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Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies

# TASMANIAN SCALLOP FISHERY ASSESSMENT 2022

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# Executive Summary

| STOCK STATUS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | RECOVERING                        |
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| <p>The Tasmanian Scallop Fishery (TSF) is managed with a harvest strategy where surveys are undertaken to estimate abundance and decision rules are used to open areas to fishing with total allowable catches (TACs) based on the estimated abundance.</p> <p>Biomass in the Tasmanian Scallop Fishery (TSF) is historically overfished (Caton and McLoughlin, 2004), with recruitment and production levels now affected. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, surveys generally found low scallop densities and limited evidence of successful recent recruitment but did identify two beds (one on the north-west coast and the other on the east coast) containing commercial quantities (Ewing <i>et al.</i>, 2016). Surveys in 2016 and again in 2017 generally only found very low levels of scallop abundance and limited evidence of successful recruitment, with no area considered to contain commercially viable quantities in either year (Ewing <i>et al.</i>, 2017; Semmens <i>et al.</i>, 2018). This includes the east and north-west coast beds fished in 2013-2015, which appeared to have been fished down to a commercially unviable density, with no subsequent recruitment evident. Given the results of the 2016 and 2017 surveys, there was a low expectation that conducting pre-season surveys in 2018 and 2019 would yield the presence of commercially viable scallop beds, and as such, pre-season surveys were not conducted. In 2020 a pre-season survey was conducted, and the survey results were dominated by low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops, several areas demonstrated signs of recruitment that suggest the possibility of supporting a tightly managed commercial fishery in the near- to medium-term. The 2021 pre-season survey consisted of 147 targeted dredge tows and 48 video surveys. Survey results showed low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops, with patchy high densities and variable discard rates.</p> <p>Preseason surveys in 2022 utilised both dredge and video methodologies and covered one north-west coast (western Bass Strait) bed, with an estimated legal-sized biomass of 21,624 t, and two lower east coast beds, with an estimated legal-sized biomass of 16,608 t.</p> <p>Fishing mortality is managed with the aim of restricting catches to beds of mature scallops near the end of their lifespan. The combination of the harvest strategy and depleted biomass has led to a history of closures due to low abundance. In recent times, the fishery was closed between 2000-2002 and again between 2009 and 2010. Areas with commercial density of scallops towards the end of their lifespan were opened to fishing each year between 2013 and 2015. The fishery was closed between 2016 and 2020. The fishery was partly opened in 2021, the first season to open since 2015, but only 44.5 tonnes were landed from the open area due to a major die-off event post survey. The fishery was fully opened to fishing in 2022, with the TAC set at 3,495 t. However, again there had been a major die-off post survey in the open area, which was in the lower east coast region, and only 604 t was landed. However, a new area in western bass Strait was opened under the established TAC, which was later increased to 4,495 t, with a total of 2,793 t landed from the new area.</p> <p>On the basis that biomass has increased during the 2016-20 closure due to wide-scale recruitment events, and current restrictions, particularly the new model of closing some biomass to fishing in the Scallop Fishery Area where fishing is taking place, are effectively limiting fishing mortality, the TSF is classified as recovering.</p> |                                   |
| STOCK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Tasmanian Scallop Fishery         |
| INDICATORS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Size structure, density and catch |

The TSF targets the commercial scallop (*Pecten fumatus*), one of three species naturally occurring in Tasmania. The SE Australian commercial scallop fishery began in Tasmania in the early 20th century and has exhibited a classic boom/bust trajectory with a combination of high recruitment variability and repeated overfishing and serial depletion leading to periods of very high effort and catches followed by extended closures for stock recovery. The TSF extends to 200 nm from the Tasmanian coast, with the exception of Bass Strait, where its jurisdiction covers 3-20 nautical miles offshore (DPIPWE, 2005). The fishery is managed by an individual transferable quota (ITQ) program and several input controls.

In comparison with historical levels, Tasmanian commercial scallop stocks are severely depleted and since 2003, the TSF has been regulated under a spatial management approach, referred to as a “paddock” fishery, whereby all areas are closed to fishing, except that certain areas can be opened after a stock assessment is completed. This approach is intended to promote stock re-building whilst allowing continuity of employment and supply for a small fishing fleet.

Sampling for the pre-season stock assessment has been conducted by selected scallop fishing vessels (issued with survey authorisations), and scallop stocks are assessed against criteria including:

- Population structure – particularly size where >80% of scallops landed must be greater than the minimum legal size (90 mm shell length (SL); animals of this size are approximately 3+ years of age and have had at least two major spawning’s).
- Commercial viability – including catch rates, market suitability, estimated costs of fishing and meat recovery (<85 scallop meats per kg).

The Scallop Fishery Advisory Committee (ScFAC) considers the pre-season-stock assessment and then provides advice to the ministry on which, if any, “paddocks” should be open for fishing. Members of ScFAC include representatives from the scallop fishing and processing industry, the research community, the relevant federal and state fisheries management agencies, and the marine conservation sector; and reflect the co-management framework for the management of the Tasmanian scallop fishery.

Sampling for the 2016 and 2017 pre-season stock assessments (Ewing *et al.*, 2017; Semmens *et al.*, 2018) on the east, north east and northwest coasts of Tasmania indicated low densities of scallops in all regions. Further, these surveys found limited evidence of successful recruitment. These findings were also supported by an IMAS fishery-independent video survey on the east coast in 2017. Based on these previous pre-season surveys, ScFAC advised the minister not to open the Tasmanian commercial scallop fishery in both 2018 and 2019 and stock status of the TSF remained classified as depleted. However, the pre-season dredge survey conducted in May-June 2020 (Ewing and Semmens 2020) offered evidence of recruitment across several areas of the fishery. While this has raised the possibility of stock recovery in these areas, based on the overall low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops in the dredge survey and the results of an IMAS fishery-independent video survey conducted in Great Oyster Bay (Semmens *et al.*, 2020), ScFAC advised the minister not to open the Tasmanian commercial scallop fishery in 2020, but to further monitor recovery prior to the 2021 season. The 2021 pre-season survey showed low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops, with patchy high densities and variable discard rates (Ewing *et al.*, 2021) and a partial opening was recommended by ScFAC in 2021, the first season to open since 2015. Scallop Area 3 opened to fishing in September 2021, the first season since 2015, with the TAC set at 1494.9 t. However, there had been a major die-off post survey, most likely due to a warm-water incursion in the Flinders Island area and only 44.5 t was landed due to poor quality and recovery. The remainder of the Scallop Fishery Areas remained closed.

Surveys were again undertaken in 2022 and covered one north-west coast (western Bass Strait) bed (Scallop Fishery Area 1) with an estimated legal-sized (> 85 mm SL) biomass of 21,624 t and two lower east coast beds (Scallop Fishery Area 5) with an estimated legal-sized (> 90 mm SL) biomass of 16,608 t (Semmens *et al.*, 2023b).

Scallop Fishery Area 5 subsequently opened to fishing in late June 2022, with the TAC set at 3,495 t. However, again there had been a major die-off post survey and only 604 t was landed from this area due to predominately poor quality and poor recovery. However, Scallop Fishery Area 1 opened to fishing in early July under the established TAC, which was increased in October to 4,495 t, with a total of 2,793 t landed from that area.

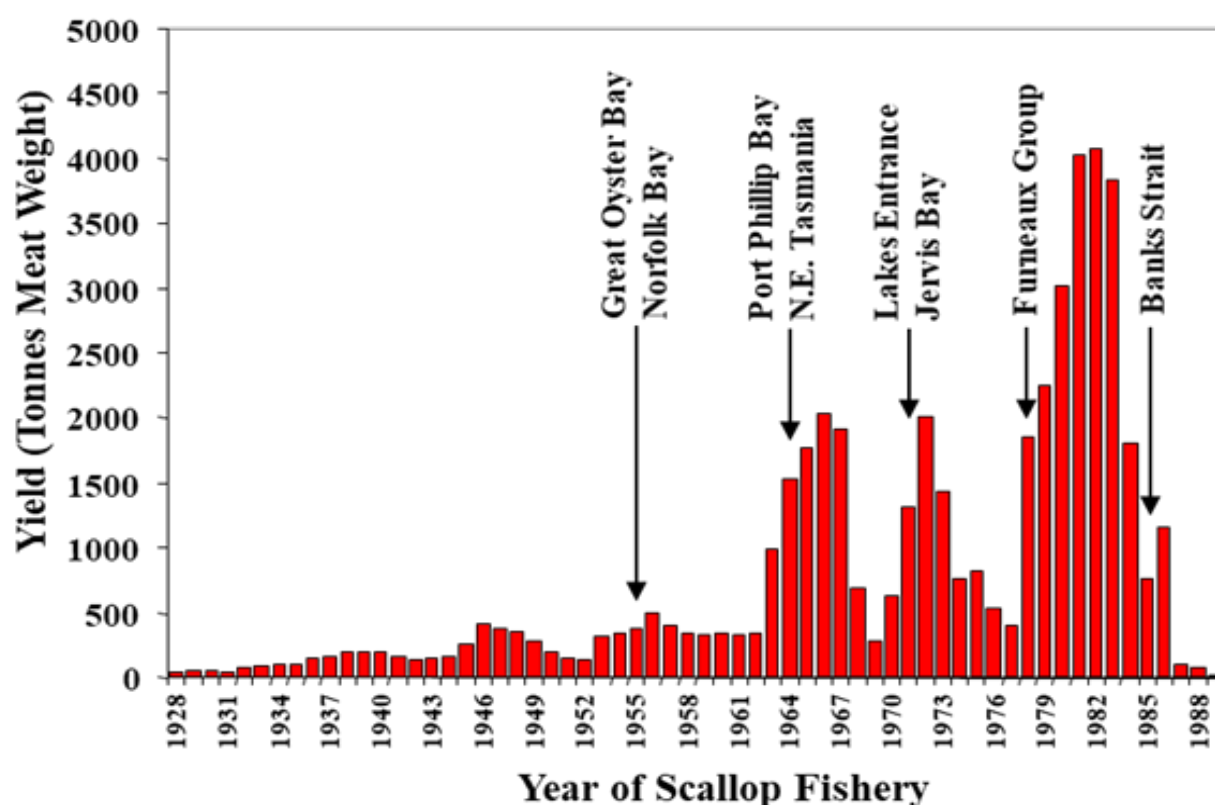
Notably, surveys since the most recent fishery closure (2016-2020) have shown evidence of wide-scale recruitment that has occurred during the closure period and fishing has occurred in 2021 and 2022, although this has been hampered somewhat by sudden bed die-off events in the eastern portion of the fishery, which may become more common with warming waters from the east Australian current pushing further southward and predicted heatwave events.

# 1. Introduction

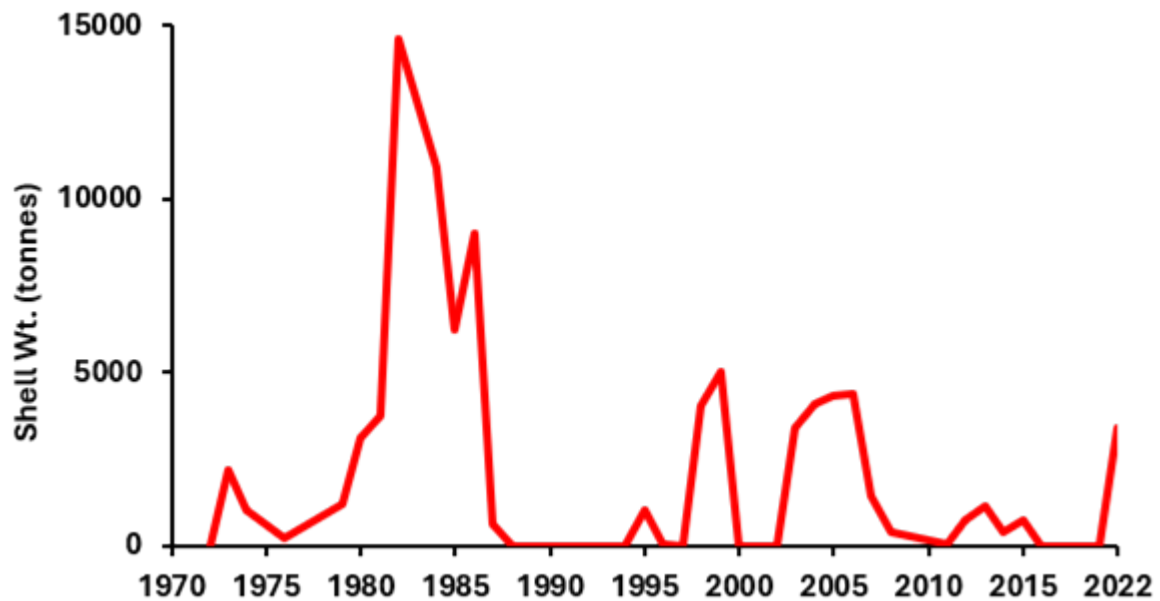
## History of the TSF

The Tasmanian scallop fishery began as a recreational fishery in the Derwent Estuary in the early 1900s. A commercial fishery developed in 1919 and in the ensuing 5 years expanded rapidly and moved to target beds in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. At the time, the loss of stocks in the Derwent were attributed to flooding and predation by crabs and starfish, however, over-fishing, industrial pollution and siltation from land-use practises are likely to have played a role in subsequent declines.

The northern beds in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel were closed amid concerns of over-fishing in 1925, then were re-opened, then were closed again in 1930, and again re-opened. Sharp declines in catches in the Channel in the 1940s were attributed to over-fishing and poor recruitment, and the fishery began exploiting east coast stocks (Figure 1). By the 1970s east coast stocks were severely depleted and effort shifted to large scallop beds off the Furneaux Island Group in Bass Strait by the late 1970s (Figure 1). Landings and numbers of vessels increased rapidly (Figures 1 & 2), with 12,000 t (live weight) taken in Bass Strait in 1983 by 231 vessels. By the late 1980s these beds were also severely depleted; in fact there were virtually no productive scallop grounds left in southern Australian (Caton and McLoughlin, 2004) (Figures 1 & 2).



**Figure 1.** Commercial catches, as total meat weights, of *P. fumatus* from Bass Strait and Tasmanian and Victorian waters from 1928 to 1989. The years when new beds were first exploited are indicated by arrows (Young *et al.*, 1988).



**Figure 2.** Commercial scallop catch (shell wt.) within the Tasmanian scallop fishery.

Stricter management arrangements commenced in the 1980s including catch history for access, allocation of fishing units, limits on vessel numbers, and fishery closures. The fishery was totally closed for 8 years from the end of 1987 until 1995 (Figure 2) to promote the rebuilding of the scallop stock. Partial recovery of the stock in some areas led the fishery to be opened for short seasons in 1995, 1996, 1998 and 1999, although the fishery again closed between 2000 and 2002 (Figure 2).

Following the introduction of 'bag' quotas in the 1990s, transferable units were introduced in 2000 to encourage restructuring in the fishery. A total of 10,730 scallop units were issued to operators and these remain in place as a fundamental component of the fishery. To limit the level of catch increasing as a result of activating effort from latent units and licences, the quota unit value was reduced effectively reducing the 'bag' quota unit value based on volume (equating to around 950 kg) to a weight-based value "kilogram scallop unit" of 500 kg. These measures reduced the total potential catch from 10,400 t (if all units were activated and used) to a more conservative level of 5,350 t.

In 2002 extensive areas of scallops were identified off Flinders Island (Furneaux Island group), however, the fishery remained closed as most of these scallops were undersize. Regardless, this generated a high level of interest in the fishery indicating that it was highly probable that most scallop licences would be activated, and most scallop units would be seasonally transferred. This created the potential for catch to exceed 4200 t and the trigger point relating to capacity of active licences being reached. DPIPWE took a proactive approach, and the scallop unit value was reduced from 500 kg to 400 kg prior to the commencement of the fishery opening in June 2003. The change reduced the maximum potential catch from 5,350 t to 4,280 t. While the industry accepted that there were no guarantees that they would catch their quota each season, DPIPWE considered it created an expectation for the opening of all areas that fulfilled the discard criteria in the immediate season.

After the fishery experienced considerable difficulties in re-establishing markets after being a long period of total fishery closure (1999 to June 2003), a spatial management strategy was refined to focus on providing for continuity of fishing seasons. This continues to be a primary aim of the management of the fishery. The intention was to develop harvesting plans for potential open areas, ranking the order in which particular areas could be opened including, where feasible, reserve areas to ensure fishing seasons 2-3 years into the future.



In 2003, three areas were opened under the spatial management strategy, east of Flinders Island, Banks Strait (stretch of water between north-eastern Tasmanian and the Furneaux Island group) and Eddystone Point (east coast), with the 30 participating operators catching 3324.5 t of the 4146.4 t TAC (10366 units at 400kg per unit). Similarly, in 2004, three areas were opened, St Helens Point to Schouten Island (east coast), then Eddystone Point and Marion Bay (east coast), with all of the 4146.4 t TAC caught by the 24 participating operators (see Table 1). For both seasons, period and trip limits were used to limit catch.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Tasmanian scallop fishery 2003-2015. \*Denotes that operators were also able to apply for an extra 50kg/unit to be caught off Flinders Island in 2005.

| Year | TAC     | Operators | Days fished | Catch tonnes |
|------|---------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 2003 | 4146.4  | 30        | 1010        | 3324.5       |
| 2004 | 4146.4  | 24        | 1402        | 4159.5       |
| 2005 | 4146.4* | 25        | 1642        | 4329.0       |
| 2006 | 4146.4  | 24        | 1386        | 4359.3       |
| 2007 | 4253.2  | 20        | 634         | 1390.9       |
| 2008 | 4253.2  | 15        | 480         | 489.8        |
| 2011 | 2552.0  | 10        | 102         | 103.3        |
| 2012 | 1163.0  | 13        | 373         | 790.2        |
| 2013 | 1489.0  | 14        | 552         | 1226.0       |
| 2014 | 1240.0  | 6         | 196         | 489.0        |
| 2015 | 1033.0  | 11        | 261         | 781.2        |
| 2021 | 1494.9  | 2         | 8           | 44.5         |
| 2022 | 4495.0  | 10        | 159         | 3397.0       |

In 2005, a new management plan was introduced which allowed the Minister to set and alter the quota unit value by public notice. The alteration in unit value effectively sets the TAC for any particular year and is based on the best available stock information at that time. DPIPWE intended to use this management tool in combination with the harvesting plans discussed above to maximise the likelihood of continuous fishing years. In addition, industry restructuring resulted in a reduction of the number of licences to 92 by 2005. In 2005, the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) advised that surveys had not indicated signs of significant recruitment of scallops and that the amount of known harvestable scallop stocks was likely to be less than the cumulative TAC over the next few years. To assist in meeting the objective of continuous fishing years, and to continue stock rebuilding, DPIPWE adopted a precautionary approach and reduced the TAC to 3628.1 t (by altering the unit value to 350 kg, with 10366 units) for the 2005 season.

Four areas were opened in 2005, Eddystone Point, Marion Bay, Paddy's Head to Schouten Island (east coast), and east of Flinders Island. Surveys conducted before fishing demonstrated that the scallop abundance east of Flinders Island was declining rapidly through natural mortality. In response, DPIPWE allocated an additional 50kg to the unit values, taking it back up to 400kg per unit, with operators also able to apply for an extra 50kg/unit to be caught off Flinders Island. A temporary legal minimum size of 80 mm shell length was also set for the east coast of Flinders Island. These measures were intended to ensure that fishers could maximise the east Flinders Island beds before they were completely lost through natural mortality. For all areas combined, 4329.0 t was caught in 2005, by 25 operators.

In 2006, White Rock (east coast) was initially opened, then Cape Lodi to Wardlaws Point (east coast). The 24 participating operators caught all the 4146.4 t TAC. Figures 3 to 6 below show the catch and effort for 2006 compared to more recent seasons (2011-2015), as 2006 was the first year that White Rock was fished since the reopening of the fishery in 2003. White Rock has been the most consistent site of the fishery in recent years (2011-2015) (Figure 3) but has produced

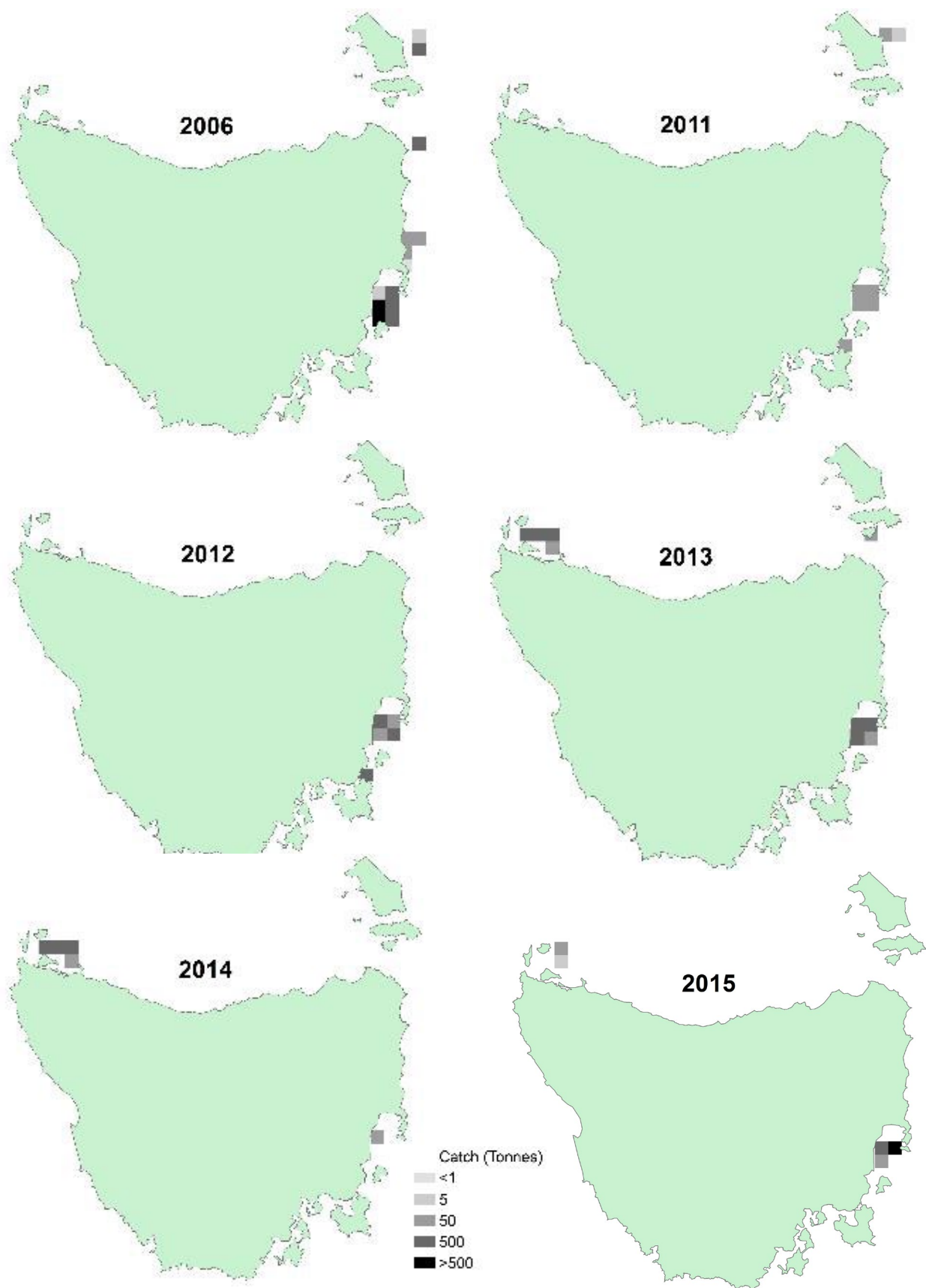
significantly smaller catches than those in 2006. In 2007, initially a small area around Eddystone Point was open, with a larger area in Banks Strait subsequently opened. Only 1390.9 t of the 4253.2 t TAC was caught, marking the beginning of the first downturn in catches, corresponding to declining stocks, since the fishery re-opened in 2003. In 2008, the stocks declined further, and there was no significant recruitment. However, two areas were opened, one-off Bicheno (east coast) and another in Marion Bay. Pre-season scallop surveys found the two open areas contained low densities of large scallops in good condition. The two open areas had been fished a number of times since 2003 and the scallops available for harvest were residual scallops from previous seasons with no evidence of recruitment to these beds. Despite this, the fishery was opened with a TAC of 4253.2 TAC, but a ministerial warning was issued that it was highly unlikely the TAC would be taken. This warning proved correct, with only 489.8 t caught by the 15 participating operators.

