A.G. thank you very much. The Challenge to find our new Editor went out at the August Committee meeting and it is with great pleasure that I advise this role will be taken over by Mick Jeacle. Without doubt Fathoms will continue to maintain the usual high standard under Mick's direction.

I know you will agree with me that our magazine is probably the most professional around and one which we can all be proud of. Fathoms is the cornerstone of our club and it is your magazine! It is however, a magazine which sometimes is put together

under difficult circumstances due to the lack of good interesting and informative articles! Put simply if we won't be reading Fathoms. 80% of articles are written by 20% of members and generally the same ones. I ask you to think a bit about your magazine and to be part of it by writing at least one article. Perhaps you have a view on the club activities, a dive story, or a bitch even. Please consider this for a better fathoms and thanks to all the scribes who wrote for fathoms this year.

It is pleasing to note that the club funds are in a fairly healthy state and as a result club fees will be held at the current rate of \$50.

In closing for this I would like to record my thanks to my fellow Committee members for their input during 1995. It has been a lot of fun despite the work involved. On my behalf and the Committee of V.S.A.G., we wish all our members good health and a safe and enjoyable diving year ahead.

REMEMBER!

V.S.A.G GENERAL MEETINGS

are on the

THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH!

AT BELLS HOTEL

CNR. MORAY & COVENTRY STREETS, SOUTH MELBOURNE

Make a note of these dates in your diary or calendar now.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19TH

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 16TH

Come and enjoy a delicious meal before the meeting which commences at 8pm sharp.



V.S.A.G. PROFILE

This month's diver profile features
BARRY TRUSCOTT

AGE: 55

OCCUPATION: CARPENTER

FAMILY: WIFE AND 3 CHILDREN

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO DIVING?

I had taken the guy next door water skiing and he suggested that i should try his sport which was scuba diving. So the following day we went scuba diving. He had two sets of gear consisting of regs, tanks, weight belts, and masks, my boys supplied the fins. We went out to a reef off Mt. Eliza, over the side, putting the tank in the water. The hard part for me was getting used to the idea that I could breath with my head under the water. I tried sticking my head under a couple of times, whilst still hanging on to the boat for security. after a few goes I was comfortable with the idea and it was off to the bottom.

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST JOIN V.S.A.G.?

A plumber on the building site I was working on had just been appointed as President of V.S.A.G. He suggested I should attend a meeting, I liked the group and here I am!

HAVE YOU A DIVE TYPE PREFERENCE?

Wrecks and crays, in that order.

TELL US ABOUT ONE OF YOUR BEST DIVES.

One of my best dives would be on the wreck of the AZU MASAN MARU in the Solomon Islands. I was as deep as I could get in the forward hold, crystal clear water with the depth gauge off the scale (225-230ft) and not another diver in sight, one of those dives that just stays with you. but, I would have to say some of the best dives I've had been the drift dives off the Heads when the conditions are just right. Needless to say they do not occur very often in the Heads area. Another I would rate amongst

the best was the one at Tuncurry/Forster on the 2nd January 1995!!!! (Ed. Note: This was the famous White Pointer encounter! Lucky Barry!)

TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORST DIVE (SCARY MOMENTS)

One of the most scary diving moments we had was inside the wreck of the GEORGE KERMODE. I was on my own and removing a porthole. During the last five minutes it was completely silted out. I was breathing hard from all the hammering and I couldn't read my pressure gauge.

HAS YOUR HEALTH EVER BEEN EFFECTED BY DIVING?

NO.

DO YOU HAVE A PET HATE ABOUT A DIVING BUDDY?

Dawdlers.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY NOTICEABLE DETERIORATION IN THE BAY OVER THE YEARS?

NO.

HOW HAS V.S.A.G. & THE DIVING INDUSTRY CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

V.S.A.G. older. Industry better gear, computers and B.C.'s.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE DIVING AMBITIONS?

Wreck diving overseas.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF V.S.A.G. AND IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT OUR CLUB YOU WOULD CHANGE?

