

## Summary of 2020 views with regards to West Coast Rock Lobster poaching

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### Summary

This document provides a brief summary of the views of the Scientific Working Group with regards to West Coast rock lobster poaching, in order to inform on the TAC for the 2020 season.

At the time of preparing the 2020 TAC recommendations, the SWG was required to summarise the current and past status of poaching levels for the West Coast Rock Lobster resource. The consensus view was that the poaching estimates to be used for projections should be set higher than those assumed previously. In reaching this view, the following information was considered:

- (1) TRAFFIC data had been updated for a further year (to cover 2019). A retrospective analysis showed a consistent underestimation of the amount of poached lobster reported for the most recent year (2019) in nearly all past series of estimates; this was because of incomplete information being available at that time for the then most recent year. Nevertheless, these data do indicate a downward trend in this component of poaching over the last decade. A regression analysis was used to estimate the current annual level of this component of poaching, which was conservatively assessed to be 500t compared to the value of 318t used in projections the previous (2019) year. See Figure 1.
- (2) DEFF compliance data for 2019 were not analysed because of administrative problems. A course summary of these data, when compared to a similar summary for the four previous years, indicated a near reversal of the downturn from 2017 to 2018 in the extent of poaching that had been evident the previous year. See Figure 2.
- (3) Local sales. No further amendments were made to the range estimated in 2019 for annual local sales of poached lobster – this being 400t-700t. The basis for this, as stated in FISHERIES/2019/AUG/SWG/WCRL/19, was: “Impressions of the likely size of the locally sold illegal catch in 2018. This is used to provide the number to scale the compliance series to tons. The poaching task group has different views on the appropriate value for this amount, but has reached a compromise agreement to consider a range from 400 to 700 tons.”

Given the above, the following conclusion was reached in 2020:

This further poaching information was considered to indicate approximately that the previous TAC estimate of 1280t for the situation of no growth above the 2006 abundance benchmark by 2025 should be reduced (by  $500-318=182$ t, i.e. the amount by which the TRAFFIC estimate was revised) to 1098t.