The Tasmanian fishery was closed to fishing in 2009–10 due to low abundance and small average sizes (below the minimum size).

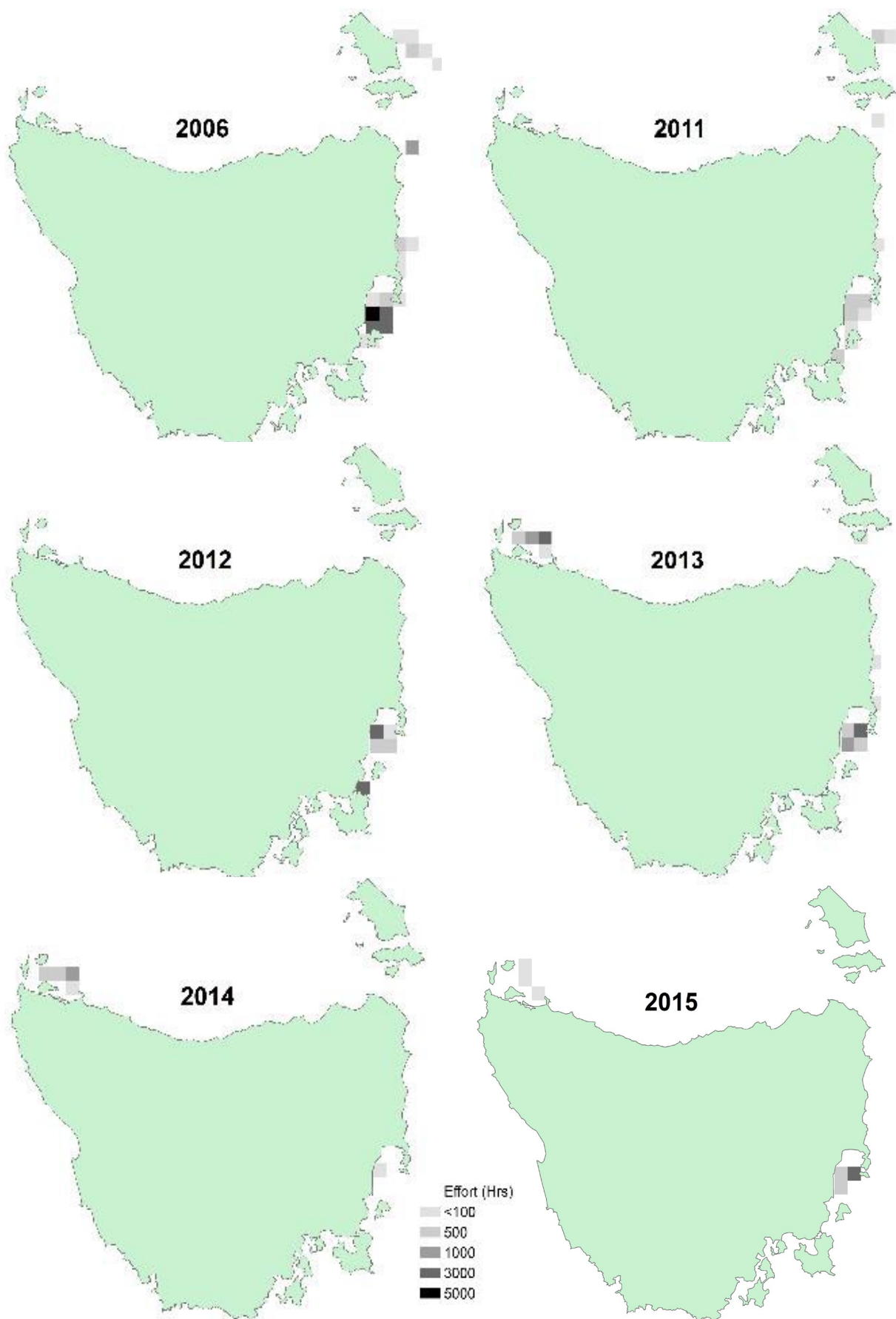
The fishery opened again in 2011 (see Figures 3-6) after a survey in White Rock indicated some stock recovery in this region of the fishery. The TAC was set at 2552 t, however, after opening the fishery, it was found that the beds had suffered a large die-off, and very little fishing took place in the White Rock region (Figure 3). Only 103 t catch was taken in 2011, and this came from a state-wide survey that failed to identify significant new scallop beds.

In 2012 Marion Bay was initially opened with a TAC of 525 t. The White Rock area was opened later, and the TAC increased to 1163 t, however, the season was abandoned due to a toxic algal bloom on the east coast, with a total of 790 t of scallops landed for the season by the 13 participating operators.

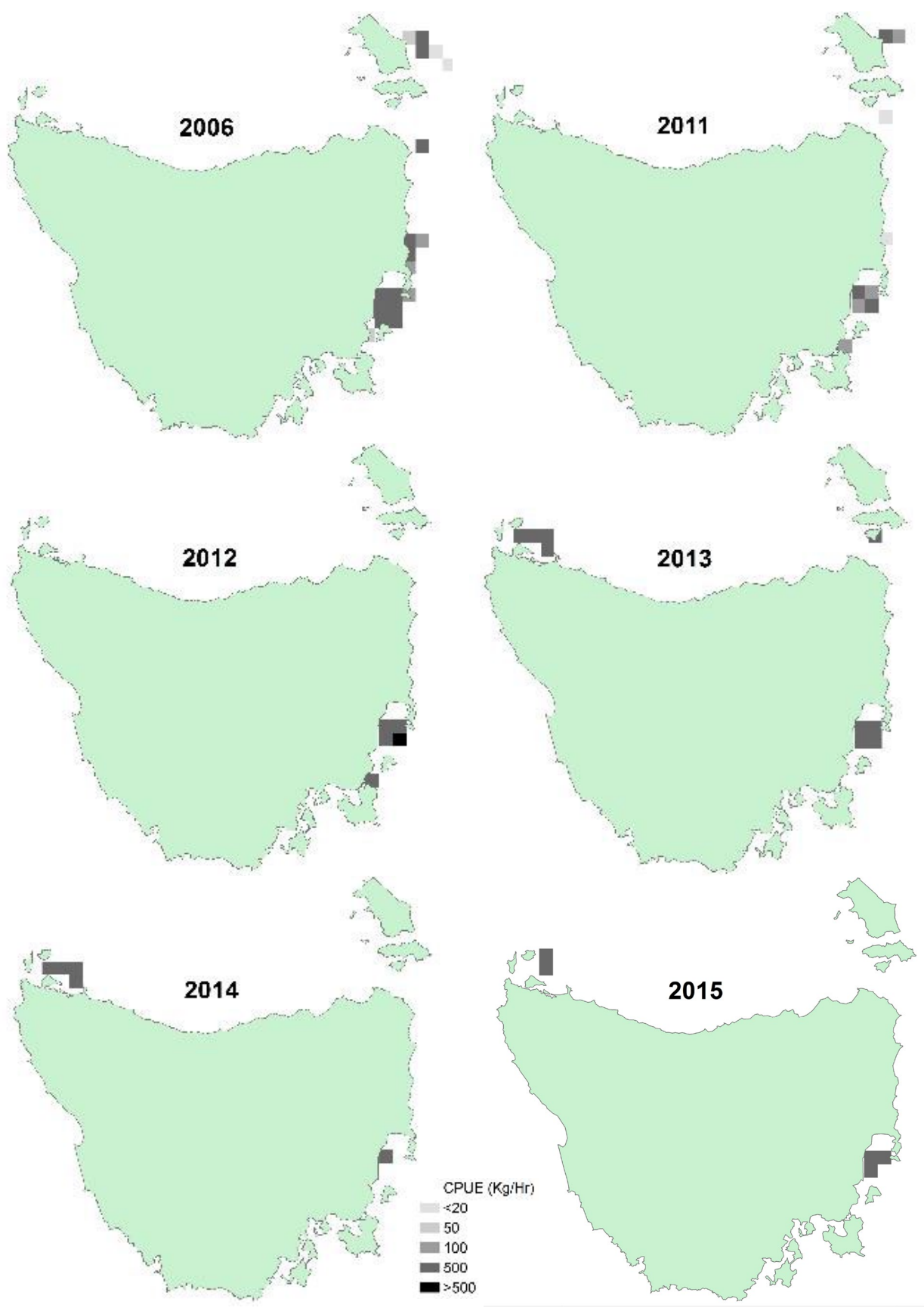
In 2013, 2014 and 2015 (see Figures 3-6) industry surveys found low scallop densities and limited evidence of successful recent recruitment other than two beds with commercial quantities. One was in the Circular Head region on the north-west coast and the other in the White Rock region. These areas were subsequently opened to fishing each year between 2013 and 2015 (Figure 3). A lower minimum size limit (85 mm SL) was applied to the north-west bed (and has been applied in subsequent years) given the historically slow growth rates in this region and the fact that most scallops of this size are still 3+ years old (Martin *et al.*, 1988).



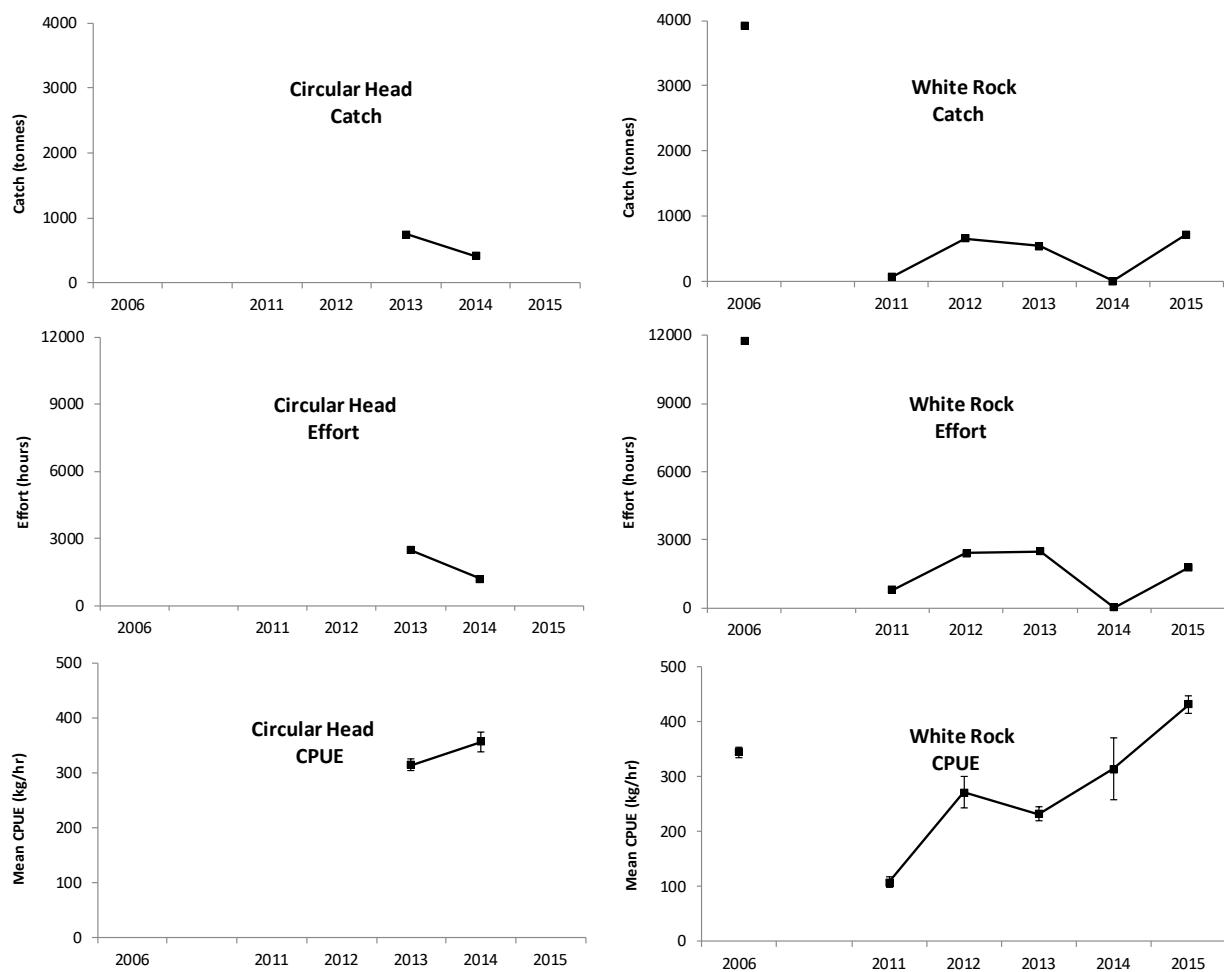
**Figure 3.** Distribution of catch (tonnes) for 2006 and for the 2011 to 2015 seasons by block.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of effort (hours) for 2006 and for the 2011 to 2015 seasons by block.



**Figure 5.** Regional CPUE (kg/hr) for 2006 and for the 2011 to 2015 seasons by block.



**Figure 6.** Catch (tonnes), Effort (hours), and mean CPUE (kg/hr) for 2006 and for the 2011 to 2015 seasons. CPUE error bars are standard error.

A voluntary industry closure was implemented in July 2013 for a portion of the east coast bed when a large aggregation of sub-legal scallops was discovered in the northern section of the fishing area. The 2013 season was originally opened with a TAC of 638 t, which was later increased to 1063 t, and then to 1489 t, following in-season surveys, with 1226 t harvested by the 14 operators participating. Similarly, a TAC of 620 t was set in 2014, but later increased to 1240 t. However, only 489 t was caught, with 6 operators participating. Most of the catch (404 t) came from the Circular Head region, which had average scallop densities of almost twice those of the White Rock region when surveyed. Again in 2015, the initial TAC (620 t) was increased during the season, with only 781 t of the final 1033 t TAC taken, with 11 operators participating. Seven hundred and seventeen t came from the White Rock region, which had average scallop densities of almost twice those of the north-west bed when surveyed. However, it should be noted that two different vessels returned different scallop densities and size frequency distributions for the same area of the White Rock region surveyed in 2015, with the second survey showing a lower density and greater percentage of sub-legal scallops (greater than the 20% allowed under the decision rules).

Through 2014–17 market supply was maintained from the Commonwealth Bass Strait central zone scallop fishery (BSCZSF) which had significantly greater stocks than those for the Tasmanian fishery at this time. Most licensees in the Tasmanian fishery also operate in the Commonwealth fishery. As such, some of the uncaught TAC in the Tasmanian fishery during this period may have been caused by a shift in effort to Commonwealth waters, where scallops were more abundant. Given the more abundant resource in the BSCZSF, industry state-wide surveys were only

conducted within known scallop beds on the state's east coast in 2016 (White Rock and Marion Bay regions), with no knowledge of the status of beds elsewhere in the state. In 2017, the White Rock and Marion Bay regions were again surveyed, along with Circular Head and the Flinders Island regions. For both years, the surveys generally only found very low levels of scallop abundance and limited evidence of successful recruitment, with no area considered to contain commercially viable quantities. This included the White Rock and Circular Head beds fished between 2013 and 2015, which appeared to have been fished down to commercially unviable densities, with no subsequent recruitment evident.

Based on these previous pre-season surveys, ScFAC advised the minister not to open the Tasmanian commercial scallop fishery in both 2018 and 2019 and stock status of the TSF remained classified as depleted. However, the pre-season dredge survey conducted in May-June 2020 (Ewing and Semmens 2020) offered evidence of recruitment across several areas of the fishery, including White Rock, the east coast of Tasmania and the Flinders Island region.

The 2020 dredge survey covered all six state-wide survey areas (note that sub-areas were removed post 2020, see Figure 7). Overall, low densities, suggested that Area 1 could not support a commercial dredge fishery at the time of the survey and that the area had not yet recovered to levels prior to it being fished between 2013 and 2015 (Circular Head Region). Densities in Area 2, the western region of Area 3, Area 5, and sub-area 6C yielded uniformly very low densities of legal-size scallops, with very few scallops encountered across all dredge tows. The average density of scallops in Area 4 was moderate, with a high discard rate at 90mm of 32%. Even though a few small beds of higher density were encountered inshore off Ansons Bay and the Gardens, the eastern side of Flinders Island (Babel Island and Pot Boil) yielded more consistent beds of a moderate density. While Area 4 yielded a much higher density of legal-sized scallops than when it was last sampled in the 2017 pre-season survey, the 2020 distribution of scallops was patchy with a strong representation of undersize classes. This evidence of new recruits across Area 4 was a potential good sign for the future of the fishery.

White Rock (sub-area 6A) survey tows yielded an average density of 21 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>, with a discard rate of 7.5%. Densities in the Marion Bay (6B) sub-area were lower than White Rock (6A), with an average density of 8.3 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>. The discard rate of 15.6% in sub-area 6B was twice that of 6A. The improved density of scallops encountered in 6A and 6B in the 2020 survey, compared with the last two pre-season surveys, is likely to be due to four years of stock-rebuilding from the closure of the fishery since the 2015 season. However, despite the increase in density since the 2017 survey, the moderate (6A) and low (6B) density areas were highly spatially restricted, i.e., patchy, as was likely the limited recruitment in these areas. Along with the dredge survey, a towed underwater video camera was used to assess scallop densities and size frequency in survey sub-area 6A (White Rock) in May and June 2020 (Semmens *et al.*, 2020). Higher density sites were highly spatially restricted, i.e., patchy. Size structure from video transects showed strong representation of sub-legal scallops (58.9% at the 90 mm legal-size) and a mean size <90 mm. Along with the discreet patches of higher densities, the high proportion of sub-legal scallops throughout the survey area, clearly demonstrated that there has been recruitment during the closure of survey sub-area 6A (and the entire TSF) since the 2015 fishing season. Furthermore, there are potential good signs for the future, with clear evidence of new recruits.

While the 2020 surveys raised the possibility of stock recovery around the state, based on the overall low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops in the dredge survey and the results of the IMAS fishery-independent video survey conducted in Great Oyster Bay, ScFAC advised the minister not to open the Tasmanian commercial scallop fishery in 2020. It should be noted that since 2014 (including 2020) market supply has been maintained by the Commonwealth Bass Strait central zone scallop fishery (BSCZSF), which has held significantly greater stocks than those for the Tasmanian fishery during this time period. The Victorian Ocean Scallop Fishery was also open in 2020.

The 2021 dredge survey covered several locations of the east coast of Tasmania, specifically White Rock, The Gardens, Pot Boil and North and South Babel. Only targeted surveys were conducted in 2021, no exploratory dredge surveys were conducted.

White Rock targeted dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 15.6 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 14.2 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 5.67% (Ewing *et al.*, 2021). Results from the video survey yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 30.4 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 27.2 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 30.5% (Semmens *et al.*, 2023a). Higher representation of smaller scallops in the video survey is expected and reflects the size selectivity of commercial scallop dredges.

The low to moderate densities of legal-sized scallops in the 2021 survey were similar to those encountered in the 2020 pre-season survey. The lower proportions of sub-legal scallops and higher average sizes relative to the 2020 survey reflect growth into the fishery of the standing crop of scallops but may also indicate reduced stock recruitment.

A low dredge survey discard rate, a decline in the video survey discard rate and high average size indicate that the White Rock region has significantly less undersize scallops in 2021. However, given the lack of recent recruitment, low to medium densities of legal-sized scallops and the history of openings and closures in this area, the merits of opening White Rock in 2021 needed to be given careful consideration, noting the depleted status of the Tasmanian scallop fishery. As such, ScFAC advised the minister not to open the White Rock region (Scallop Area 5) and instead Scallop Area 3 (eastern side of Flinders Island) opened to fishing in September 2021, the first season since 2015, with the TAC set at 1494.9 t. However, there had been a major die-off post survey, most likely due to a warm-water incursion in the Flinders Island area and only 44.5 t was landed due to poor quality and recovery. The remainder of the Scallop Fishery Areas remained closed.

The 2022 pre-season survey program was comprised of targeted (Scallop Areas 1 and 5) and exploratory (Scallop Areas 1, 3, 4 and 5) commercial dredge surveys and an IMAS video survey (Scallop Area 5) yielding density and size structure in the fishery areas (see Semmens *et al.*, 2023b). In contrast to previous years, White Rock (Area 5) and the North West (Area 1) regions were each divided into four equal-sized sub-areas to ensure a more even sampling design. As for 2021, a random survey was designed, where shots were randomly assigned in each of the sub-areas. White rock was also subject to a video survey prior to the targeted dredge survey, allowing for comparative results.