A future of V.S.A.G. is to recruit more divers. Re changes, I would like to see more non diving events in winter.

Editor's Note: The process of learning to dive has certainly changed since Bazza (Life Member) began and that wasn't yesterday was it Barry? Thanks must go to Chris Llewellyn who initiated the idea of a Club member profile.

FEW CHANGES IN NEW COMMITTEE LINE UP

MICK JEACLE

There have only been some minor changes to the V.S.A.G. Committee portfolios for the ensuing year.

Full details can be found on Page 2. Briefly, the situation as it now stands is as follows:

- Mick Jeacle is now Newsletter Editor
- Positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer and Social Secretary remain as is
- Gerry Devries joins the ranks for the first time and has taken on the position of property officer. Welcome Gerry!

For the first time in some years VSAG is now operating under a Committee of 12, as allowed under its constitution.

COMMITTEE MEETING DATES/VENUES 1995/1996

October 24 - Doug Catherall

November 21 - Bob Scott

December - No meeting

January 23 - Pat Reynolds

February 20 - Gerry Devries

March 26 - Chris Llewlyn

April 23 - Don Abell

May 21 - Leo Maybus

June 25 - Des Williams

July 23 - Sant Khan

August 20 - Andy Mastrowicz

September 24 - John Lawler

SPECIAL NOTICE

NO DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Members please note that we are unable to secure our normal meeting room at Bell's Hotel for December.

Accordingly there will be no Official General Meeting held on Thursday 21 December, 1995. However, for those wanting to maybe meet for a meal and some good cheer on the evening then please come along to bills for a meal/social get-together before Christmas.

Your Committee has decided to hold a General Meeting on the 18th January 1996 to compensate and maintain the norm of 11 meetings per year. a reminder notice to this effect will appear in the December/January Fathoms.

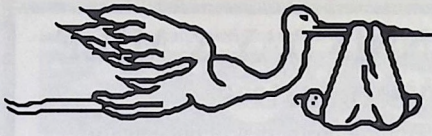
**OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING
GUEST SPEAKER, DES WILLIAMS**



Did you know that before Australian Federation, the individual Colonies each had their own small navies to defend their ports? Due to the fabulous wealth generated by the gold rush, Victoria had the biggest colonial navy in this country. Now, only the decaying old monitor CERBERUS, at Black Rock, remains as the last tangible link with our wonderful old Victorian navy. At the October 19th General meeting, Des Williams will present a short history of the old Victorian Navy with emphasis on the rusting underwater remains of the first class torpedo boat COUNTESS OF HOPETOWN at Swan Island.

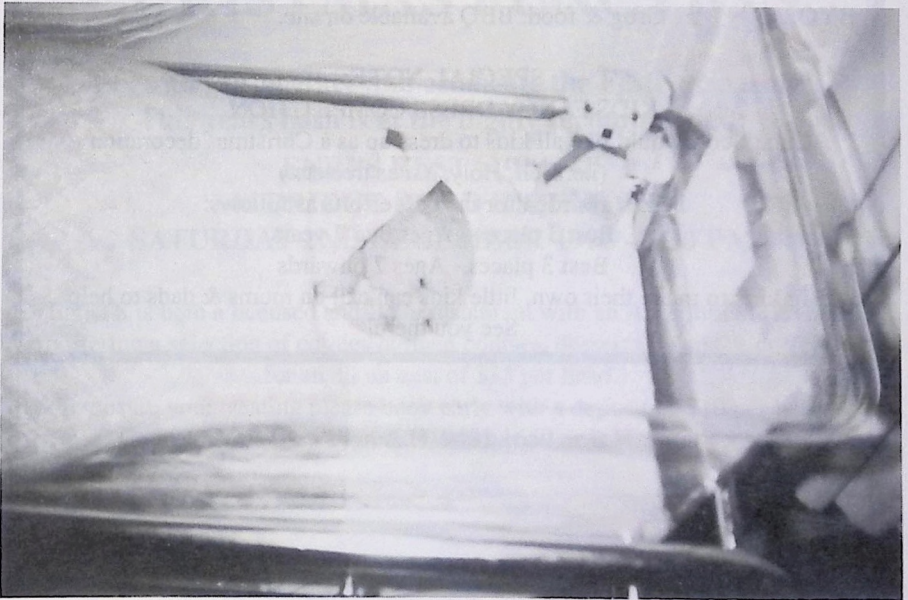
The presentation will include many rare old photographs of these long lost fighting vessels as well as underwater photographs of the COUNTESS wreck site as it is today.

