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Presentation transcript

Slide 2: The blue warehou fishery is probably the worst management of a fishery in recent history... Commercial Trawl and deep-water netting targeting spawning biomass led to collapse of the fishery. The lighter section of each column indicates the discarded fish each year. A total of around 3000 tonnes of high value fish wasted over about 20 years. Now we have a collapsed fishery that is not recovering... With the benefit of hindsight maybe not discarding the 1000's of tonnes, dead, might have made a difference; I'm not sure what this speaks to in the commercial stewardship space or for responsible and sustainable management... perhaps a more cautionary harvest strategy would have protected the fishery.

Slide 3: This graph illustrates the recent history of commercial and recreational catch for Southern Garfish. The recent scale fish review paper indicated a commercial catch of around 10 tonnes in the past couple of years and suggested restraint of the recreational sector through a bag limit reduction and spawn closure.

The reality is the recreational catch was so low we had close to zero impact on the fishery.

Would maintaining a higher biomass through commercial catch management have seen a sustainable take year on year? I'll get onto limit reference points a bit later but it seems there was no active management of this fishery until catch rates fell.

Slide 4: This slide shows the rock lobster biomass and egg production assessments used in the discussion paper around rule changes in the first half of last year. It illustrates a willingness to allow a significant reduction of biomass. These stock assessments are made at the end of a ten year rebuild strategy. The target reference point for the rebuild strategy was 20% of virgin biomass as you can see only areas 1, 6 and 8 are currently above that level. More and more frequently I'm hearing that a 20% low level reference is considered irresponsible and often 40% is referred to as a more reasonable target.

Slide 5: This slide indicates the commercial and recreational catch in each of the scientific assessment areas. I'd like to draw attention to the commercial catch in area 5 at 275 tonnes it is the highest commercial harvest from any area. A commercial harvest of that volume doesn't make a lot of sense when we know the biomass level is at or around 12%. Here we see what I'd describe as an aggressive harvest strategy from an area that is severely depleted... Agonisingly slow rebuilds seem the most likely outcome from any fishery management plan that enables fishing when biomass is below 20%.

Slide 6: The graph builds a picture of how a fishery might be managed. The target, trigger and limit reference points would be set at a percentage of biomass. For years we've seen

20% used as a notional limit reference point, the reality of fisheries management in both state and commonwealth waters is that the 20% is used as a fishdown limit. I don't study catch rates for a living but it also seems that aggressive harvest is allowed right down to the limit reference point often resulting in the limit being bypassed.

It seems reasonable to me that as we approach the limit reference we should reduce catch particularly the more aggressive techniques such as trawl... a reduced catch rate should make the limit reference more manageable, in turn if the limit reference is set high enough any rebuild necessary should be shorter.

Slide 7: Policy associated with this year's scalefish review emphasises commercially profitable fisheries... I think that emphasis is the root cause of fishery decline, the profit motive seems to enable an override of caution, the thought that we would be considering exploitation at a level where spawn effectiveness may be compromised paints a picture of madness... if we go back to the limit reference for any fishery that reference should be set at a level well above the point where recruitment might be impaired.

Slide 8: The trajectory of fish stocks is cause for concern. The picture here talks to jobs and spend associated with recreational fishing... the return to state revenue is higher for each kilo of fish harvested recreationally. It's food for thought... the future should be looked at as an opportunity; our oceans are contending with warming waters, increasing acidity and an increasing human population... we're also seeking to exploit under sea mineral resources, where we can fit our increasing need for power generation and opening more and more waters for aquaculture... if all we think about is money we're inevitably doomed probably not long after the last wild fish is harvested... or we can change course and think differently about what it means to share our oceans with those that live in them.