The exploratory surveys showed that while Scallop Areas 3 and 4 only had low densities of scallops, Areas 1 and 2 had medium density beds and as a result were further examined with targeted surveys. The North West (Area 1) targeted dredge survey tows (52) yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 36.61 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>, with a discard rate of 38.7%. Note, however, that two of the four sub-areas had high densities (Area 1, Sub-area 1: 65.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>; Area 1, Sub-area 2: 52.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>). The White Rock (Area 5) targeted dredge survey tows (52) yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 22.3 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>, with a discard rate of 3.1%. Scallop Fishery Area 1 had an estimated legal-sized (> 85 mm SL) biomass of 21,624 t. The White Rock targeted video survey tows (52) yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 30.0 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>, with a discard rate of 5.0%. Note, however, that two of the four sub-areas had high densities (Area 5, Sub-area 1: 47.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>; Area 5, Sub-area 2: 63.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>). Scallop Fishery Area 5, encompassing White Rock and Marion Bay, had an estimated legal-sized (> 90 mm SL) biomass of 16,608 t (13,413 in White Rock).

The 2022 scallop season saw a new management rule introduced, where to open one of the six Scallop Fishery Areas for harvest with a total allowable catch (TAC) equal to or greater than 1,000 t, an area with a minimum estimated biomass of 1,000 t of scallop with a 'medium' density (~ 0.6 scallops/m<sup>2</sup>) that meets the discard criteria must be closed to commercial fishing for the entire season as a spawning biomass closure. To open a Scallop Fishery Area with a TAC less than 1,000 t, a spawning biomass closure equivalent to the TAC must be established.

Scallop Fishery Area 5 subsequently opened to fishing in late June 2022, with the TAC set at 3,495 t. However, again there had been a major die-off post survey and only 604 t was landed from this area due to predominately poor quality and poor recovery. However, Scallop Fishery Area 1 opened to fishing in early July under the established TAC, which was increased in



October to 4,495 t, with a total of 2,793 t landed from that area. Note that despite the majority of the fishery moving to the north west (Area 1), one fisher remained in Area 5 all season, as fishing was still profitable for them given short travel times and larger scallops being available, although in low numbers.

Notably, surveys since the most recent fishery closure (2016-2020) have shown evidence of wide-scale recruitment that has occurred during the closure period and fishing has occurred in 2021 and 2022, although this has been hampered somewhat by sudden bed die-off events in the eastern portion of the fishery, which may become more common with warming waters from the east Australian current pushing further southward and predicted heatwave events. Note however, that recruitment events post the recent closure have been limited and will be needed in the coming years to continue the recovery of the fishery.

### **New research**

#### **FRDC 2021/010: Wider investigation of the use of video survey techniques to determine commercial scallop abundance in inshore and offshore waters, closed areas and juvenile beds.**

This project began in 2022 and is based on meeting the following need: Commercial scallop is fished by dredging in three jurisdictions, with Tasmania (TSF) and Victoria currently depleted. The third jurisdiction, the BSCZSF, closes some scallop beds to fishing while the rest of the fishery remains open for harvesting. The closed beds and the TAC are informed by an annual dredge survey. These surveys also give an indication of recruitment within the fishery. However, the size selectivity of the dredges is not considered in this process, which may result in an under-estimation of recruitment. The need to minimise disturbance to juvenile beds to reduce mortality of small scallops through survey activities is also a consideration. Currently the only options for known juvenile scallop beds are to not survey them or to conduct a minimal number of dredge shots, noting that commercial dredges do not effectively sample juveniles. The TSF only opens a small area of the fishery following annual dredge surveys, with the remainder closed. However, the issue of the estimation of recruitment and sensitivity of juveniles to dredging during surveys and fishing is still relevant, as only those beds with > 80% legal sized scallops are opened. Comparison of TSF 2020 video survey results with dredge survey results demonstrated much greater size selectivity by scallop dredges for legal-sized scallops than was previously thought, such that relying on dredge surveys alone to inform management decisions may be jeopardising the sustainability of the fishery. Along with the need to define the size distribution of scallop beds more accurately within the fishing zones, both Tasmania and the Commonwealth have areas closed to scallop fishing that contain an unknown scallop biomass that may contribute to recruitment. AFMA and Tasmanian DPIWWE resource managers and industry members are committed to further investigating and optimising the use of towed video surveys to provide a survey method for both inshore and offshore waters to estimate both legal and sub-legal scallop density/biomass in fishery zones, as well as areas closed to dredging and known juvenile beds, which will in turn inform management decisions, such as area closures and setting of TACs, and contribute to more sustainable fisheries. As such, this project aims to further compare dredge and video survey methods, propose an optimal design of a video survey platform and data analysis regime for commercial scallops in both inshore and offshore waters in multiple jurisdictions, and develop pathways to adoption.

### **Key previous research**

#### **FRDC 2012/027: Determining when and where to fish: Linking scallop spawning, settlement, size and condition to collaborative spatial harvest and industry in-season management strategies.**

This project defined timing of scallop spawning based on gonad condition, and hence potential settlement of recruits across the different populations/beds of the fishery and determine any differences in spawning potential among scallop beds/locations. Additionally, this project defined

differences in spawning potential between scallops ranging from 80 to 90 mm SL and assessed the size limits used to define a bed as commercially viable across the three southeast Australian jurisdictions. Furthering our understanding of growth rate in several fishing locations across all three jurisdictions allowed better management of individual beds and use of scallop condition in setting season openings and closings (Semmens *et al.*, 2019).

Changes in muscle weight, gonad weight and meat recovery weight (combined meat and gonad weight) varied through the season and the gametogenic cycle, but this relationship is affected by year. There was no common trend in changes in muscle, gonad, and combined weight across areas, instead the changes are area-specific and year-specific and can vary considerably. The differences were of such a magnitude that each area requires research prior to harvesting. This is particularly relevant in the TSF, when only relatively small areas of the fishery are opened at any one time and the remainder of the fishery is closed, although the adaptive in-season management model in this fishery (i.e., open area boundaries can be changed during the season) can overcome this issue in some circumstances. In the BSCZSF and OSF, given only relatively small areas of the fishery are closed during the fishing season or the entire fishery is opened, respectively, there may be a greater opportunity for scallop fishers to find beds with higher muscle, gonad and combined weights, although this of course relies on fisher behaviour and is dependent on the number of different beds available, with limited to no scallop beds available for harvest in the OSF for over two decades. Furthermore, without adaptive in-season management, which is the case in the BSCZSF (i.e., spatial closures are not adjusted during the fishing season), there is the potential for the best quality scallops to be 'locked-up' in spatial closures for the entire season.

Maturity stages identified macroscopically did not consistently match the maturity stages identified by histological sampling. Apart from macroscopic stage 2, which comprised scallops with predominantly gonads in the developing stage, the other macroscopic stages showed a mixture of reproductive stages. Therefore, while the macroscopic staging scheme is useful to derive a general indication of gonad condition, it does not accurately reflect the maturity stage in the ovary.

Based on microscopic observations compared to macroscopic examination of gonads, three visual stages are described based on the morphological appearance of the gonad to the naked eye: Developing or spent; maturing or atretic (reabsorbing eggs as spawning is delayed); and partially spawned. Fishing in the Commonwealth predominately takes place in the beds or regions surveyed before the season commences. Similarly, the TSF only opens to fishing surveyed areas that meet the management plan. While the OSF does not use surveys to determine open areas, as it is not a spatially managed fishery, fishing generally occurs in traditional areas, which will have variable gonad development and spawning timings within and between them. As such, the simple three stage visual classification system developed in this project is useful to both scallop resource managers and industry, as part of in-season management strategies, to define the overall reproductive stage of scallops and predict timing of spawning, thus assisting in the best condition scallop beds being fished sequentially throughout the season.

Collection of data on scallop condition, reproductive stages and settlement rates collectively can help inform best timing for season opening and closing dates in each location. The information available from this study and previous studies, suggest that the Lakes Entrance region, which comprises the majority of the OSF, would profit from an early start during winter. However, note that the OSF is currently considered depleted and has not had significant catches in over two decades. This in part may be attributable to the fact that the fishery has historically been open continuously throughout the year, including the settlement period. At White Rock in the TSF, starting the fishery in September would appear more beneficial in terms of harvesting the best product, although this may not fit best with protecting newly settled scallops, and may in part explain why this area has not supported a fishery in recent years and is now classified as depleted. At the Bass Strait site in the eastern section of the BSCZSF, the best time to fish appears to be spring and summer/autumn. Fishing up to the closing date of December 31 may not fit best with protecting newly settled scallops, with the major settlement period occurring in spring, and again may in part explain why this area has not been viable in recent years. At King Island, in the BSCZSF, the best time to fish appears to be spring and summer, however, settlement occurs from approximately November to January.

Fecundity increased exponentially with SL and modelling predicted that a scallop measuring 90 mm in shell length would be 13 and 25% more fecund than an 85 and 80 mm scallop, respectively. Furthermore, an 80 mm scallop would be 44% more fecund than a scallop measuring 70 mm in SL. Scallops measuring 100 mm in SL would produce 32% more eggs than a scallop measuring 90 mm. These differences are less dramatic than previous findings where 3+ years old scallops measuring ~90 mm SL shed (3.5 million eggs on average) compared to 2 million eggs shed by scallop measuring ~83 mm SL (a 57% difference compared to 19% estimated in this study). This result of the current study showing a much smaller difference in fecundity in scallops of various sizes compared to previous findings, is a very important finding in relation to the decision rules around scallop harvest, particularly the under-sized discard rate rule and the two spawnings criteria which states that scallops should be allowed a minimum of two major spawning events before being harvested. Scallops that are 85-95 mm SL are 3+ years old and have had two major spawning and thus contributed significantly to potential recruitment. However, given the relationship between fecundity and SL demonstrated in this study, which shows a 3-fold decline in the difference between fecundity of an 83 and 90 mm SL scallop compared to the previous research, the size limits are very conservative. As such, the use of 85 mm SL still allows the scallops to have produced two major spawnings before harvest, with relatively little difference between the fecundity of 85 and 90 mm SL scallops (13%). However, it should be noted that in regions that have very low biomass or are recovering from being depleted (e.g., TSF), this additional 13% could be significant, and a highly conservative approach may be warranted. Furthermore, it should be noted that the 80 mm SL size limit used for the decision rules in the OSF is likely not appropriate, as it is outside of the size range for the two major spawnings criteria and should be revisited, with this low size limit perhaps contributing to the long history of limited biomass and recruitment in the fishery.

Differences in shell morphology were evident among regions, with significant differences between the standardised height for a standard scallop measuring 90 mm SL. However, differences in morphology were more evident among locations when comparing shell widths for standard scallops measuring 90 mm SL. Northwest Tasmania (TSF) and Great Bay (TRSF) had comparatively thinner individuals, followed by King Island (BSCZSF), Banks Strait (TSF), Marion Bay (TSF) and White Rock (TSF). Scallops from Babel Island (TSF and BSCZSF) showed no significant differences in shell width with Eddystone (TSF) or the Bass Strait (BSCZSF) site. Scallops located in Victoria (OSF) had the thickest scallops. For fisheries management purposes it is interesting to determine if scallops with greater SW also have greater muscle and/or gonad weights. Indeed, the Victorian (OSF) site had the thickest (deepest) scallops, and these scallops generally had the heaviest muscles, gonads, and combined weights in winter of all the regions. Additionally, other thick scallop regions, Isthmus Bay (TRSF) and Eddystone Point (TSF), also had heavy muscles, gonads, and combined weights in winter. Furthermore, the relatively thick scallops from the Bass Strait (BSCZSF) site had heavy muscles, gonads, and combined weights in autumn. Fishing these areas (when opened) in the seasons noted could increase commercial yields.

Scallops at different sites showed variable mean growth increments depending on initial mean size of cohorts. There was no obvious growth pattern on the latitudinal gradient. For instance, sites at the extreme north (North Flinders and King Island, both in the BSCZSF) and south (Great Bay, TRSF) of Tasmania showed average mean growth increments. Low and high values of growth were observed in sites that are close to each other in the BSCZSF (1.9 and 9.20 mm/year for King Island Middle and King Island 2 respectively). Therefore, growth variations seem to be associated with local factors rather than factors linked with large spatial scale change, which has also been observed for other species of scallop. This growth analysis has shown that there is great variation in growth rates of commercial scallop across the traditional fishing areas within the southeast of Australia, with great variation even prevalent between beds in the same area, e.g., King Island (BSCZSF) and East Flinders Island (TSF).

Importantly, however, this analysis has shown that the fishing areas examined can be generally grouped into three general groups: rapid growers; moderate growers; and slow growers. Rapid growers will be younger than their shell length indicates, so those scallops may not be 3+ at 85-95 mm SL and may not have had three major spawnings. As such, despite the relationship between size and fecundity showing that the 90 mm size limit is very conservative, it may not be for these rapidly growing scallops, and perhaps a more conservative approach is needed, particularly as the

size limit used in the BSCZSF, where the two North Flinders fishing areas are located, is 85 mm SL. Alternatively, if a validated aging technique can be developed for commercial scallops, this should be adopted to ensure scallops are only fished from the 3+ age class onwards. It is interesting to note that three rapid growing areas are North and Northwest Flinders (BSCZSF) and White Rock (TSF), all areas that have shown large reductions in biomass, with little or no recruitment in recent years. The TSF had plans to use an 85 mm SL size limit from 2020 onwards, however, based on this research, the 90 mm SL size limit was maintained.

Note that as previously mentioned, there is great variability with areas, with Flinders Island 1 (BSCZSF), which like North and Northwest Flinders is also situated north of Flinders Island, showing slow growth. Two other slow growing areas are at King Island (KI 2 and KI New, BSCZSF), with King Island Mid (BSCZSF) showing moderate growth. The slow growing scallops will be older than their shell length indicates, and as such 90 mm SL minimum size is likely to be very conservative. The King Island sites are in the BSCZSF, and as such currently managed under an 85 mm SL size limit, which would appear very appropriate, but likely to be highly conservative. This may be a key factor in the fact that this region has been maintaining very high biomasses despite the fishery operating in the region since 2014 and ~12500 t coming out of the area (west of 147 degrees east) in that time. Although note that the Northwest region in Tasmania is fished with an 85 mm SL size limit rule, as fishers nominated this area as a slow growing scallop area, however it has undergone a large decline in biomass, following no recruitment in recent seasons.

In those areas with slow growing scallops, closing beds based on the 20% discard rule may mean that some beds that have 80% or greater of the scallops within it having reached 3+ and having had at least two major spawnings may be inadvertently closed, and as such this rule will be very conservative in these areas. Conversely, the opposite will apply in fast growing areas, with beds that have less than 80% of the scallops within it having reached 3+ and having had at least two major spawnings being inadvertently opened, and as such this rule is not met in these, which could have an impact on the sustainability of fisheries in these areas. As such, defined use of the minimum size limit and 20% discard rule is not appropriate, and instead they should be used in conjunction with the known attributes of the beds within region to be fished and applied in an informed and sensible manner such that recruitment potential is not impacted. If a validated aging method can be developed for commercial scallops, the 20% discard rule will be able to be applied with greater confidence.

### **FRDC 2008/022: Establishing fine-scale industry based spatial management and harvest strategies for the commercial scallop fishery in South East Australia.**

FRDC 2008/022 examined scallop stock structure, spawning biomass density/recruitment relationships, and the impacts of intensive fine spatial scale fishing on scallop communities with the aim of refining detailed spatial management/industry fine-scale management harvest strategies, such that they promote recruitment and minimise impacts on the broader environment (Ovenden *et al.*, 2016; Semmens *et al.*, 2015).

This project demonstrated that the south east Australian commercial scallop population is largely a genetically homogeneous single population. However, there was some evidence of population structure within Bass Strait, which has implications for management of apparently genetically linked populations in separate management jurisdictions (Tasmania, Victoria, and Commonwealth). Evidence from this study suggested that these differences may be due the effect of ocean gyres that exist in the Bass Strait and may force self-recruitment of certain beds and genetic separation from the general population of the scallops in the Strait. It is important to note that these differences may be due to genetic drift rather than spatial barriers to cross bed recruitment. This project also demonstrated that overall genetic exchange appears to be limited when distances exceed 300km and the finest scale at which genetic subdivision was found was approximately 100km. Importantly, this study demonstrates that appropriate scales of management should consider both long established patterns of dispersal and recruitment as indicated by population genetic structure, as well as short term patterns due to demographic heterogeneity. The genetic evidence indicates that stock structuring can occur within 100 km implying that yearly stock- recruitment dynamics are likely to exist on even smaller spatial scales. In other words, recovery of depleted scallop beds in

the short term will be heavily influenced by recruitment from adjacent scallop beds rather than from distant beds. This study reinforces existing knowledge based on the modelling of currents in Bass Strait (Hammond *et al.*, 1994) indicating that cross seeding of scallop beds is rare. The scale of the current spatial management harvest strategies employed in both the Commonwealth and Tasmania would seem appropriate given the genetic evidence presented here. However, the harvest strategy employed in the Commonwealth, where a proportion of known beds cannot be fished, should perhaps be considered in Tasmania, given that localised recruitment appears to be the driving process.

In accordance with research in other benthic molluscs, this project found a strong indication that the density of recruits is related to the density of adults in the previous year. In the areas studied, recruit density increased by between 2 and 10 times for every single unit of adult density prior to spawning. The density of adult spawners also has an impact on the level of synchronicity between spawning adults. This study showed a difference in spawning intensity and synchronisation between sites of high and low densities and suggests that maintaining dense areas of adult scallops may increase the probability of recruitment, through increased spawning intensity. To this end, the protection of dense scallop beds has been incorporated into the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy, with at least part of a high density bed(s) found during surveys closed to fishing during the season. Again, this may well be a strategy worth adopting in Tasmania to promote recruitment.

Analysis of data from the Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) study component of this project, which aimed to determine the impacts of commercial dredge fishing effort on the benthic communities found within scallop habitat, showed no significant effect on abundance or species composition whether or not scallop beds were fished, the level of fishing effort, the sampling year or the region sampled. This suggests that intensive fine spatial scale fishing associated with spatial management has no obvious short- to medium-term detrimental effects on scallop communities within the fishing grounds of the Commonwealth Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF). As such, allowing for beds to potentially be rotationally fished after relatively short temporal closures, if they meet the harvest strategy decision rules, may have relatively little impact on the scallop communities.

However, it is important to note that the BSCZSF has been fished since the 1970s, and the small differences in species assemblages selective to dredge fishing between fished and non-fished sites found in this study may be due to 'historical impacts' the dredge fishery may have had on the benthic community. Repeated dredging over many years may have shifted the entire community to one which is more resilient and which can withstand dredge fishing pressure as has been found in other studies (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2001). Those species that are most affected by dredging may now be too rare to be effectively sampled using dredge surveys.

Furthermore, previous studies have also shown that changes in community structure following seasonal weather events can be more significant than those changes associated with fishing (Currie and Parry, 1996). Communities within the BSCZSF are more exposed to environmental variability than other regions where commercial scallops are or have been fished, perhaps further explaining why changes in species abundance were not observed in this study, but were observed for commercial scallops in inshore waters (see Currie and Parry, 1996). Despite this, heavily fished inshore regions also show resilience to fishing, with species abundances similar to those prior to dredging within six to nine months after fishing in the Port Phillip Bay Scallop fishery (Currie and Parry, 1996), which was fished close to continually for around 30 years.

### **FRDC 2005/027: Facilitating industry self-management for spatially managed stocks: a scallop case study.**

FRDC 2005/027 established the capacity for industry to organise and implement surveys at both the scale of the fishery, and the scale of individual scallop beds (Harrington *et al.*, 2008a). These surveys are independent of direct research and management involvement. The population structure and abundance data that industry obtains during such surveys can be used by management to meet decision rules allowing the successful implementation of detailed spatial management strategies within the fishery. Furthermore, the development and use of electronic

measuring and recording devices both simplifies and adds a level of credibility to the process of data collection, storage, and analysis. The inclusion of industry in the data collection process of management also creates a sense of Industry ownership. In general, this improves the relationship and communications between all stakeholders in the fishery (industry, managers, and research), and creates both an acceptance and level of understanding of the biological and economic benefits of detailed spatial management. This belief in the benefits of spatial management has directly led to industry empowerment, with much greater roles and responsibilities in the management of their fishery.

### **FRDC 2003/017: Juvenile scallop trashing rates and bed dynamics: testing the management rules for scallops in Bass Strait.**

FRDC 2003/017 concluded that spatial closures in the management of commercial scallop stocks, where the majority of the fishery is closed to fishing and only small discrete regions of the fishery are opened to harvesting, offers a real prospect for providing continuity and sustainability for the fishery (Haddon *et al.*, 2006), especially when compared to conventional management. It also identified the very extensive data/stock information requirements of closed area spatial management (Haddon *et al.*, 2006; Harrington *et al.*, 2007). Without credible up-to-date stock information, scallop beds cannot be opened to harvesting, within season contingency plans cannot be formulated, and longer-term harvest strategies cannot be developed. This type of longer-term information and planning is essential in creating a level of certainty within the catching sector (industry), which in turn allows the development of processing infrastructure and domestic and export markets.

### **Overview of Management of the Tasmanian Scallop Fishery**

The Tasmanian commercial scallop fishery extends to 200 nm, except Bass Strait, where jurisdiction covers 3-20 nautical miles offshore (DPIPWE, 2005) (see Table 1 for a summary of the fishery). The fishery is managed by an individual transferable quota (ITQ) program, which was implemented in 1986, as well as several input controls. Since 2003, the fishery has been managed under a spatial management approach, referred to as a paddock fishery, whereby all areas are closed to fishing, except that certain areas can be opened after a stock assessment is completed. The Fisheries (Scallop) Rules 2020 (current January 2021) is a collection of detailed fishery rules governing the fishery. A draft document, *A Management of the Tasmanian Scallop Fishery – Policy and Decision Making Guidelines*, describes the framework for management of this fishery, including goals, objectives, and strategies.