So be with V.S.A.G. on Thursday 19th October 1995 at bell's Hotel for a step back into time.



IT'S A BOY!

Congratulations to Dave & Franca Machen on the birth of their first child. Joshua William Machen was born on 1st September 1995 and weighed in at a healthy 7lb. 7oz.



Editor Note: What's the trick Dave! I thought Divers only had daughters!

ANNUAL VSAG TENNIS DAY & MILE

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER, 1995

Don't miss this great Family Day. The Tipping brothers will once again organise this event with all sorts of prizes for tennis prowess and running skills.

Location: Cranbourne South Tennis Courts
Brown's Rd (Just past Bazza's place)

Time: 10am onwards

BYO: Grog & food, BBQ available on site.

SPECIAL NOTE:

KIDS FANCY DRESS COMPETITION

June Scott would like all kids to dress up as a Christmas decoration
(i.e. Bell, Holy, Xmas tree etc.)

Prizes awarded for the best efforts as follows:

Best 3 places - Ages 0 to 7 years

Best 3 places - Ages 7 onwards

Big kids to make their own, little kids can call on mums & dads to help
See you there!



VSAG CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

**Let's all get together and celebrate the Festive Season
This years bash is at the highly recommended:**

**ENRI'S RESTAURANT
344 BRIDGE ROAD RICHMOND
SATURDAY 2ND DECEMBER 1995 - 7.30 PM**

ENRI'S is both a licensed and BYO restaurant with an Argentinian flavour offering a selection of entrees & main courses, desserts, salads & coffee, for an all up cost of \$35 per head.

To ensure your seating please book early with a deposit of \$10 per head.
Contact Chris Llewellyn A.H. 9431 1650 or B.H. 9464 1599.



REFUGE COVE WEEKEND

BY MICK JEACLE

It's on again. Australia Day 1996 falls on a Friday, so VSAG has the chance to revisit magnificent Refuge Cove.

It may sadden some members to hear that the RosaLea has ceased to operate, as its owner has flown to Queensland.

Now for the good news!

Daryl Broche has acquired a new larger twin hull boat and is available for that weekend at a cost of \$110 per diver per day, inclusive of all meals and unlimited diving. The plan would be to board the boat on Thursday evening and depart the wharf on Friday morning returning Sunday afternoon.

The boat is equipped with compressor and presumably air tanks.

Interested divers would only need to take clothes, dive gear, toiletries, sleeping bags/pillow and a supply of grog.

Maximum passengers he can accommodate are 10 so if you are interested then phone Bob Scott on 059 712 206, but be quick.

At an all up cost of \$330, it is expected the 10 places will not last too long.

Presumably there will be a number of private boats also making the trip and daryl will fill their tanks at the nominal club cost of \$5. More on this special weekend next issue

FATHERS DAY YUM CHA

CHRIS LLEWELLYN

Now I'm not suggesting that it being the chinese year of the pig had anything to do with it, but we did get a good roll up to the VSAG Fathers day Yum Cha.

26 Adults and 11 nippers were all lined up in China town bright and early for our 11am start. Luckily we were blessed with glorious sunshine, as I suspected the fixed price per head, ensures you don't get in the door a minute before time.

I was sitting there looking at Bob scott and his dad and wondering who was who, when the food started to arrive fast and furious. mercifully one could say no to a dish if you don't like the look of it or you hadn't wiped the last dish off the chin. We were treated to a variety of tasty chinese delicacies all washed down with a dainty chardonnay. For mine it was a very pleasant way to spend a Sunday morning.

