

Advisory for Stakeholders

Western Australia abalone fishery

In accordance with the MSC General Certification Requirements v 2.4.1 clause 4.12.2 d. 1, bio.inspecta Pty Ltd, mandated by q.inspecta, wishes to advise all stakeholders of a deviation from the MSC Fisheries Certification process (FCP) v 2.2 in the fourth surveillance report for this fishery and the proposed action to address the deviation.

By way of background, progress against the open conditions were assessed during the fourth surveillance audit. Condition 1 to do with stock status of greenlip was found to be behind target for a second time. This condition was originally drafted during the second audit and states "By the 4th surveillance audit, provide evidence that the stock is highly likely to be above the PRI and is fluctuating around a level consistent with MSY (permitting for adjustments due to natural environmental fluctuations)." Exceptional circumstances in accordance with FCP v 2.2 clause 7.18.1.6 as they relate to natural biological recovery times were not evident at the time of drafting the condition.

During the third audit, the condition was found to be behind target. New information became available, a rebuilding strategy was developed and noting a recovery rate of 16 years (twice the generation time of greenlip abalone) the third audit report noted that closing of the condition at the fourth audit was unlikely.

Progress against the condition was assessed at the fourth surveillance audit and confirmed that the stock was rebuilding but was still not fluctuating around a level consistent with MSY and the condition could therefore not be closed out by the deadline. The fourth audit report noted that this condition will be carried over into the reassessment as the condition was set during an audit (FCP G7.30.5.1.a), furthermore the analyses conducted to develop the rebuilding plan indicate that exceptional circumstances apply (FCP 7.18.1.6) which also permits conditions to be carried over (FCP 7.30.5). The exceptional circumstance in this case is that a rebuild to the point where SG80 is met for PI 1.1.1 is not possible within an assessment cycle, even under perfect implementation of the rebuilding plan.

The FCP requires the CAB to specify a deadline for each condition (FCP 7.18.1.4) however, it is silent on amending condition deadlines. The deadline for condition 1 to be closed was originally set for the fourth audit and expected to improve to the 80 level within a period no longer than the term of certification (FCP 7.18.1.3). This deadline resulted in the condition being behind target for a second time. A variation request to highlight the exceptional circumstances and propose a revised

condition timeline was not submitted to the MSC in time and before the report was published on the MSC website.

Proposed actions:

1. The fourth audit report will be amended to include a revised deadline for condition 1 that aligns with the rebuilding timeframe of two times the generation time of greenlip abalone.
2. The fishery has entered reassessment and the ACDR includes a carryover of condition 1 based on exceptional circumstances. A variation request to apply exceptional circumstances after a condition has been drafted will be submitted to the MSC.
3. After the site visit, when more information is provided and if the response to the VR permits, the next version of the report (Client and peer review draft report) will include condition 1 with a deadline and corresponding milestones and interim scores to ensure that the rebuild trajectory remains on track.