

8TH MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 14 to 18 February 2020

COMM 8 – Prop 08.1
Explanatory Note to Proposal 08
New Zealand – Australia



Additional information relating to the proposal for amendments to the Deepwater species Conservation and Management Measure for SPRFMO

24 December 2019

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1. Purpose of paper

This paper provides additional information on the proposed amendments to the Deepwater Species CMM 03a-2019 to:

1. update the catch limits for orange roughy in the Louisville Ridge and Westpac Bank areas, and
2. improve the management and implementation of the adopted catch limits for orange roughy.

2. Rationale for amendments to Conservation and Management Measure

The Deepwater species CMM 03a-2019 sets precautionary catch limits orange roughy for specific stocks or areas. The catch limits for the Louisville Ridge and Westpac Bank area are only set for the 2019 fishing year within the current CMM. The proposed amendments set catch limits for these areas based on recommendations from the 7th Scientific Committee (SC) meeting.

The Deepwater species CMM 03a-2019 does not include a framework for managing to the relatively low catch 'hard limits' for orange roughy. Through domestic implementation Members have restricted catch well below the specified limit to ensure the catch limits are not exceeded. The proposal introduces an unders and overs framework that enables Members to better utilise their catch limit allocation while providing clarity on how the Commission would address over and under catch of those specified catch limits. The unders and overs framework is a mechanism used in some international and many domestic fisheries.

3. Catch Limits

The SPRFMO orange roughy stock assessments for the Louisville Ridge stocks¹ have been updated using age and length frequency data from Louisville Central. The 7th SC noted that there was no clear advantage of separate yields over a total yield for these stocks. Although the current stock status for each of the stocks in the Louisville Ridge area is uncertain, the current stock status for Louisville Central and North is likely above 30%B₀; and the current stock status for Louisville South is likely above 20%B₀. The proposal is to adopt the SC recommendation that the catch limit of 1,140 t for Louisville Ridge area is maintained for each of the 2020, 2021, and 2022 fishing years.

The SC agreed that the New Zealand 2019 stock assessment for the Southwest Challenger Plateau stock of orange roughy, which includes the Westpac Bank Area in the SPRFMO Convention Area, is the best available information to support management decisions. The stock assessment estimated current biomass of the entire stock to be 47%B₀, and that a maximum annual yield of 2,448t would maintain the biomass of the stock above 40%B₀ for the next five years.

The current Total Allowable Commercial Catch limit for the entire area applied by New Zealand is 2,058 t. There is no new information to suggest that the estimate of 12.5% of the stock biomass being in the Westpac Bank Area is inappropriate. A catch limit of 258 t in each fishing year is proposed and represents a suitably precautionary approach given uncertainties in the stock assessment, in particular with regards to potential recruitment, and would also be consistent with the assumption that 12.5% of the Southwest challenger stock biomass occurs in the Westpac Bank area and that the catch limit be proportional to the total catch limit for the stock in accordance with this assumption.

4. Catch Limit Implementation

The proposal to include a framework for how the Commission would implement and manage orange roughy catch is to enable Members to better utilise the catch limit they are allocated and provide clarity on how over and under catch is to be addressed. The catch limits are low and precautionary based on

¹ Louisville North, Louisville Central, Louisville South



advice from SC; and to ensure that catch limits are not exceeded in this dynamic fishery, Members have needed to restrict catch to well below the catch limits.

To enable Members to fully utilise the catch limit they are allocated, it is proposed that if a Member or CNCP catch limit is under caught for a defined area, that Member or CNCP may carry forward to the next fishing year up to 10% of their catch limit or the difference between their catch limit and reported catch for that year, whichever is lesser. The inclusion of this provision reduces the incentive to fish up to 100% of the catch limit and/or risk exceeding the catch limit without a clear process for addressing over catch.

If a Member or CNCP catches more than their catch limit for orange roughy for a defined area, the excess catch shall be deducted from their catch limit for the subsequent fishing year.

As long as any excess catch is accounted for the subsequent fishing year, given the biological characteristics of orange roughy, there will not be unfavourable effects on the sustainability of the stock in the area. The catch limits in place correspond to about 2–4% of the estimated current biomass (see paper SC7-DW5), e.g. a carry forward of 10% of the entire allowable catch will constitute much less than 1% of the current biomass and have negligible impact on that biomass in the short to medium term. It is anticipated that stock assessments will be updated about every 3 years giving plenty of time to respond to changes in the biomass and to ensure that catch limits are appropriate.

This proposed framework allows for improved implementation of catch limits, it is not an increase in Member or CNCP catch limits. Any excess catch is required to be accounted for in the subsequent fishing year and up to 10% only of under catch is able to be carried forward.

5. Conclusion

To allow for orange roughy fishing within the Louisville Ridge and Westpac Bank areas, New Zealand and Australia request the Commission adopt the proposed amendments to catch limits for those areas.

In order to improve implementation and provide clarity regarding management of orange roughy catch limits, New Zealand and Australia request the Commission adopt the proposed framework for accounting for under and over catch of allocated Member/CNCP catch limit tonnages.