I did the father thing and proudly paraded the "LittleFella" around the tables. It must have had some affect as I overheard marie Truscott cluckily cooing into Bazza's ear after a cuddle of baby Blake! How'd ya go Bazz!

Big Mick had previously decreed that if it was a fine day, a look around the Southbank would be appropriate. Not having been to Southbank before I was very surprised, it has a very busy international feel to it. Almost a bit like Sydney's Darling Harbour. One wonders what the place will be like when the new casino is finished!

We wandered down by the Riverside, through all the very trendy market stalls but the highlight must have been the country & western line dancing exhibition and June Scott, Sam and jessica Jeacles great "Boot Scootin" fancy work! These three should have got a part in the beverley Hill Billies remake. All in all it was a most enjoyable VSAG Fathers Day.



The Luxfords are all smiles. See I did have film!



Justin Lyddy with lovely daughter Kimberley



All the female attention is on Dougie!



Proud Father Des shows off "The Family" & niece.



"A chip off the old block". Bobby gives Dad & June a cuddle.



The Jeacles and Rhonda in between serves.



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Your Ref.

August 1995

Our Ref.

To all recreational rock lobster fishers and other interested people

The process of reviewing the management of the Victorian rock lobster fishery and producing a Management Plan has been concentrating on the commercial fishery so far this year. The latest stock assessments have confirmed that there needs to be a reduction in commercial fishing effort of 50% east of Cape Otway, which includes most of the popular diving areas, and 25% west of Cape Otway. Changes of this magnitude will require major structural changes to the commercial fleet. Working papers have been produced for the major management options for the commercial fishery.

After consideration of the responses from recreational fishers to the Discussion and Options papers, and comments received at meetings and workshops last year, a working paper outlining proposals for the management of the recreational fishery has also been produced. A copy of this paper is enclosed.


It is anticipated that a draft Management Plan for the rock lobster fishery will be produced by early next year and the Plan will be finalized by the end of June. Your comments on this working paper are invited and should be sent to

David Molloy
Project Manager
Rock Lobster Management Team
Victorian Fisheries Research Institute
PO Box 114
QUEENSLIFF VIC 3225

by the 31 October 1995.

Members of the rock lobster management team will be available to meet with groups to discuss issues raised in the working paper. For further information contact David Molloy on (0520 520 111 or fax (052) 520 270.

Copies of the working papers for the commercial fishery are also available on request.



Russell Watkinson
Acting Manager, Victorian Fisheries

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Most recreational rock lobster fishers that have responded to the previous Discussion and Option papers and who have attended meetings and workshops agree that measures must be taken to improve the state of the resource. The majority are prepared to take reductions in the recreational catch, if they are of similar magnitude to reductions in the commercial catch.

Gear restrictions

Captive air

There is a strong view amongst commercial fishers that the use of captive air should be prohibited when taking rock lobsters, because diving on air is too efficient.

Recreational divers have argued very strenuously that they should continue to use captive air for the taking of rock lobsters. It is argued that most divers could not take a lobster without captive air, and that prohibiting the use of captive air would not result in equitable access to the resource for recreational fishers. Experienced divers estimate that a ban on captive air would reduce the recreational catch by over 90%.

It is proposed that recreational divers should continue to use captive air for taking rock lobsters. Alternative measures will be used to reduce the recreational catch.

Pots.

Recreational fishers in Victoria are not permitted to use cray pots. They can use up to two hoop nets for taking rock lobsters.

No change is proposed.

Snarcs

The management team has received some comment that supports the use of snarcs for taking rock lobsters.

It was generally agreed that while snarcs would reduce some damage to lobsters that occurs as divers try to take them by hand, it would also significantly increase the catch. Snarcs would make it easier for inexperienced people to take lobsters and also enable lobsters to be taken from places that are currently inaccessible.

No change to the ban on the use of snarcs is proposed.