This strategy specifies some main criteria that need to be satisfied for a specific area (paddock) to be opened (and remain opened) to fishing:

1. Minimum size or age – At least 80% of scallops must be greater than minimum legal size (90 mm SL) or at least 80% of scallops are ages 3+, corresponding to at least two major spawning opportunities. Alternative minimum size limits can be established, in cases where it can be established that scallops have had the opportunity to spawn at least twice prior to harvest.
2. Commercial viability – Potential fishing areas are prioritized based on anticipated economic returns, catch rates, market suitability, and estimated costs of fishing. Commercial viability is subjectively determined by the Scallop Fishery Advisory Committee (ScFAC), which is largely comprised of industry members.
3. Listing candidate open areas – The spatial management regime requires areas to be assessed to characterize population structure and extent of candidate scallop beds before being considered for commercial harvesting. Initially, statewide exploratory surveys are conducted using industry scallop vessels that can retain limited tonnages of located scallops (50 t survey area cap for six areas; 300 t State-wide, see Figure 7). If targeted surveys with an observer on board then reveal that the size structure indicates a

discard rate no larger than 20% prior to an opening, then the surveyed area can be considered as a candidate area for a fishery opening. The effect of the spatial management regime is essentially a rotational harvest system.

4. Discard threshold – If a vessel has more than two dredge tows in which  $\geq 20\%$  of scallops are less than minimum size, then the vessel should move at least 250 m. If such discard rates persist, then the coordinates should be reported for potential mitigation measures.
5. Meat recovery guideline – As a general guideline, meat recovery (adductor muscle and roe) should be  $> 11.8$  g corresponding to  $< 85$  scallops/kg.

Revised area harvest strategy criteria effective from 2022:

- Six scallop areas (Figure 7) will be considered for opening for commercial harvest following a targeted survey.
- To open an area (1-6 in Figure 7) for commercial scallop harvest with an allowable catch equal to or greater than 1,000 tonnes, an area with a minimum biomass of 1,000 tonnes of scallop that meets the discard criteria (where no more than 20% of scallops are less than the legal minimum size limit) must be closed to commercial fishing for the entire season as a spawning biomass closure.
- To open an area with an allowable catch of less than 1,000 tonnes the equivalent biomass of scallops that meets the discard criteria must be closed to commercial fishing for the entire season.
- To increase the allowable catch by 1,000 tonnes during an open season, a minimum of 80% of the allowable catch for that area must have been caught.
- To increase the allowable catch for an area where the allowable catch is less than 1,000 tonnes, a minimum of 80% of the allocated catch for that area must have been caught. If an increase takes the allowable catch to 1,000 tonnes or greater, an area with a minimum biomass of 1,000 tonnes of scallop that meets the discard criteria must be closed to commercial fishing for the remainder of the season.
- Scallop beds identified during surveys or during an open season that do not meet the discard criteria will be closed to commercial fishing; these do not contribute to the closed spawning biomass.
- A TAC increase may be considered after three months from the opening of the season in situations where 80% of allocated catch cannot be caught.
- No increase in allowable catch will be considered after 15 November.

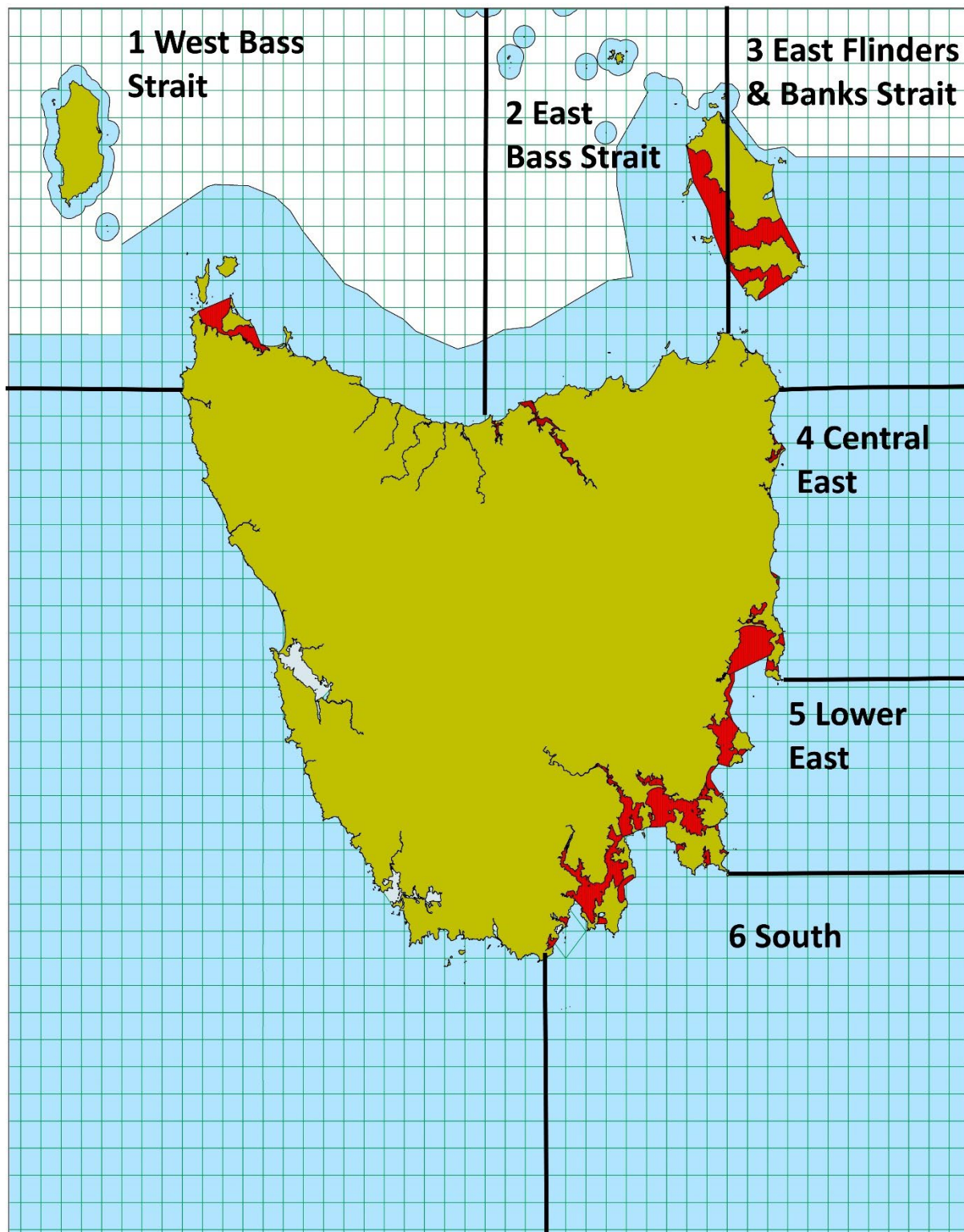
Density criteria for spawning biomass closure:

- A medium density for the area surveyed (not highest or lowest areas)
- Aiming for a target density of  $\sim 0.6$  individuals (ind)/m<sup>2</sup>
- A minimum density of 0.2 ind/m<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2:** Summary of the Tasmanian scallop fishery

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Area                                | The area of the fishery extends from the high-water mark to 20 nautical miles into Bass Strait and from the high water mark out to 200 nautical miles off the rest of the State of Tasmania.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Fishery status                      | The target species within Tasmanian waters is currently considered to be overfished.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Target Species                      | Commercial scallops ( <i>Pecten fumatus</i> ).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| By-product Species                  | Doughboy ( <i>Mimachlamys asperima</i> ).<br>Queen scallop ( <i>Equichlamys bifrons</i> ).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Gear Commercial                     | Benthic scallop dredge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Recreational/Indigenous             | Dive only – D'Entrecasteaux Channel closed to fishing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Season                              | Peak catch and effort occur between winter and spring/early summer (Fishery closes 31 December).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Primary landing ports               | Stanley, Triabunna, St Helens.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Fishing licences                    | 63                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Active vessels                      | 10 in 2022 season. Most operators also have access to one or both of the Victorian and Bass Strait Central Zone (BSCZ) scallop fisheries.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Value of commercial harvest         | Up to \$6 million, with the 2004 beach value of scallops being \$5.5 million.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Management arrangements             | Output controlled through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAC based on aggregation of 10,366 scallop bag units,</li> <li>• the Minister can set and alter the quota unit value by public notice.</li> </ul> Input controlled through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited entry (fishers must also hold a scallop entitlement) and a minimum unit holding to operate,</li> <li>• minimum size limits to allow for two spawning's,</li> <li>• spatial management regime, where most of the fishery area is closed and only certain defined areas opened if criteria met,</li> <li>• seasonal closure – fishing only allowed when scallops have reached optimum condition and to maximise recruitment,</li> <li>• limits on number, dimensions, and structure of dredges,</li> <li>• 1 April fishery opens as state-wide survey, survey period to end when an open season is declared or on 31 December.</li> </ul> |
| Export                              | Mainly a domestic market, although export grew substantially in 2005, particularly to France.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Bycatch                             | Bycatch is relatively low, consisting mostly of molluscs such as dog cockles ( <i>Glycymeris</i> sp.) and the native oyster ( <i>Ostrea angasi</i> ). Diogenid hermit crabs ( <i>Paguristes tuberculatus</i> ) and the introduced screw shell ( <i>Maoricolpus roseus</i> ) are also taken as bycatch.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Interaction with Threatened Species | Considered low, but potentially greater interactions with syngnathids. Possible minor interactions with seals, sharks, cetaceans, and seabirds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |





**Figure 7.** State-wide survey areas.

## **Recreational fishery**

Recreational fishing for scallops has a long history in Tasmanian waters and, like the commercial fishery, has been characterised by open seasons followed by extended closures for stock rebuilding. The current recreational dive-only fishery for scallops (commercial, queen, and doughboy scallops are targeted) commenced in 2006 and catches are input controlled with open seasons, closed areas, size limits, bag limits, possession limits, and a specific scallop diver recreational license. Although the entire Tasmanian coast was initially open to recreational effort, TAFI (now known as IMAS) recreational fishing surveys showed that fishing was primarily focused in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, and consequently IMAS conducted seven scallop dive surveys of the channel between 2006 and 2011. This research established that the total number of scallops in the channel declined by 87% between 2006 and 2011 (commercial scallops declined by 93%). These surveys and subsequent D'Entrecasteaux Channel surveys in 2012 (dive), 2016 (dive), 2017 (video and dive) and 2020 (video) found that no significant recruitment pulses had occurred since 2007. On this basis, the D'Entrecasteaux Channel component of the recreational fishery has been closed to fishing since 2012 and is likely to remain closed for the foreseeable future due to low abundance of juveniles.

The recreational scallop dive fishery elsewhere around the state has supported open seasons each year from 2012 and approximately 13,000 and 130,000 scallops landed in the 2013 and 2018 recreational seasons respectively, primarily from the central east coast of Tasmania (Lyle *et al.*, 2014; Lyle *et al.*, 2019).

A video survey conducted in 2022 (Ewing *et al.*, 2022) checked for signs of recovery of scallop stocks in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, and to initiate sampling in other areas exposed to recreational effort in south-east Tasmania (White Beach and Bull Bay). Commercial Scallop densities were generally low throughout the Channel, except for three sites where medium densities ( $> 0.5$  scallops/m<sup>2</sup>) were observed. Commercial scallops were present in very low densities at Bull Bay, and in medium densities at shallower sites at White Beach. The D'Entrecasteaux Channel size structure was dominated by legal-sized scallops (84%) and very few small scallops were encountered. The White Beach area size structure was also dominated by legal-sized scallops (75%) and very few small scallops were encountered. Very few scallops were encountered at Bull Bay sites and no scallops were measured.

Commercial Scallops have increased in density in the D'Entrecasteaux channel, particularly in the high current areas around Middleton and Gordon, and Satellite Island. While this is a positive sign that the stock is re-building, overall densities are still low, and the predominance of legal-sized scallops suggest that recruitment continues at low levels. Genetic analysis (Ovenden *et al.*, 2016) suggests that the Commercial Scallop population in the Channel is heavily reliant on self-recruitment and as such further rebuilding the adult stocks are necessary before any fishery for this species could be justified.

While it is promising that densities are increasing in the channel, to put it into perspective, most recently densities peaked in 2006 at 2.0 scallops/m<sup>2</sup> (Tracey and Lyle, 2008), and densities in 1955 were as high as 5.5 scallops/m<sup>2</sup> (Olsen, 1955). This is orders of magnitude greater than the majority of densities observed in the 2022 survey.

## **Basic commercial scallop biology**

Commercial scallops (*Pecten fumatus*) are filter feeders that sift plankton and detritus from the water column. They are simultaneous hermaphrodites and highly fecund, with up to 1 million eggs produced by an individual scallop. Reproduction is by broadcast spawning, where individuals release sperm first followed by eggs, (Minchin, 2003). In Tasmania, *P. fumatus* has a protracted spawning season involving several partial spawning events, as spawning lasts 5–6 months during spring and summer (Mendo *et al.*, 2014a). After external fertilization, larvae remain in the water column for 30 d before settling on fine to coarse sand (generally without organic sediment) forming aggregations commonly referred to as “beds” (Mendo *et al.*, 2014a). The longevity of scallop beds depends on cohort structure. If beds consist of a single cohort, the whole bed disappears when

the animals reach the end of their lifespan (Hortle and Cropp, 1987). The size of scallop beds can vary from 5 to 30 square nautical miles (17–100 km<sup>2</sup>) (Haddon *et al.*, 2006). The settled scallops grow quickly and reach 70 to 75 mm shell length (SL) in around 18 months. Age and size at maturity are 2 years and 70-80 mm SL, and maximum age and size are 7 years and 120mm; however, these parameters are known to vary by region.

## 2. Fishery peer review

A peer review of the scallop assessment process was conducted by Dr Gordon H. Kruse in 2015 (Kruse, 2015). Dr Kruse was employed from 1985-2001 at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, first as the Statewide Shellfish Biometrician and then as Chief Marine Fisheries Scientist; and from 2001 to present has been the President's Professor of Fisheries at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. With respect to scallops, he led the development of the State of Alaska's scallop fishery management plan and co-authored the first federal scallop fishery management plan for Alaska. He served on the Scallop Plan Team of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for 8 years and is in his 15<sup>th</sup> year as a member on the Scientific and Statistical Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, where he conducts reviews of the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports for scallops and other species. Recently, he conducted a scientific review of the weathervane scallop fishery in Alaska for Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program. In addition to the state and federal management plans for scallops, he has published 11 peer-reviewed papers and agency reports on the scallop fishery in Alaska.

The review was informed by interviews with industry, researchers, and fishery managers and through documents including scientific papers, survey reports, and minutes of advisory committee meetings relating to application of research data for decision-making. The review was first prepared as a draft, and then provided to Government and Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) to enable any correction of factual errors or oversights. The aims of the review were:

1. Evaluate the adequacy of life history information delivered by the current assessment program to fishery assessment and management decision-making processes.
2. Evaluate the adequacy of monitoring data used for assessing current status of the stock and used for informing management decisions and the annual harvest strategy (i.e., open areas and Total Allowable Catch, TAC, setting).
3. Evaluate the adequacy and application of methods used to translate life history and monitoring data into scientific guidance on the state of the stock and harvest scenarios.

### Reviewer's Recommendations

The reviewer's recommendations were in three categories, as detailed below. Text in *italics* outlines how this has been addressed:

1. Improved understanding of *Pecten fumatus* life history through research into:
  - Stock structure using genetic and larval drift methods

*Addressed in FRDC 2008/022: Establishing fine-scale industry based spatial management and harvest strategies for the commercial scallop fishery in Southeast Australia (see page 20)*

- Reproductive biology

*Addressed in FRDC 2008/022 and FRDC 2012/027: Determining when and where to fish: Linking scallop spawning, settlement, size and condition to collaborative spatial harvest and industry in-season management strategies (see page 17).*

- Age, growth, and maturity

*There is currently no simple reliable and repeatable technique for accurately ageing scallops. As such, age is currently estimated from a previously defined shell length to age relationship.*

*Growth has been examined in FRDC 2003/017: Juvenile scallop trashing rates and bed dynamics: testing the management rules for scallops in Bass Strait, using modal analysis of length frequency data (see page 21) and was further addressed using this technique in FRDC 2012/027.*

The current monitoring program is generally adequate to inform the current paddock fishing strategy, although future improvement could include allocation of size limits specific to growth rates by area.

*A lower minimum size limit (85 mm SL) is applied to scallop beds in the north-west bed given the historically slow growth rates in this region and the fact that most scallops of this size are still 3+ years old, and hence have had two major spawning's (Martin et al., 1988).*

2. Improved scientific guidance to management of the fishery through provision of regular stock assessment reports including:
  - Historic landings: *See pages 7-16.*
  - Survey results including size frequency distributions: *Survey undertaken in 2022 identifying size frequency distributions and legal sized density across fishery reported by Semmens et al. (2023b).*
  - Catch per unit effort (CPUE) reporting: *Currently being developed by NRE.*
  - Economic performance of the fishery: *See page 57.*

## 3. 2022 Pre-season survey

### INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Tasmanian Scallop Fishery (TSF) pre-season assessment was comprised of targeted and exploratory commercial dredge surveys and an IMAS video survey yielding density and size structure in the TSF areas. In contrast to previous years, White Rock (Area 5; Table 3, Appendix 1) was divided into four equal-sized sub-areas to ensure a more even sampling design and was subject to a video survey prior to a targeted dredge survey, allowing for comparative results.

### SURVEY METHODS

#### **Dredge surveys**

Dredge surveys consisted of exploratory and targeted tows in the 2022 TSF preseason survey. Two targeted surveys were conducted Area 5: one in White Rock consisting of 52 sites, and one in Marion Bay consisting of 30 sites. IMAS developed a random survey design for the targeted component of the dredge survey to better reflect the variation in density of scallops across the defined area of interest. Fishers participating in targeted dredge surveys were chartered by NRE to sample in accordance with the IMAS random survey design and did not retain scallops. Tows were ~ 500 m in length for both targeted and exploratory surveys (calculated from the start and finish coordinates). The sites towed were randomly assigned within the boundaries of polygons defined by NRE managers as the regions of commercial interest (Table 3). An IMAS or department observer was onboard for targeted surveys and catch weights (kg) of legal-sized scallops ( $\geq 90$  mm) were recorded for each tow. The observer recorded the size structure of each tow by measuring the shell length (width at the widest point of the shell) of up to 100 scallops randomly sampled from the ungraded catch. The density of legal-sized scallops was reported as the ratio of the landed weight of legal sized scallops over the product of dredge width and tow length (calculated from start and finish coordinates).

#### **Video Surveys**

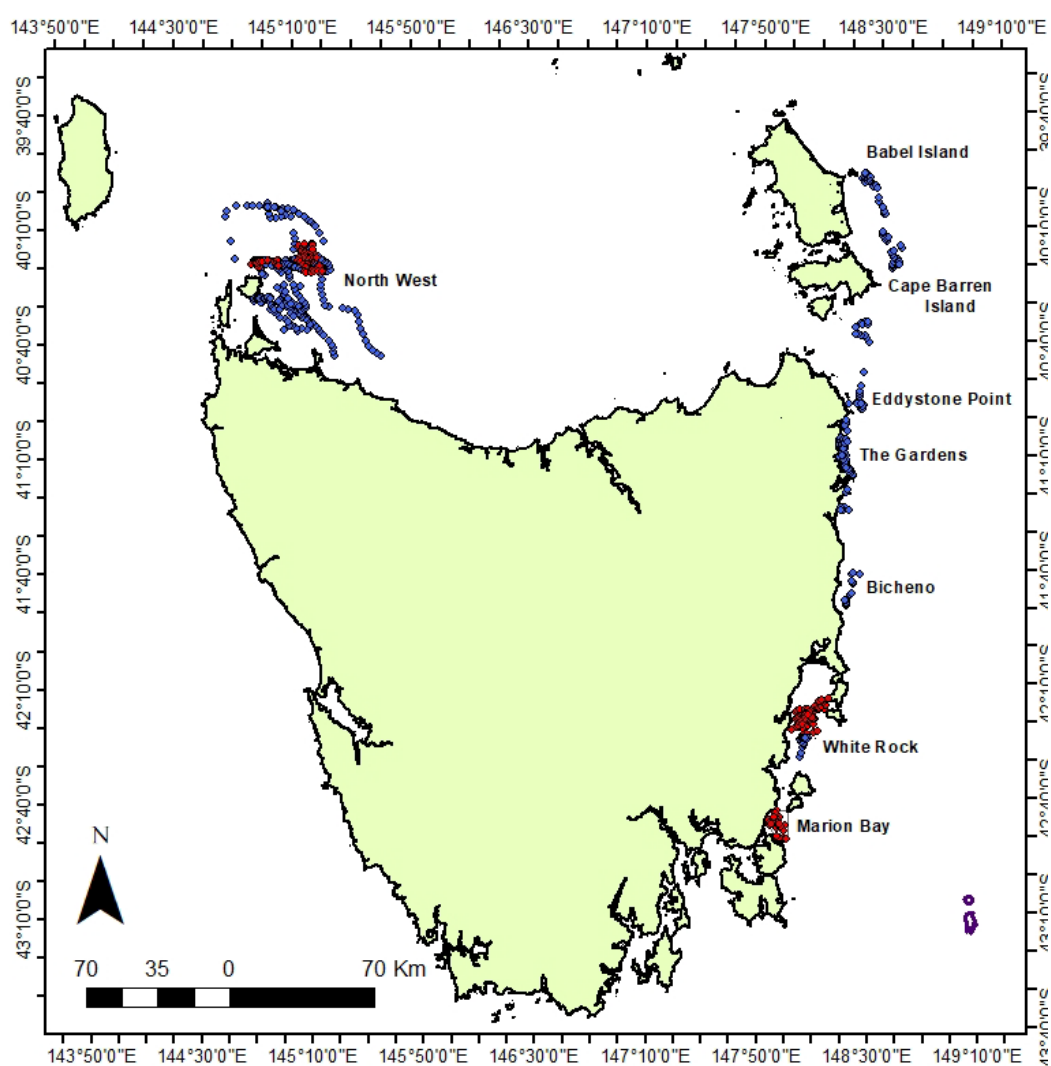
The video component of the survey was conducted in White Rock (Area 5) in April 2022 (Table 3). Fifty-two sites within this region were randomly assigned for the 2022 survey using the 'Create Random Points' tool in the software package ArcGIS 10.4. Assignment of random points was constrained within a 200 km<sup>2</sup> polygon (perimeter 72 km) provided by NRE that defined the area of interest to management, and with a minimum allowable separation of 500m. The 2022 pre-season survey deployed the IMAS towed video system at the same 52 sites prior to the targeted dredge surveys in the White Rock region to provide a comparison between the survey methods. The video survey consisted of a towed video from the site position in a straight line transect for at least 500m, approximately 1m above the seafloor, at towing speed 1.5 knots. Each transect was recorded as a track on the vessel's GPS unit.