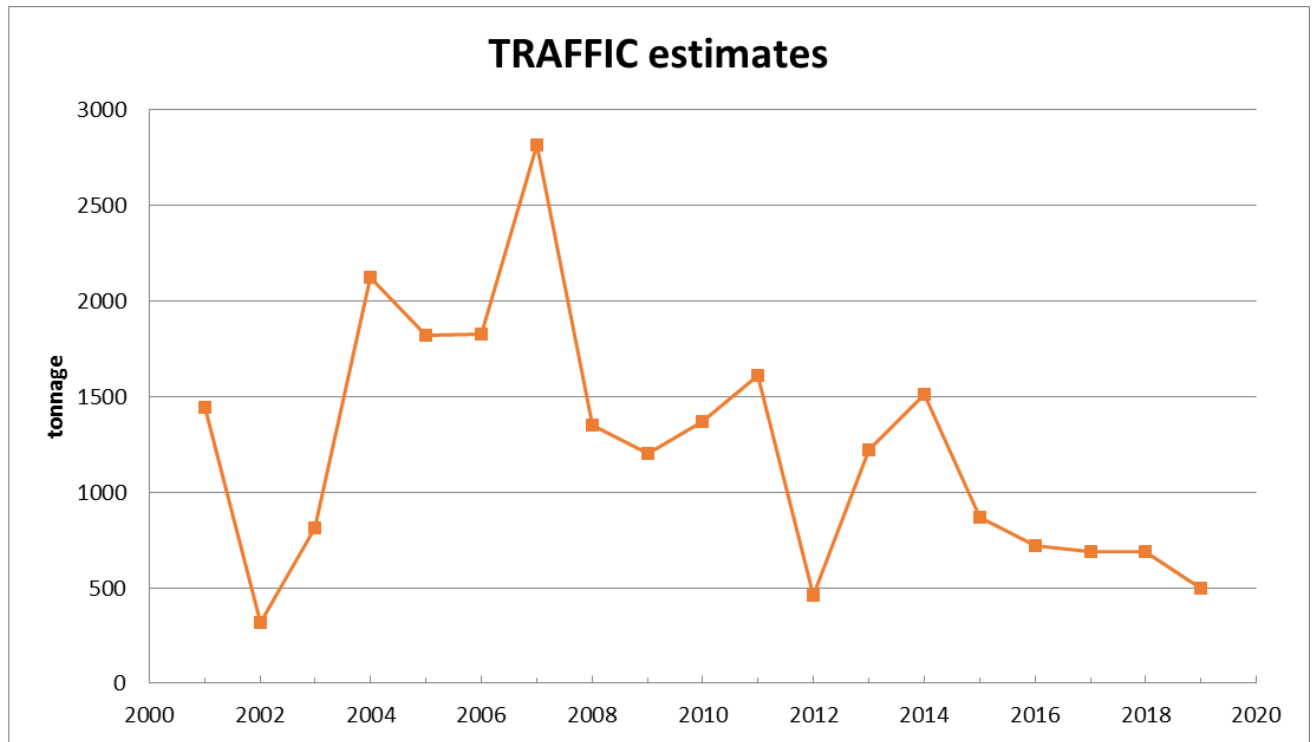


Figure 1: Estimates of poached lobster obtained from TRAFFIC import-export data analyses (Louw and Burgener 2020).

### Lobsters Confiscated 2015-2019

Plots indicate the number of lobsters confiscated vs the different effort methods using Annual Compliance data for the period 2015 – 2019.

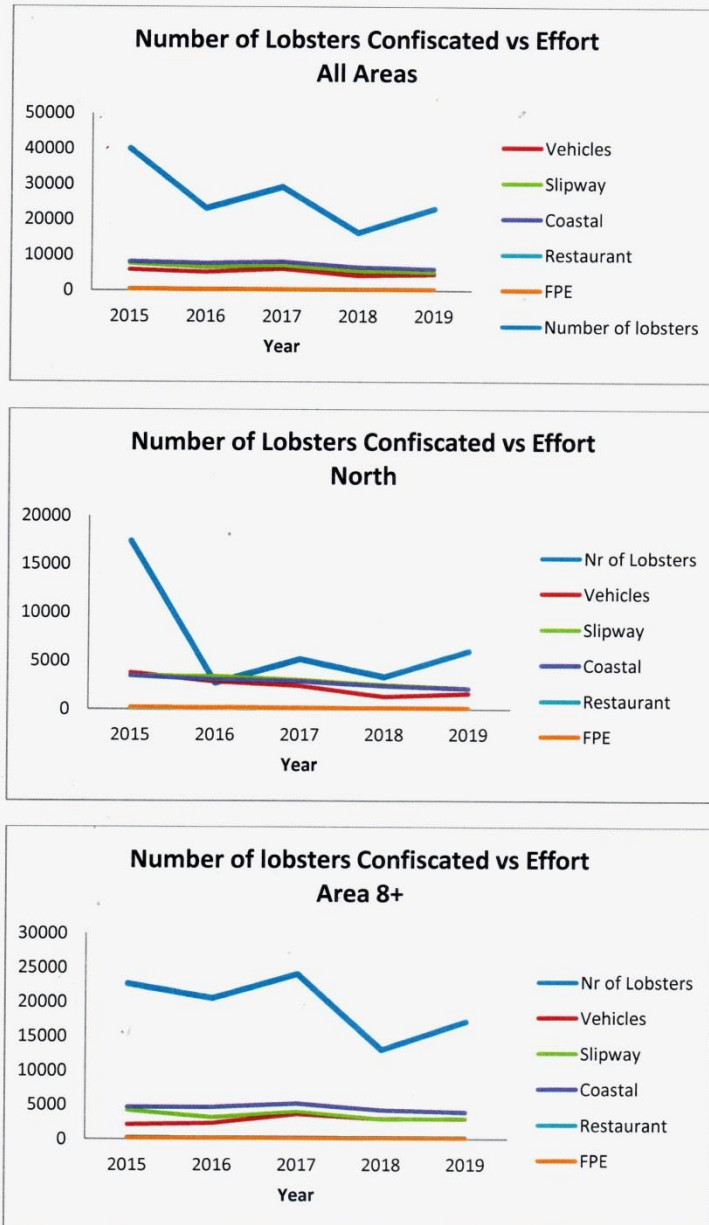


Figure 2: Compliance data: the plots above indicate the number of lobsters confiscated vs the different effort methods using DEFF Annual Compliance data for the period 2015-2019.