PROPOSALS FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE RECREATIONAL ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY IN VICTORIA

Introduction

The principles of ESD require that management of the rock lobster fishery should take into account all forms of utilisation of that resource. This includes recreational diving and hoop netting for rock lobster. One of the Goals for management is to ensure that recreational fishers have an equitable allocation of the resource, but this also means that the responsibility for conserving and protecting the resource should be shared by recreational fishers.

Thirty years ago, divers could readily take lobsters by snorkelling in inshore waters, despite the fact that there had been commercial potting in these waters for over 100 years. Since then there has been an increase in recreational diving, and in particular the use of SCUBA and hookah, and this combined with ongoing commercial fishing has contributed to the decline in the inshore stocks.

Data from the commercial fishery shows that catch rates in inshore areas are now up to three times less than in offshore areas. There is relatively little data on the recreational rock lobster fishery in Victoria, however observations from field staff suggest that very few recreational fishers take the daily bag limit of four rock lobsters, and the majority cannot regularly take a legal size rock lobster. The past activities of both sectors of the fishery have left the resource in a depressed state for the present generation of fishers and the current level of fishing is putting the long term future of the resource at risk. There will have to be tight controls on both groups if the inshore stocks are to be returned to anything like their former state.

The goals and objectives for conservation and optimum utilization of the resource will not be met unless there is a reduction in the total catch, to allow the stocks to rebuild. A target for reduction in commercial fishing effort of 50% have been set for the eastern zone (approximately east of Cape Otway), the area where most recreational diving is done. Any benefits from a reduction in the commercial catch will be diminished if the recreational catch increases as this rebuilding takes place. The management objectives and targets are more likely to be achieved if the recreational catch is reduced correspondingly with the commercial catch.

The benefits from management action now to rebuild the inshore stocks will be that recreational fishers will again be able to readily find and take a rock lobster. Also, success in restoring the adult component of the inshore stock will enhance annual egg production for the fishery.

Catch limits

Daily bag limit

Although only a relatively small percentage of divers regularly take the current bag limit of four rock lobsters per day, observations and interviews from field staff suggest that these divers account for a significant proportion of the total catch. Almost 50 percent of divers interviewed by field staff who were targeting rock lobsters had caught none.

A reduction in the bag limit may not effect the majority of divers but it will have an impact on those divers who take the most lobsters, and on the total catch.

It is proposed that the recreational bag limit for rock lobsters in Victoria be reduced to two per day.

Possession limit

At present, the daily bag limit for rock lobsters applies "on or adjacent to Victorian waters". In effect, there is no possession limit once a person has left the water. The state of the rock lobster resource in Victoria is such that the Fisheries Branch considers that it is no longer acceptable for recreational fishers to stockpile rock lobsters by frequent or extended lobster fishing trips.

It is proposed that there should be a total possession limit for rock lobsters in Victoria, as there is with abalone. If the bag limit is reduced to two per day as proposed, the possession limit could remain at four.

Size Limits

The Stock Assessment Group at VFRI - MSL has reviewed the analysis of the available data. There is a relatively high level of uncertainty about some of the parameters such as growth and mortality of rock lobsters in different areas across Victoria. However the Group concluded that on the information available, in terms of overall egg production there is not much to be gained by small increases in the legal minimum length. The main problem is one of too much fishing pressure.

More research is required on biological parameters for rock lobsters across Victoria, to improve the assessment of the size limits.

At this time it is not proposed to change the legal minimum lengths for rock lobsters in Victoria.

Closed seasons

Closed seasons can be used to protect spawning stock and to reduce effort. Increasing the length of the closed season is one option being considered by the commercial sector. From an enforcement view point, any closures should apply to both sectors of the fishery.

At this stage additional closed seasons for the recreational sector will not be considered in isolation from the commercial sector.

Closed Areas

Permanently closed areas should be considered as part of any management arrangements, to ensure that there are some areas where all lobsters are allowed to reproduce. Closed areas could also be used as reference/study areas, and as areas where divers can go to enjoy the experience of observing rather than taking lobsters.

Any closed areas should apply to both sectors of the fishery to be effective.