Video footage from each site (in a randomised order) is currently being viewed and analysed using video analysis software Transect Measure (SeaGIS) which allows frame-by-frame analysis of the video footage. Within any frame a pixel-to-millimetre calibration was made using a known distance (e.g., the separation of scaling lasers) allowing objects within that frame to be measured in mm. The software also incorporated annotation of the position and time sequence of objects and measurements within any frame. By matching the frame time sequence with vessel GPS track time sequence data, the geographic position of objects in a frame was determined. These features of the software were used to ascertain the number of commercial scallops, their size, and their geographic position within the analysed segment of each video transect.



**Table 3.** Tasmanian Scallop Fishery 2022 pre-season survey sites by area, region, vessel, and survey method. Areas refer to Appendix 2.

| Area               | Region             | Vessel              | Targeted Dredge | Exploratory Dredge | Video     |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 3                  | Babel Island       | Odete C             | -               | 30                 | -         |
| 3                  | Cape Barren Island | Odete C             | -               | 35                 | -         |
| 3                  | Eddystone Point    | Odete C             | -               | 15                 | -         |
| 4                  | The Gardens        | Odete C,<br>Karmin  |                 | 64<br>18           | -         |
| 4                  | Bicheno            | Odete C             | -               | 13                 | -         |
| 5                  | White Rock         | Odete C             | 52              | -                  | 52        |
| 5                  | Marion Bay         | Odete C             | 30              | -                  | -         |
| 5                  | South White Rock   | Odete C             | -               | 16                 | -         |
| 1                  | North West         | Shandara<br>Odete C | 52              | 150<br>152         |           |
| <b>Total Sites</b> |                    |                     | <b>134</b>      | <b>493</b>         | <b>52</b> |



**Figure 8.** Map of the 2022 TSF pre-season dredge survey sites. Red dots indicate targeted survey sites and blue dots indicate exploratory survey sites.

## SURVEYS RESULTS BY AREA

### White Rock (Area 5) – Targeted dredge and video surveys

The White Rock targeted dredge survey consisted of 52 targeted dredge survey tows in four sub-areas (13 in each sub-area) deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3, Figures 8, 9 and 10). The targeted dredge sites were a random subset of 13 of 20 sites randomly allocated in each of the sub-areas in the White Rock NRE-defined polygon. The 2022 White Rock video survey consisted of 52 tows using the IMAS towed video unit which were conducted prior to the dredge surveys. Video tows were each of approximately 500m in length.

The White Rock targeted dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 22.3 kg/1000m<sup>2</sup> (median 8.3kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 3.1% (Table 4; Figures 9-12). Sub-area yields are provided in Table 5.

The White Rock targeted video survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 30.0 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 23.7 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 5.0% (Table 4; Figures 9-12). Sub-area yields are provided in Table 5.

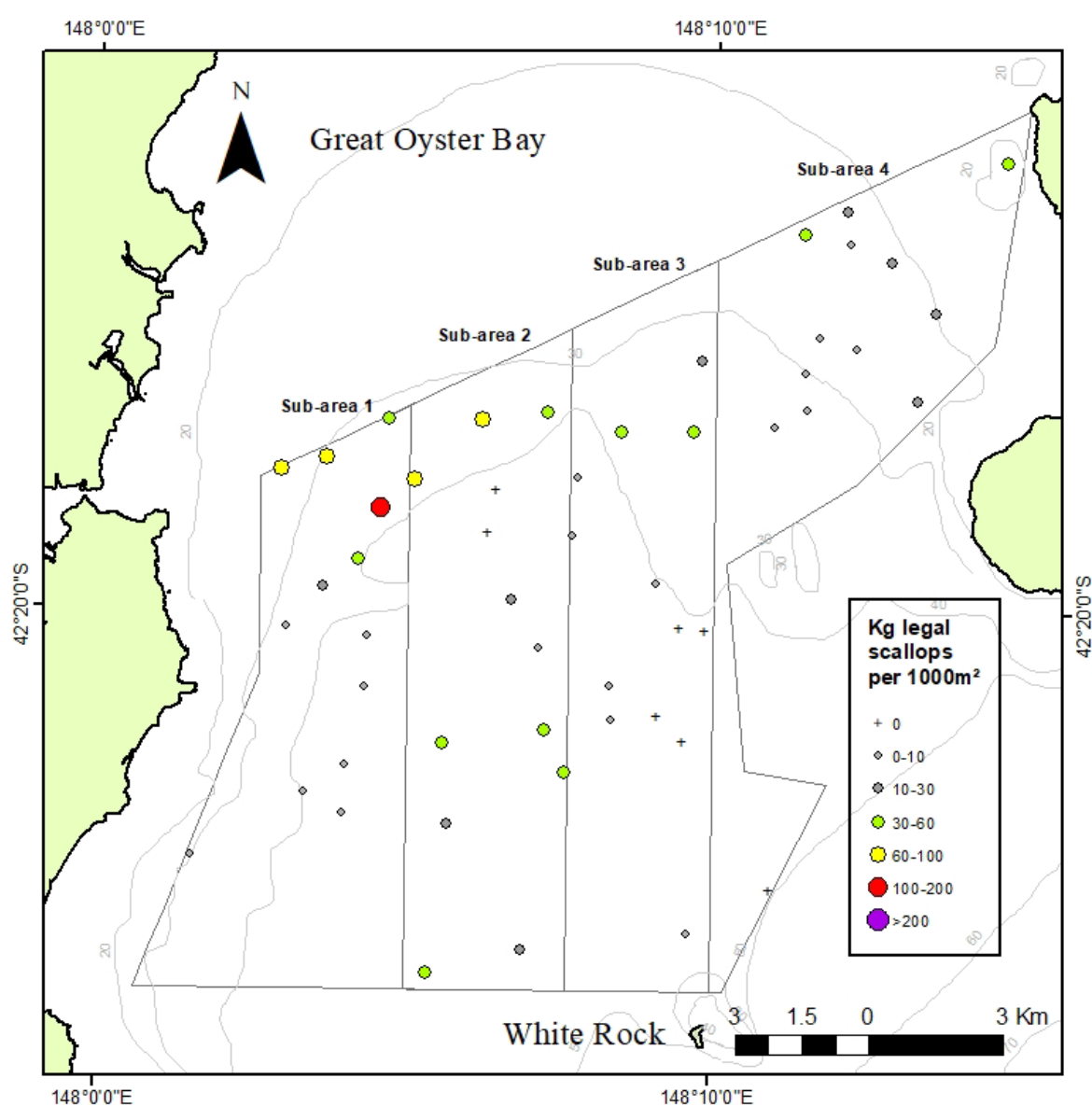
**Table 4.** Current and historical legal-sized scallop density, average size, and discard rate for White Rock (Area 5) from recent dredge and video pre-season surveys.

| Season | Method | Density (kg/1000 m <sup>2</sup> ) |        | Average scallop size<br>(mm ± SE) | Discard %<br>< 90 mm |
|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
|        |        | Average                           | Median |                                   |                      |
| 2022   | Dredge | 22.3                              | 8.3    | 106.4±0.2                         | 3.1                  |
|        | Video  | 39.0                              | 23.7   | 106.8±0.3                         | 5.0                  |
| 2021   | Dredge | 15.6                              | 14.2   | 102.2 ± 0.2                       | 5.7                  |
|        | Video  | 25.4                              | 21.6   | 96.3 ± 0. 6                       | 28.2                 |
| 2020   | Dredge | 20.9                              | 16.6   | 97.9 ± 0.2                        | 7.5                  |
|        | Video  | 21.9                              | 8.5    | 85.6 ± 0.4                        | 58.9                 |
| 2017   | Dredge | 4.7                               | 3.9    | 100.5 ± 0.1                       | 2.2                  |
| 2016   | Dredge | 4.4                               | 3.5    | 96.8 ± 0.2                        | 22.5                 |
| 2015   | Dredge | 19.7                              | 15.8   | 99.1 ± 7.7                        | 3.9                  |
| 2014   | Dredge | 8.6                               | 7.2    | 98.2 ± 8.2                        | 7.3                  |
| 2013   | Dredge | 6.2                               | -      | 93.9 ± 11.1                       | 18.2                 |
| 2011   | Dredge | >30                               | -      | -                                 | 7.5                  |

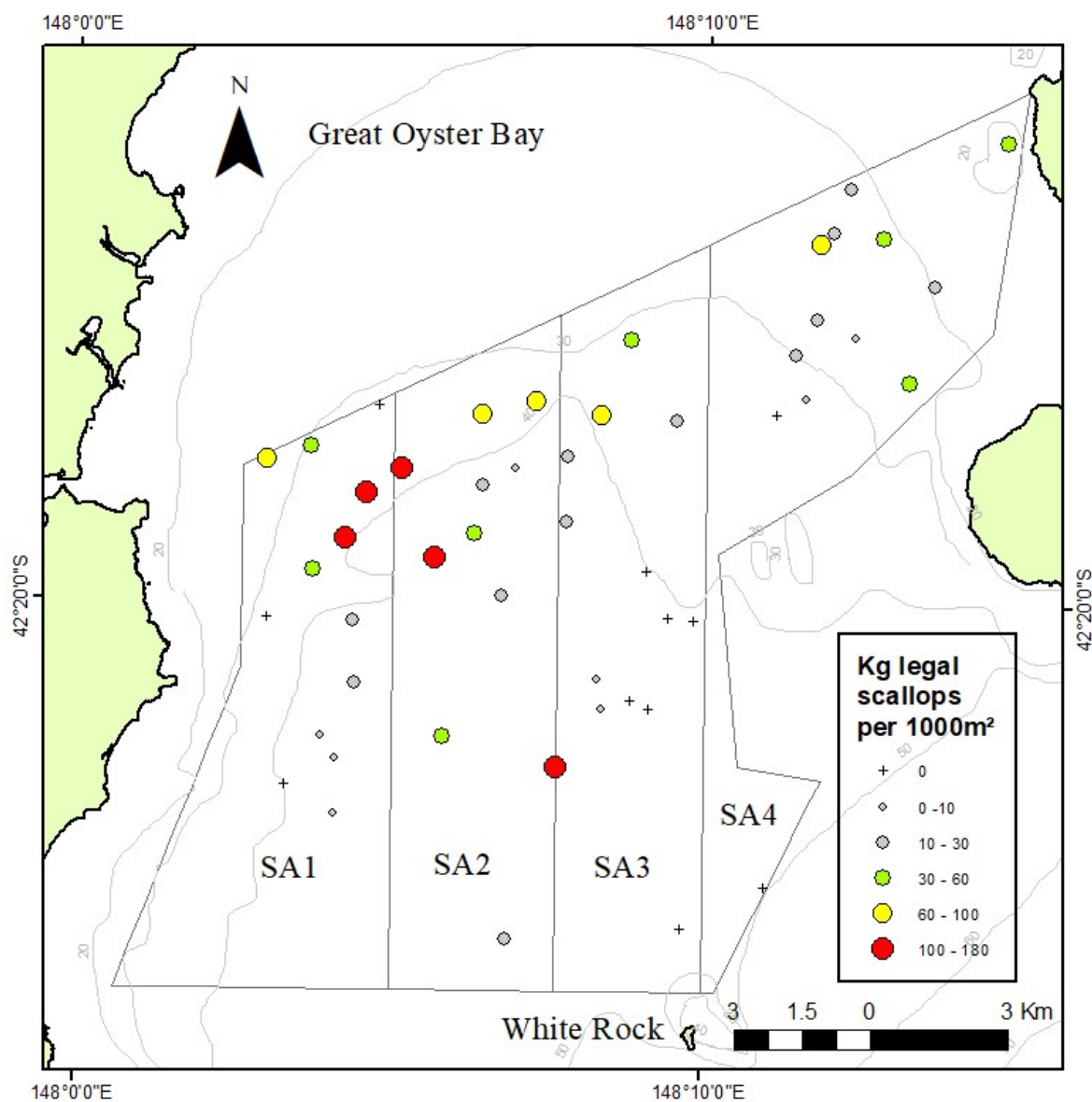


**Table 5.** Legal-sized scallop density, average size, and discard rate for the four sub-areas of White Rock (Area 5) from the 2022 dredge and video pre-season surveys.

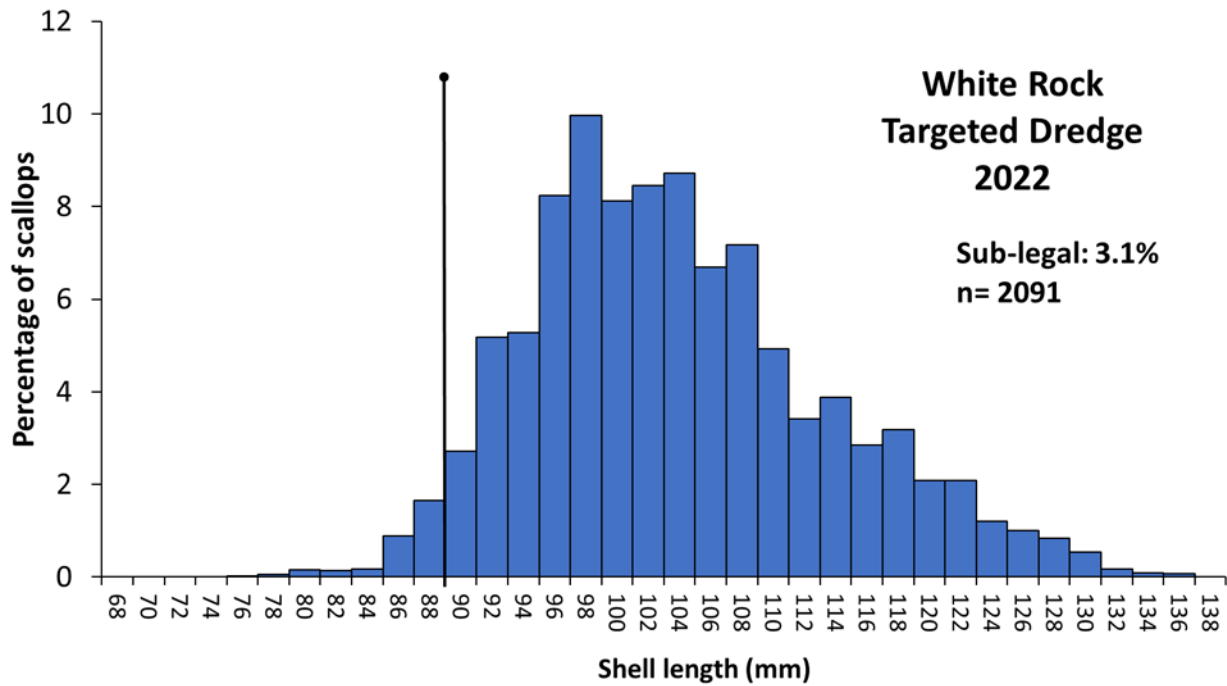
| Method | Sub-area   | Density (kg/1000m <sup>2</sup> ) |        | Average scallop size (mm ± SE) | Discard % <90 mm |
|--------|------------|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|
|        |            | Average                          | Median |                                |                  |
| Dredge | Sub-area 1 | 29.4                             | 6.6    | 102.3±2.4                      | 4.7              |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 36.4                             | 36.3   | 101.6±1.7                      | 2.0              |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 10.2                             | 1.8    | 105.5±2.3                      | 7.0              |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 13.4                             | 8.5    | 116.5±2.9                      | 0.5              |
| Video  | Sub-area 1 | 47.5                             | 34.0   | 104.9±0.5                      | 5.8              |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 63.5                             | 51.6   | 104.8±0.4                      | 5.5              |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 22.5                             | 16.9   | 108.3±0.8                      | 0.9              |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 22.0                             | 14.3   | 114.9±1.0                      | 1.7              |



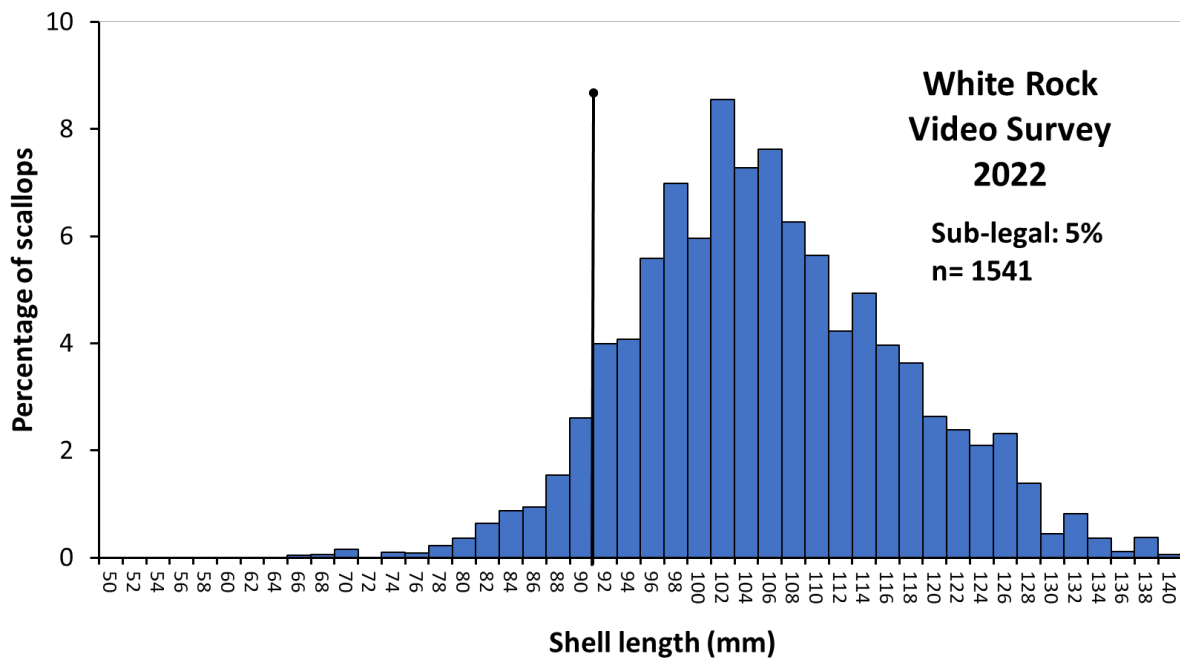
**Figure 9.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the White Rock (Area 5) targeted dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 10.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the White Rock (Area 5) targeted video survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 11.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 52 dredge tows in the White Rock (Area 5) targeted dredge survey. The dredge discard rate was 3.1% from 2091 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $106.4 \pm 0.23$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

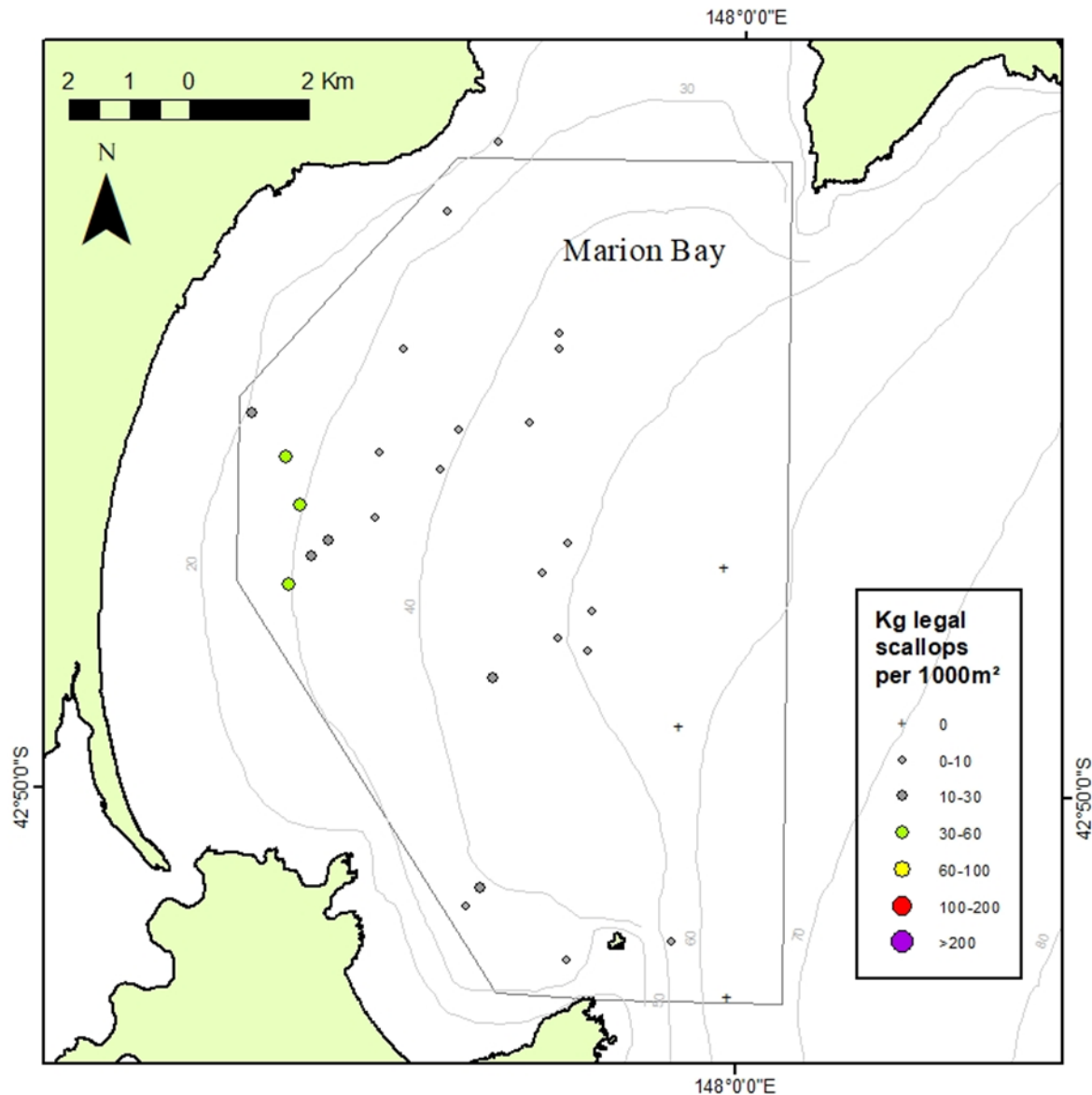


**Figure 12.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the video tows in the White Rock (Area 5) targeted video survey. The video discard rate was 5.0% from 1541 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $106.78 \pm 0.29$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

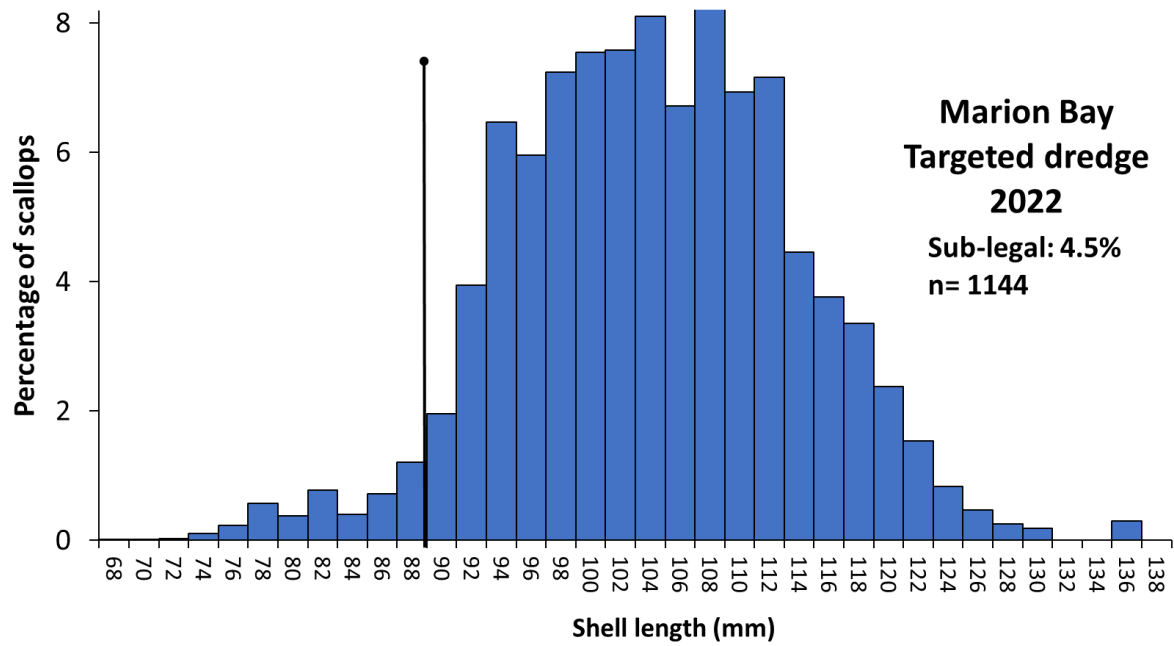
## Marion Bay (Area 5) – Targeted dredge survey

The Marion Bay targeted dredge survey consisted of 30 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3; Figures 8, 13 and 14).

The Marion Bay targeted dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 10.1kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 5.6 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 4.47% (Figures 13 and 14).



**Figure 13.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the Marion Bay (Area 5) targeted dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

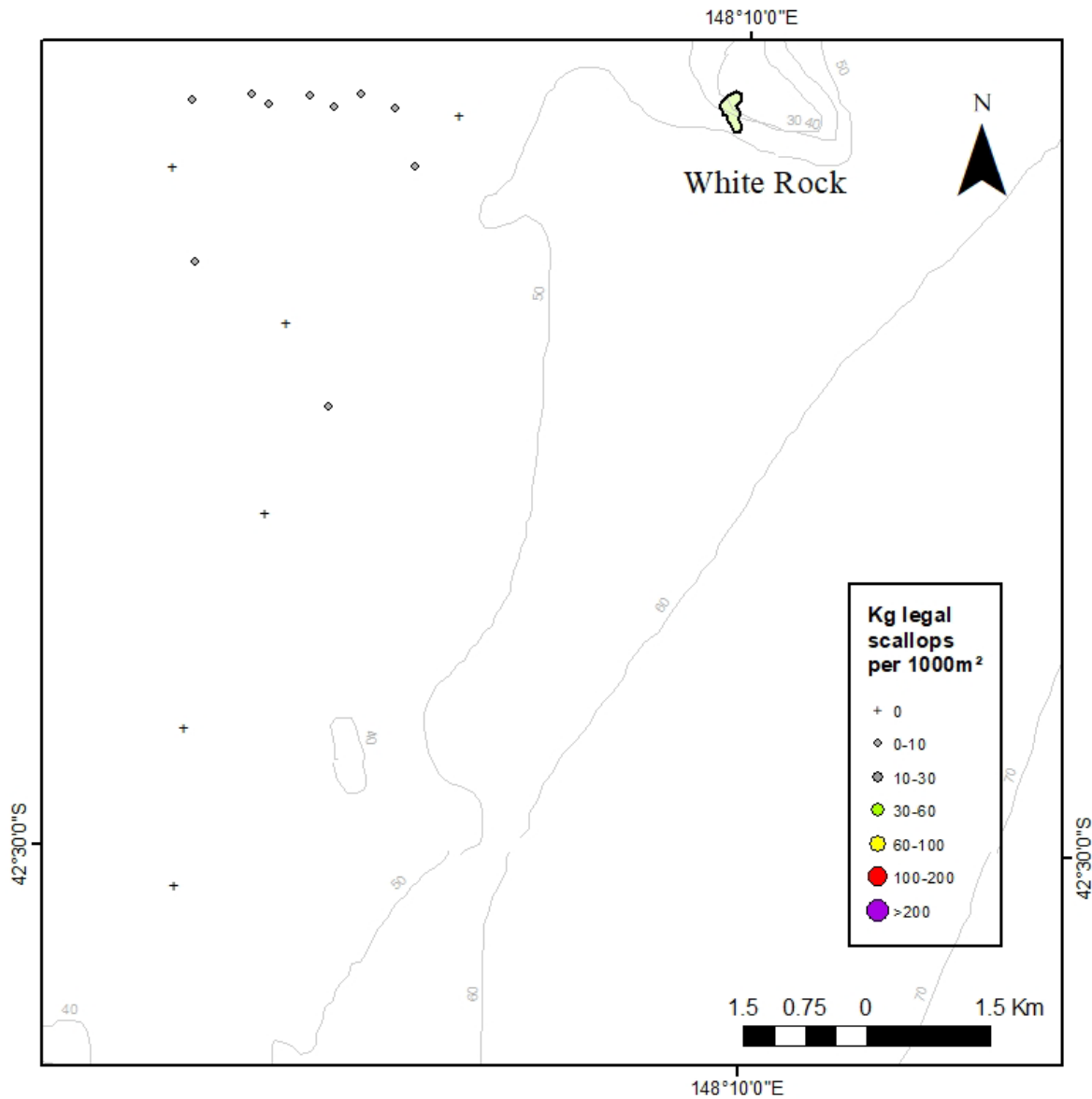


**Figure 14.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 30 dredge tows in Marion Bay (Area 5) targeted dredge survey. The dredge discard rate was 4.47% from 1144 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $104.6 \pm 0.3$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

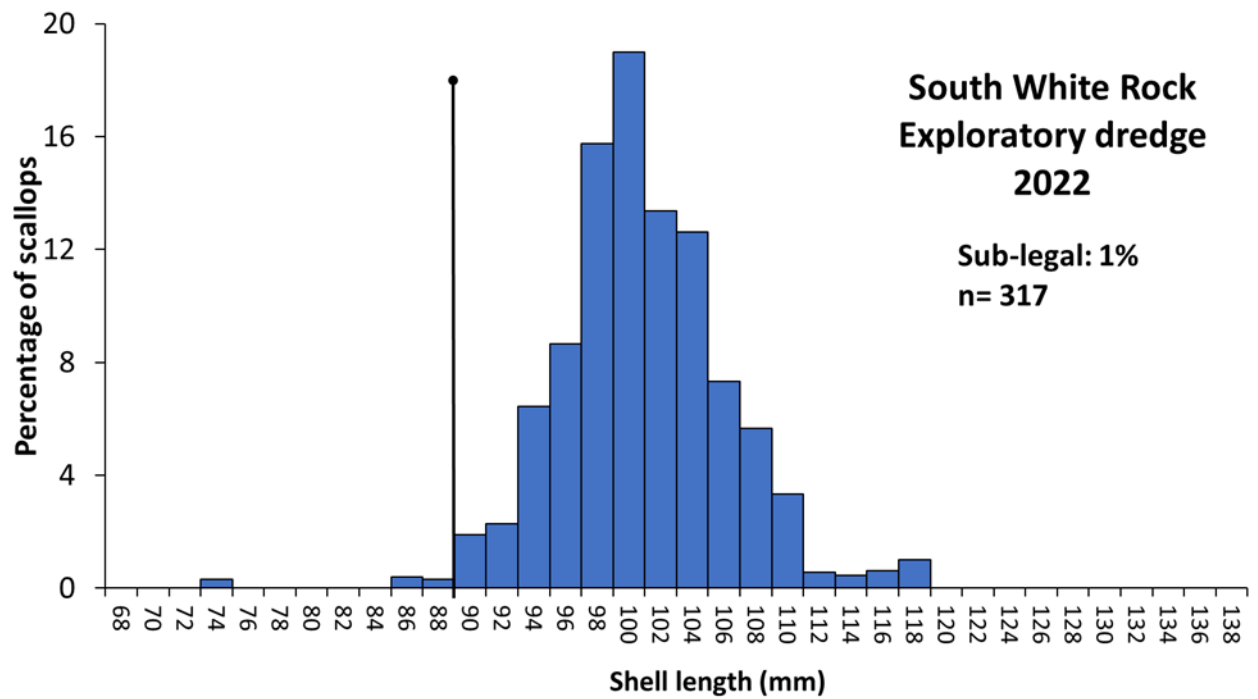
## South White Rock (Area 5) – Exploratory dredge survey

The South White Rock exploratory dredge survey consisted of 16 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3; Figures 8, 15 and 16).

The South White Rock exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 2.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 0.05 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a low discard rate of 1% (Figures 15 and 16).



**Figure 15.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the South White Rock (Area 5) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

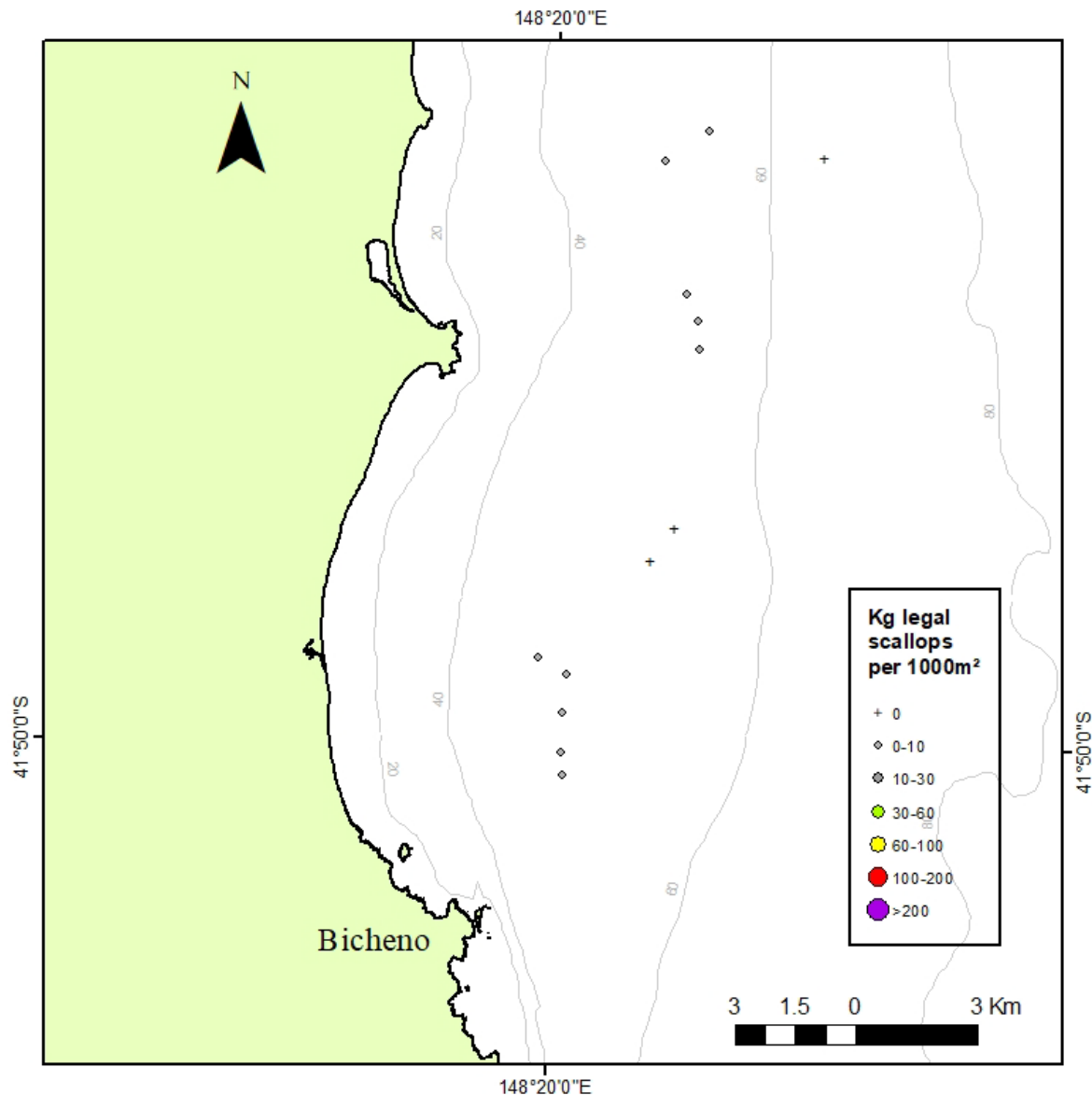


**Figure 16.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 16 exploratory dredge tows in South White Rock (Area 5). The dredge discard rate was 1% from 317 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $102.4 \pm 0.3$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

## Bicheno (Area 4) – Exploratory dredge survey

The Bicheno exploratory dredge survey consisted of 13 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3; Figures 8 and 17).

The Bicheno exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 0.65 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 0.4 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>, Figure 17). Note that no length data was provided for Bicheno survey dredge tows.



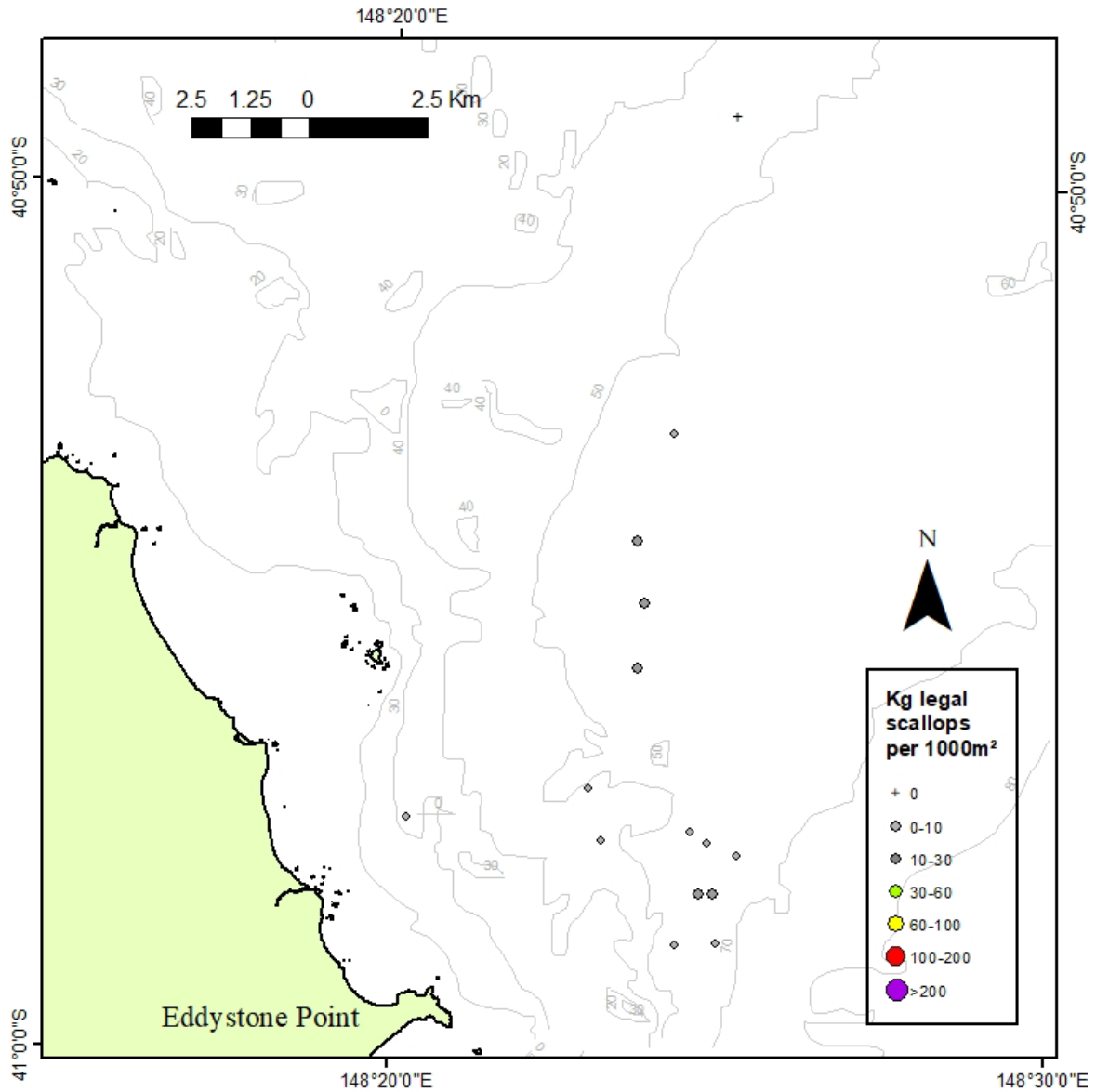
**Figure 17.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for Bicheno (Area 4) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



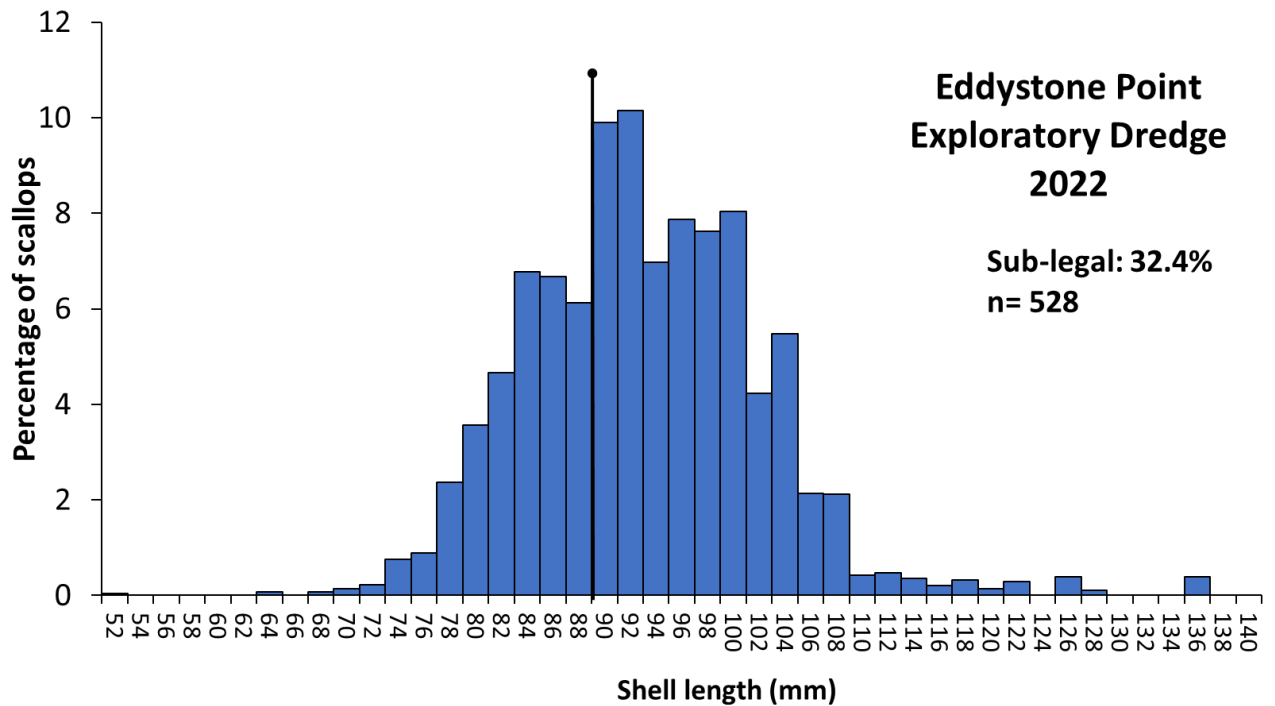
### Eddystone Point (Area 3)– Exploratory dredge survey

The Eddystone Point exploratory dredge survey consisted of 15 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3, Figures 8 and 18).

The Eddystone Point exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 8.12 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 4.8 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 32.4% (Figures 18 and 19).