The Land Conservation Council's (LCC) Marine and Coastal study draft recommendations are expected to be released for comment in April 1995, and it is expected that there will be recommendations about closed areas.

Although closed areas are supported, no specific proposals are made at this time, pending the outcome of the LCC study.

Identification of the recreational catch.

Although it is recognized that the vast majority of recreational rock lobster fishers do not illegally sell their catch there is increasing concern over illegal sales, particularly as the price of rock lobsters rises.

In NSW recreational fishers must apply a non-reusable tag around the base of the antennae of all rock lobsters taken. Commercial fishers have a different coloured tag. Serious consideration is being given to tagging for both sectors if the fishery, but at this stage no suitable tag has been identified.

In Western Australia recreational fishers must clip or punch a hole in the tail fan of all rock lobsters within five minutes of removing them from the water.

Unless a suitable tag can be identified, it is proposed that all rock lobsters taken by recreational fishers must be tail clipped or punched, to clearly identify them as non-commercial lobsters.

Licensing

It is not known how many people use their Amateur Fishing Licence to take rock lobsters because there is no specific rock lobster endorsement and no licensing database, and there have not been any creel surveys or other systematic monitoring of the recreational fishery, so there is no estimate of the total recreational catch. This is the most basic data that is required for any assessment of the recreational fishery.

There is strong support for a separate licence for recreational diving. The genuine sport divers want to be highly visible and monitored so that there is good data on their activities. They believe that the number of divers taking lobsters, and their impact, is generally over estimated.

It is proposed that recreational rock lobster divers and hoop netters be licensed separately from anglers. It is essential that a licensing database be established as an integral part of assessing the recreational rock lobster fishery.

Research and Monitoring

To date there have not been any creel surveys or systematic monitoring of the recreational rock lobster fishery, and there is no estimate of the total recreational catch.

Assessing the recreational fishery is part the current research program, and it must be given a high priority.

It will also be critical to monitor the state of the inshore stocks to determine the success of the proposed management action.

Education and Extension.

It will be important to have an education and extension strategy to make divers and hoop netters more aware of their impact on the resource. Divers should be encouraged not to view the resource as something to be exploited, but to enjoy observing rather than taking lobsters as part of the overall diving experience.

Part of this strategy could be to provide suitable areas that are permanently closed to fishing, where numbers of lobsters will build up so that they can be easily seen and enjoyed by divers.

BRAVING THE ELEMENTS

DON ABELL

I had a few things planned for Sunday August 6 and diving was not one of them. I was the dive captain who was confident that not even VSAG had members who would want to brave the elements after looking at the weather forecast as it built up through the previous week.

I was wrong. A few VSAG members don't worry about gale force winds, squalls and 2 meter seas on Port Phillip. A couple of deaths in the bay during the week seemed to go unnoticed.

I understand J.L. ringing in on Saturday, his boat is always available but even John was scepticle of our chances. Then I had a call from a pommny who was visiting Australia and felt like a dive. I guess if you are used to the North Sea this didn't seem so bad. At this time I was still ready to cancel when I got a call from Rob Birtles on behalf of himself, Devries and Natoli. The solution was still obvious. Only one boat and conditions too dangerous for only one boat to venture out by itself.

I rang Neville Viapree who also thought we were insane but was willing to be committed to the same institution and agreed to bring his boat along. It is dedication and club mania like Neville's that has made VSAG what it is today - and I'll never forgive them.

So we had to go to Sorrento. A stiff breeze blew off shore so we were not able to assess the water property. I figured we should have an egg and bacon sandwich and a coffee but I was out voted by a group of escaped asylum inmates who wanted a launch immediately.

Those who attended the August meeting will have heard my baby polar bear joke. If you missed it then you should have been there to hear scuba humour at its best. Despite Tony Tipping's scoffing he had not heard it before. He was only displaying his jealousy because unlike his own stories told at VSAG meetings, all members were still awake when I had finished.

I thought that the adventure on the sea would be the hardest part of the day but I