**Figure 18.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for Eddystone Point (Area 3) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

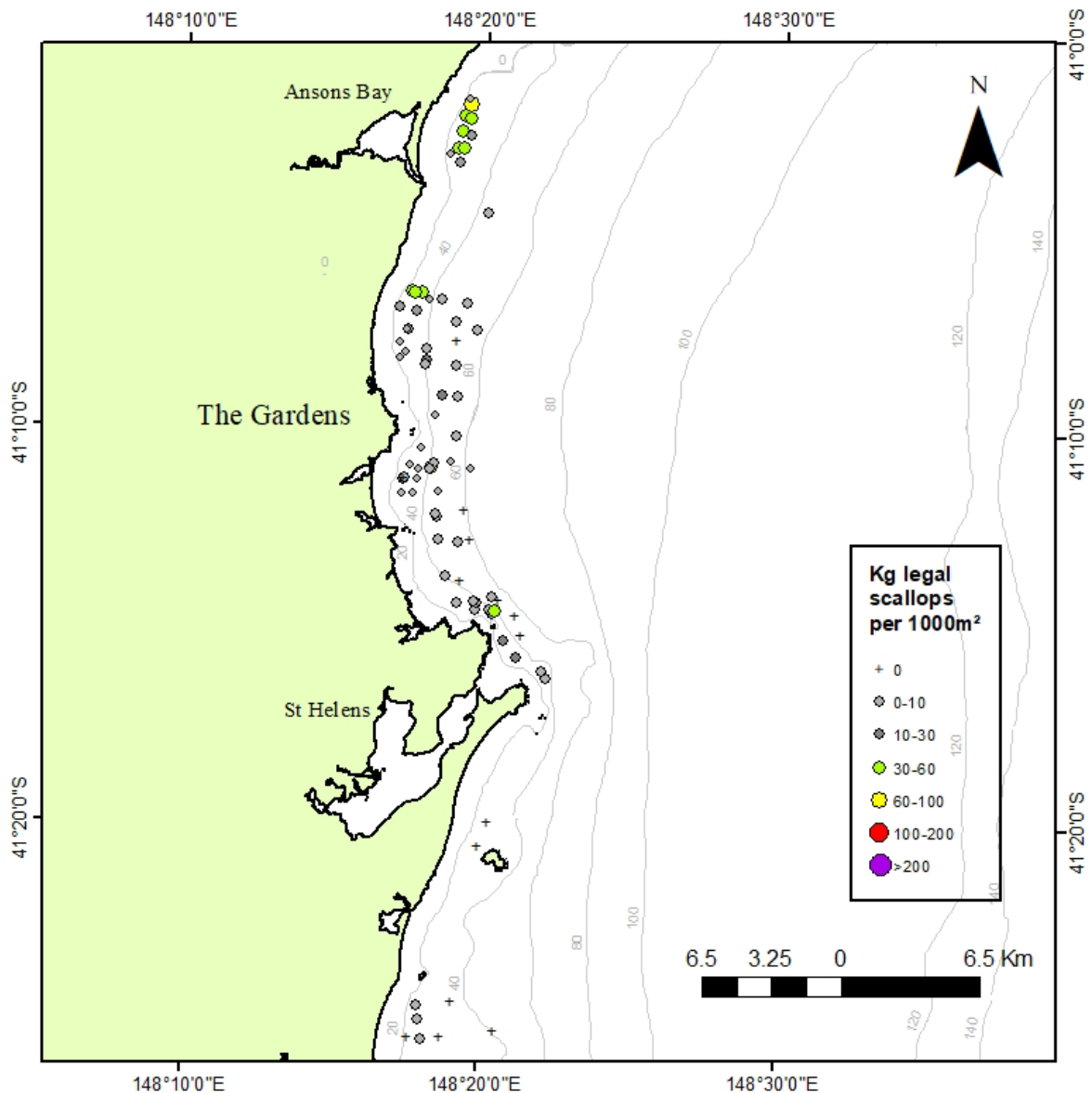


**Figure 19.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 15 exploratory dredge tows in the Eddystone Point region. The dredge discard rate was 32.4% from 528 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $93.97 \pm 0.42$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

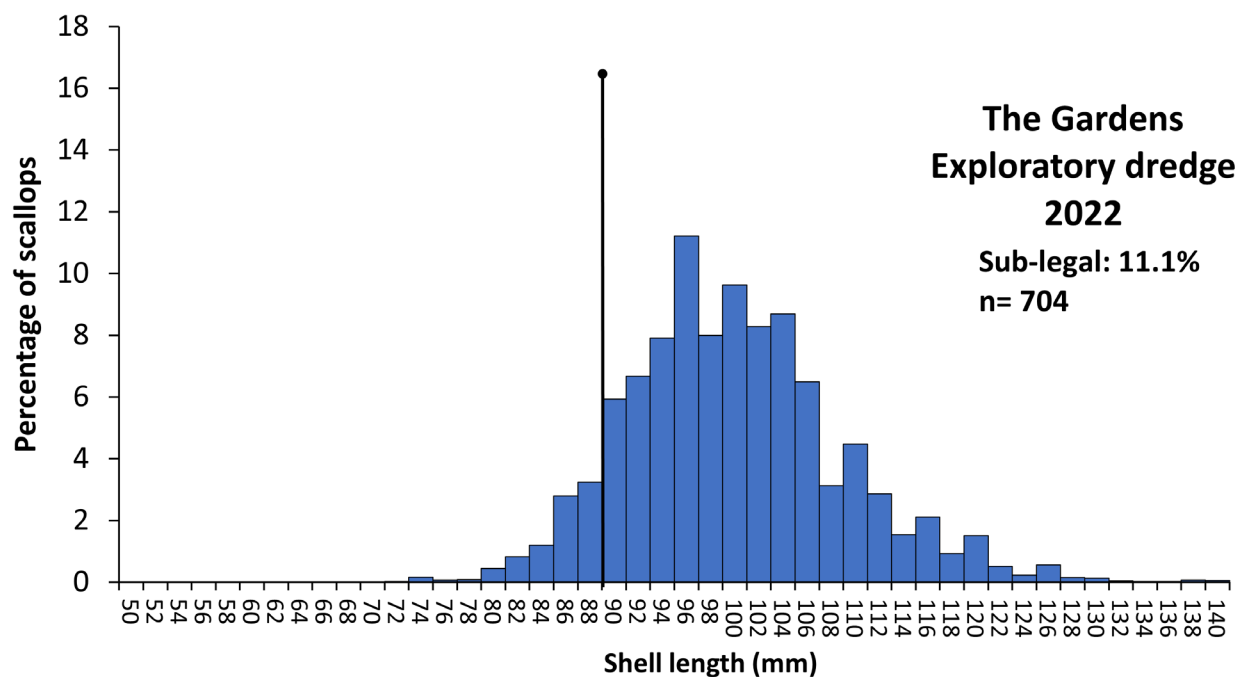
## The Gardens (Area 4) – Exploratory dredge survey

The Gardens exploratory dredge survey consisted of 82 survey dredge tows. 64 deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022, and 18 tows deployed from FV Karmin in May 2022 (Table 3, Figure 8 and 20).

The Gardens exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 9.95 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 1.85 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 11.1% (Figures 20 and 21).



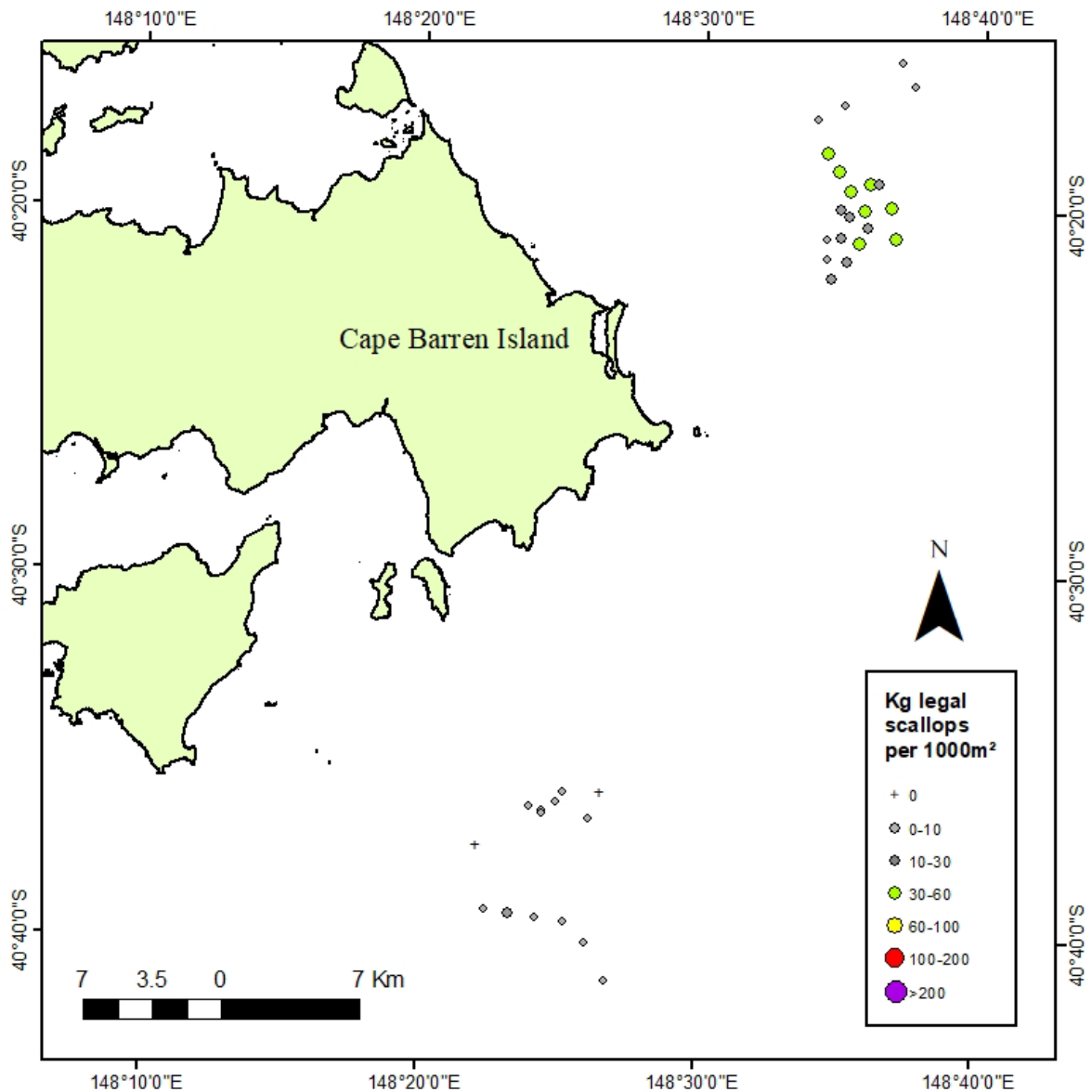
**Figure 20.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for The Gardens (Area 4) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



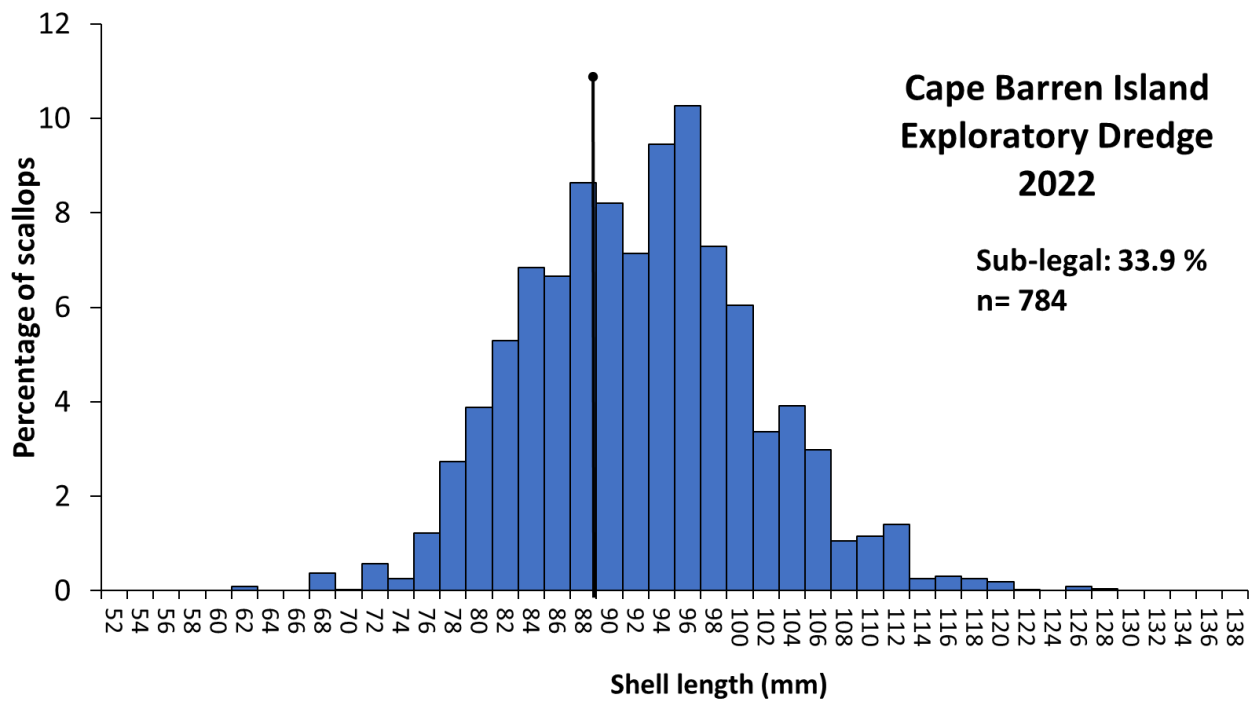
**Figure 21.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 82 exploratory dredge tows in The Gardens region. The dredge discard rate was 11.1% from 1767 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $101.03 \pm 0.22$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

### Cape Barren Island (Area 3) - Exploratory dredge survey

The Cape Barren Island exploratory dredge survey consisted of 35 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3, Figures 8 and 22). Yielding an average density of legal-sized scallops of 15.1 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 8.8 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 33.9% (Figures 22 and 23).



**Figure 22.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for Cape Barren Island (Area 3) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

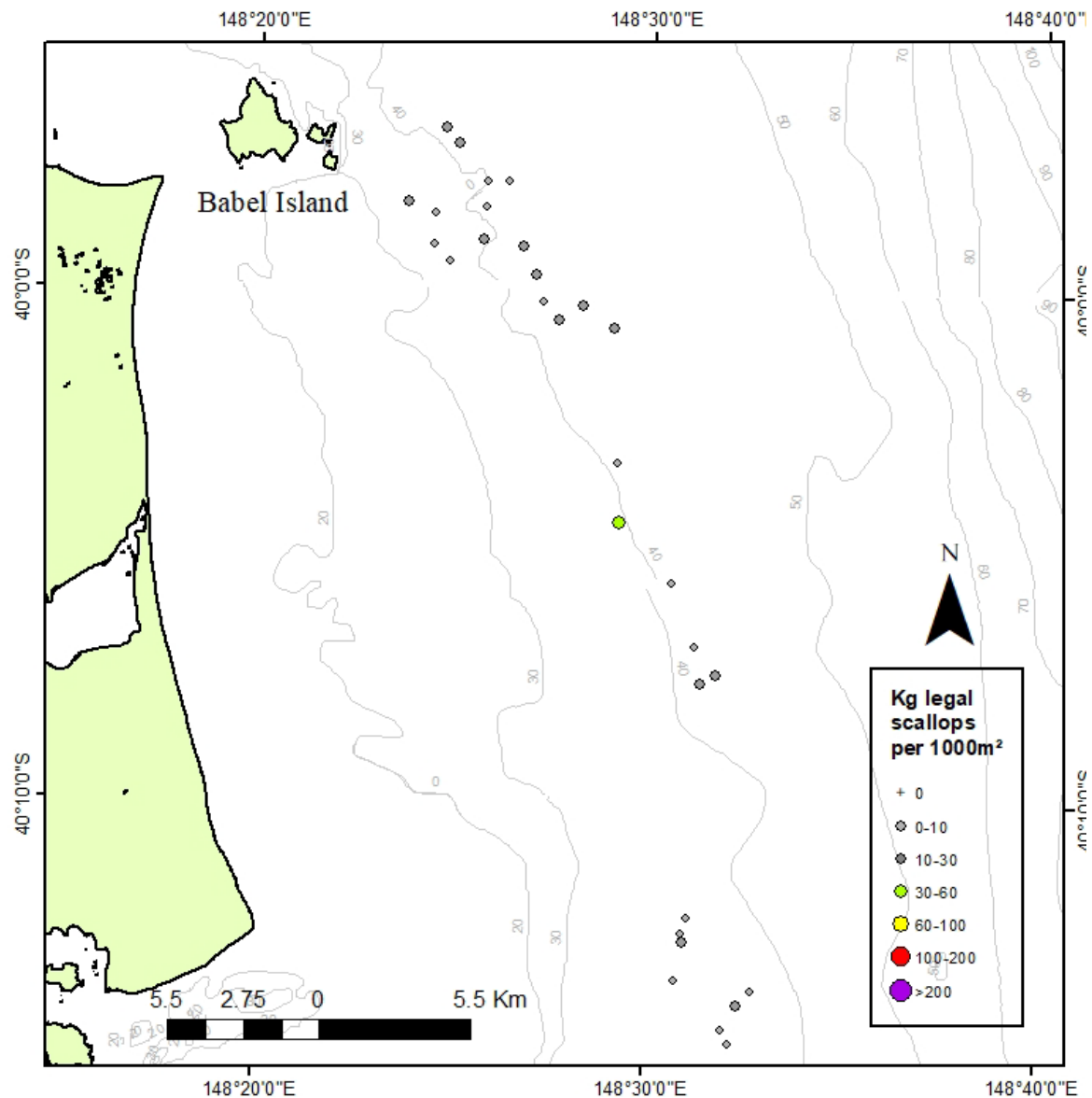


**Figure 23.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 35 exploratory dredge tows in the Cape Barren Island region. The dredge discard rate was 33.9% from 784 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $96.27 \pm 0.35$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length. Note a total of 35 tows were conducted for this region, only 21 of those sites yielded length data.

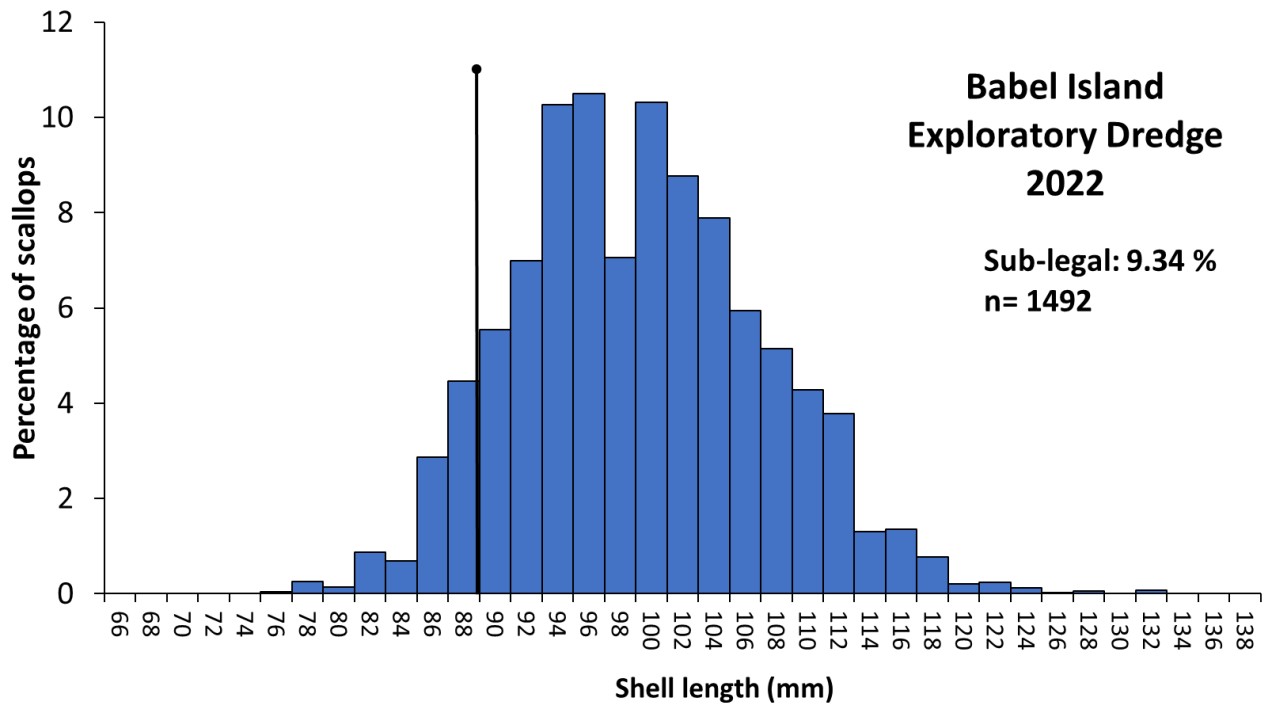
### Babel Island (Area 3) - Exploratory dredge survey

The Babel Island exploratory dredge survey consisted of 30 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Odete C in April 2022 (Table 3, Figures 8 and 24).

The Babel Island exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 12.5 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 9.32 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 9.34% (Figures 24 and 25).



**Figure 24.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for Babel Island (Area 3) exploratory dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 25.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 30 exploratory dredge tows in the Babel Island region. The dredge discard rate was 9.34% from 1492 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $100.40 \pm 0.21$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.



## North West (Area 1) – Targeted dredge survey

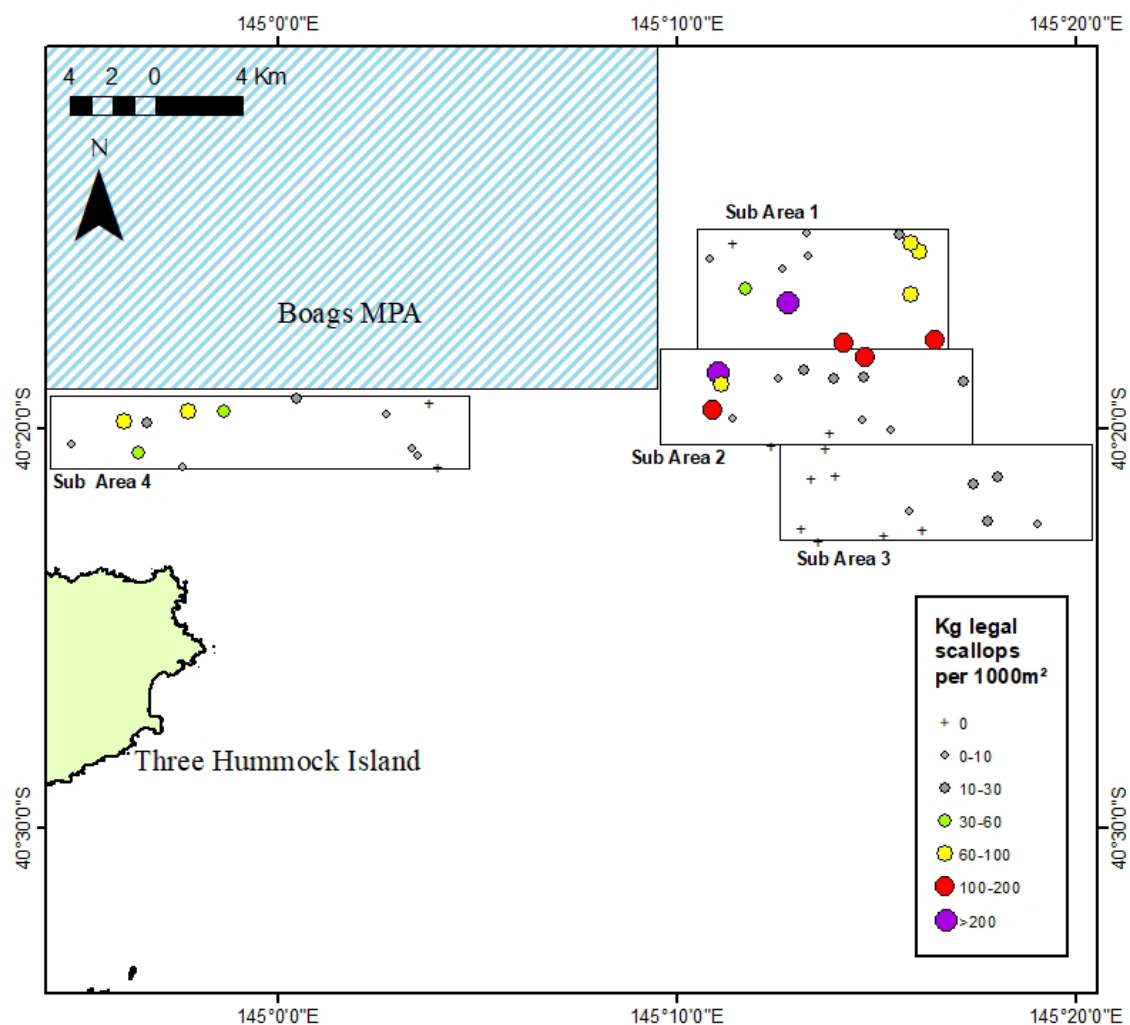
The North West targeted dredge survey consisted of 52 survey dredge tows deployed from FV Shandara in June 2022 (Table 3 and 6; Figures 8, 26 and 27).

The North West targeted dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 36.61 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 6.6 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 38.7% (Figures 26 and 27).

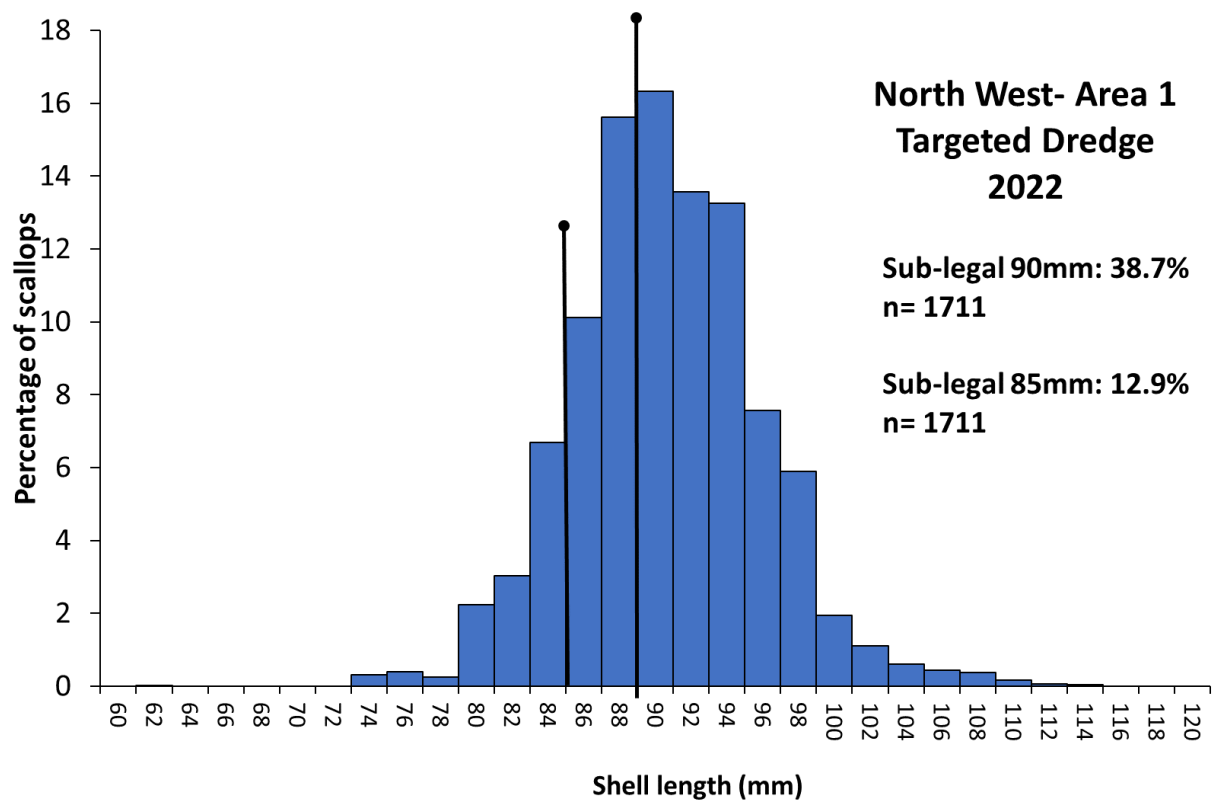
Sub-area yields are provided in Table 4.

**Table 6.** Legal-sized scallop density, average size, and discard rate for the four sub-areas of North West (Area 1) from the 2022 dredge survey.

| Method | Sub-area   | Density (kg/1000m <sup>2</sup> ) |        | Average scallop size (mm ± SE) | Discard % <90 mm |
|--------|------------|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|
|        |            | Average                          | Median |                                |                  |
| Dredge | Sub-area 1 | 65.5                             | 30.6   | 91.8±0.2                       | 38.7             |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 52.5                             | 18.6   | 91.0±0.2                       | 38.2             |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 5.6                              | 0      | 90.6±0.3                       | 51.2             |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 22.7                             | 5.5    | 96.0±0.4                       | 27.3             |



**Figure 26.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the North West (Area 1) targeted dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

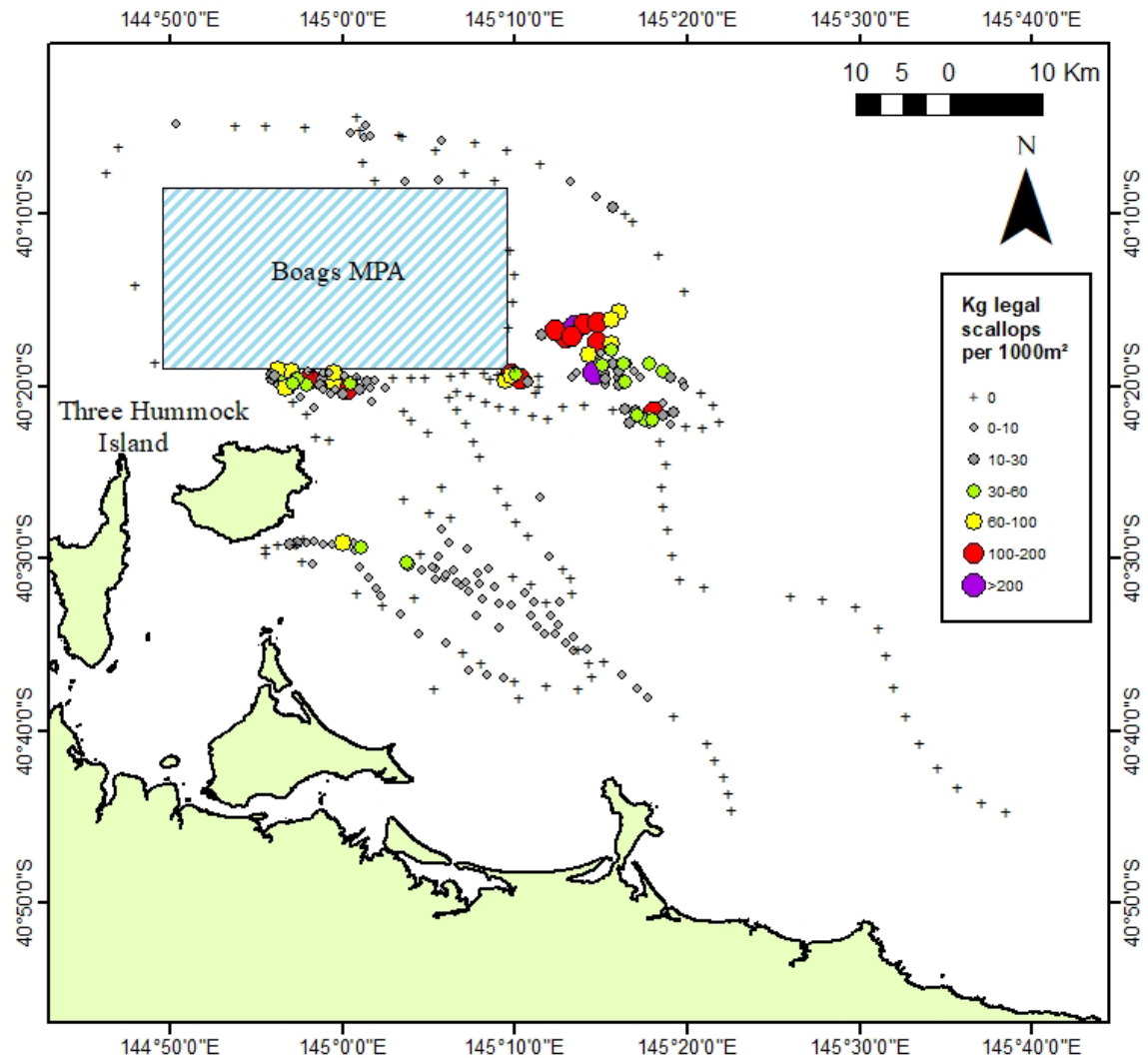


**Figure 27.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 52 dredge tows in the North West (Area 1) targeted dredge survey. The dredge discard rate was 38.7% from 1711 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $92.4 \pm 0.1$  mm. The first and second vertical lines from left show the 85 and 90 mm minimum length, respectively.

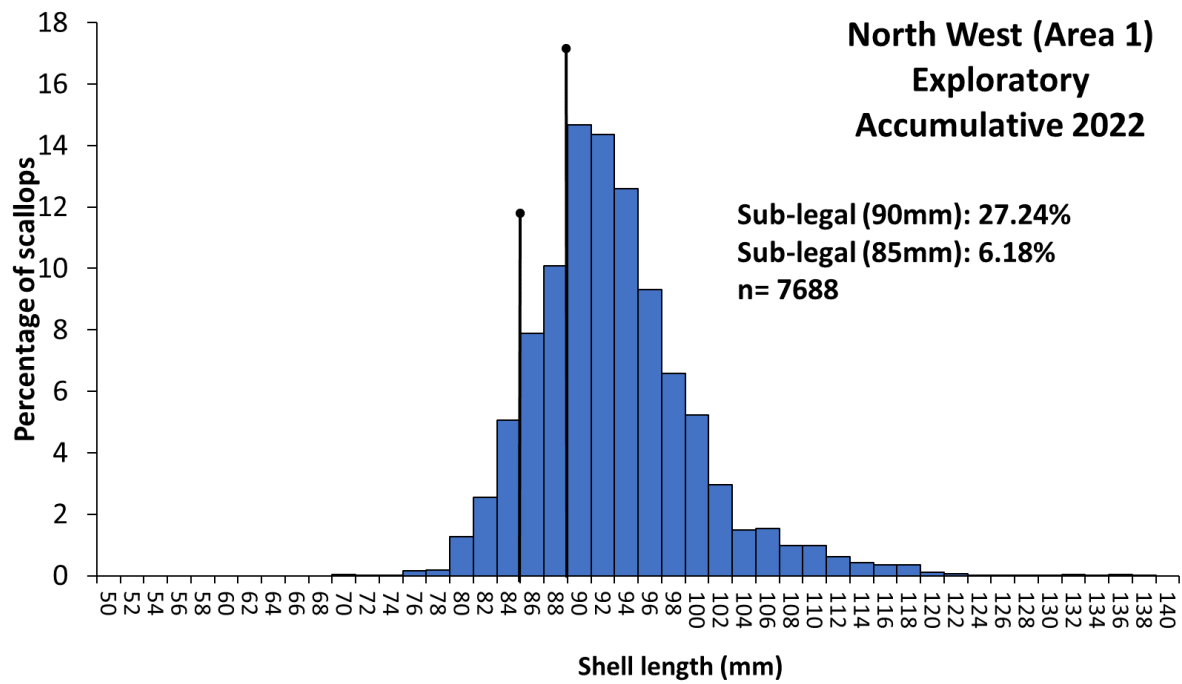
## North West (Area 1) – Exploratory Dredge Survey

The North West exploratory dredge survey consisted of 302 survey dredge tows. 152 deployed from FV Odete C and 150 deployed from FV Shandara (Table 3, Figures 8 and 28).

The North West exploratory dredge survey tows yielded an average density of legal-sized scallops of 22.2 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup> (median 0.27 kg/1000 m<sup>2</sup>), with a discard rate of 29.1% (Figures 28 and 29)



**Figure 21.** Legal-sized scallop density per tow for the North West (Area 1) targeted dredge survey. Density is displayed as kg of legal scallops (>90mm) per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 29.** Standardised length frequency distribution for the 302 exploratory dredge tows in the North West region. The dredge discard rate was 27.24% from 7688 scallops measured at 90 mm minimum length with a mean size  $\pm$  se:  $94.18 \pm 0.078$  mm. The vertical line shows the 90 mm minimum length.

## **BIOMASS ESTIMATES**

An estimated biomass of scallops within each of the polygons defined by NRE managers as the regions of commercial interest was calculated using the standard method of scaling-up the mean density across the survey area for both the dredge and video surveys (Table 7).

An adjustment for dredge efficiency of 33% (Harrington et al. 2008b) has been applied to the dredge biomass estimates and is also presented in Tables 7, 8 and 9. It should, however, be noted that the comparison between the dredge and video biomass estimates in the White Rock region in the 2021, and 2022 surveys raises questions around the validity of the adjustment applied for dredge efficiency. The dredge estimates of the mean and lower and upper 95% confidence intervals for biomass were 61.3, 63.4 and 60.3% of those for video in 2021, respectively. Similarly, the dredge estimates of the mean and lower and upper 95% confidence intervals for biomass were 58.1, 54.3 and 60.2% of those for video in 2022. This suggests that dredge efficiency, at least in the White Rock region, is significantly higher than 33% and closer to 60%. Consequently, dredge biomass values provided here should only be used as a relative value for comparison between the regions surveyed.

**Table 7.** Density and estimated biomass of legal-sized commercial scallops (*Pecten fumatus*) within each of the sub-areas of the White Rock survey area (Area 5), based on dredge and video survey methods for 2022. Dredge-derived biomass estimates adjusted for dredge efficiency should be interpreted with caution as recent White Rock video surveys raise questions about their validity. Biomass confidence intervals are 95%.

| Method | Sub-area   | n  | Mean legal<br>(kg/1000 m <sup>2</sup> ) | SD (kg/1000<br>m <sup>2</sup> ) | Area<br>(km <sup>2</sup> ) | Biomass (t) |      |           | Adjusted biomass (t) |      |           |
|--------|------------|----|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|------|-----------|----------------------|------|-----------|
|        |            |    |                                         |                                 |                            | Lower CI    | Mean | Higher CI | Lower CI             | Mean | Higher CI |
| Dredge | Sub-area 1 | 13 | 29.4                                    | 35.8                            | 50                         | 388         | 1469 | 2549      | 1164                 | 4407 | 7647      |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 13 | 36.4                                    | 29.9                            | 50                         | 914         | 1817 | 2721      | 2742                 | 5451 | 8163      |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 13 | 10.2                                    | 16.5                            | 50                         | 9           | 509  | 1008      | 27                   | 1527 | 3024      |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 13 | 13.4                                    | 12.8                            | 50                         | 284         | 671  | 1058      | 852                  | 2013 | 3174      |
| Video  | Sub-area 1 | 9  | 34.9                                    | 35.6                            | 50                         | 668         | 1743 | 2817      | -                    | -    | -         |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 7  | 66.6                                    | 57.8                            | 50                         | 1582        | 3328 | 5074      | -                    | -    | -         |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 4  | 28.2                                    | 31.2                            | 50                         | 470         | 1412 | 2353      | -                    | -    | -         |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 9  | 24.7                                    | 23.2                            | 50                         | 533         | 1233 | 1933      | -                    | -    | -         |

**Table 8.** Density and estimated biomass of legal-sized commercial scallops (*Pecten fumatus*) within the White Rock and Marion Bay sampling areas (Areas 5) defined by NRE managers as the regions of commercial interest, based on dredge and video survey methods for 2022 and previous years. Dredge-derived biomass estimates adjusted for dredge efficiency should be interpreted with caution as recent White Rock video surveys raise questions about their validity. Biomass confidence intervals are 95%.

| Area       | Method      | n  | Sub-legal (%) | Mean legal (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) | SD (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) | Area (km <sup>2</sup> ) | Biomass (t) |      |           | Adjusted biomass (t) |       |           |
|------------|-------------|----|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------|-----------|----------------------|-------|-----------|
|            |             |    |               |                                 |                         |                         | Lower CI    | Mean | Higher CI | Lower CI             | Mean  | Higher CI |
| White Rock | Dredge 2022 | 52 | 3.1           | 0.0223                          | 0.0271                  | 200                     | 2960        | 4471 | 5982      | 8880                 | 13413 | 17946     |
|            | Dredge 2021 | 29 | 5.7           | 0.0156                          | 0.0144                  | 200                     | 2025        | 3122 | 4220      | 6072                 | 9366  | 12660     |
|            | Video 2022  | 52 | 5.1           | 0.0384                          | 0.0402                  | 200                     | 5456        | 7694 | 9932      | -                    | -     | -         |
|            | Video 2021  | 38 | 30.5          | 0.0304                          | 0.0286                  | 200                     | 3191        | 5093 | 6995      | -                    | -     | -         |
|            | Video 2020  | 48 | 58.9          | 0.0219                          | 0.0280                  | 200                     | 2077        | 3161 | 4246      | -                    | -     | -         |
| Marion Bay | Dredge      | 30 | 4.5           | 0.0101                          | 0.0134                  | 106                     | 537         | 1065 | 1593      | 1611                 | 3195  | 4779      |
| North West | Dredge      | 52 | 38.7          | 0.0366                          | 0.0563                  | 133                     | 4089        | 7208 | 10327     | 12267                | 21624 | 30981     |

**Table 9.** Density and estimated biomass of legal-sized commercial scallops (*Pecten fumatus*) within each of the sub-areas of the North West survey area (Area 1), based on dredge survey methods for 2022. Dredge-derived biomass estimates adjusted for dredge efficiency should be interpreted with caution as recent White Rock video surveys raise questions about their validity. Biomass confidence intervals are 95%.

| Method | Sub-area   | n  | Mean legal (kg/1000 m <sup>2</sup> ) | SD (kg/1000 m <sup>2</sup> ) | Area (km <sup>2</sup> ) | Biomass (t) |      |           | Adjusted biomass (t) |      |           |
|--------|------------|----|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------|-----------|----------------------|------|-----------|
|        |            |    |                                      |                              |                         | Lower CI    | Mean | Higher CI | Lower CI             | Mean | Higher CI |
| Dredge | Sub-area 1 | 13 | 65.5                                 | 70.0                         | 34.5                    | 1064        | 3243 | 5422      | 3192                 | 9729 | 16266     |
|        | Sub-area 2 | 13 | 52.5                                 | 68.5                         | 34.1                    | 462         | 2573 | 4684      | 1386                 | 7719 | 14052     |
|        | Sub-area 3 | 13 | 5.6                                  | 9.6                          | 34.3                    | -21         | 276  | 573       | -7                   | 828  | 1719      |
|        | Sub-area 4 | 13 | 22.7                                 | 27.9                         | 30.8                    | 258         | 1125 | 1993      | 774                  | 3375 | 5979      |

## 4. Economic data

The TSF was opened in 2022, with the TAC set at 4,495 t or 435 kg/unit. 3,397 t were landed, with 604 t coming from Area 5 and 2,793 t from Area 1. 61.8 t of the total landed was taken during the survey period. In 2022, there were 63 scallop licenses held by 63 quota holders, with a total of 10336 quota units. In 2022, there were 12 processors that received scallops.



## 5. Stock status

| STOCK STATUS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | RECOVERING                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p>The Tasmanian Scallop Fishery (TSF) is managed with a harvest strategy where surveys are undertaken to estimate abundance and decision rules are used to open areas to fishing with total allowable catches (TACs) based on the estimated abundance.</p> <p>Biomass in the Tasmanian Scallop Fishery (TSF) is historically overfished (Caton and McLoughlin, 2004), with recruitment and production levels now affected. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, surveys generally found low scallop densities and limited evidence of successful recent recruitment but did identify two beds (one on the north-west coast and the other on the east coast) containing commercial quantities (Ewing <i>et al.</i>, 2016). Surveys in 2016 and again in 2017 generally only found very low levels of scallop abundance and limited evidence of successful recruitment, with no area considered to contain commercially viable quantities in either year (Ewing <i>et al.</i>, 2017; Semmens <i>et al.</i>, 2018). This includes the east and north-west coast beds fished in 2013-2015, which appeared to have been fished down to a commercially unviable density, with no subsequent recruitment evident. Given the results of the 2016 and 2017 surveys, there was a low expectation that conducting pre-season surveys in 2018 and 2019 would yield the presence of commercially viable scallop beds, and as such, pre-season surveys were not conducted. In 2020 a pre-season survey was conducted, and the survey results were dominated by low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops, several areas demonstrated signs of recruitment that suggest the possibility of supporting a tightly managed commercial fishery in the near- to medium-term. The 2021 pre-season survey consisted of 147 targeted dredge tows and 48 video surveys. Survey results showed low to moderate densities of legal sized scallops, with patchy high densities and variable discard rates.</p> <p>Preseason surveys in 2022 utilised both dredge and video methodologies and covered one north-west coast (western Bass Strait) bed, with an estimated legal-sized biomass of 21,624 t, and two lower east coast beds, with an estimated legal-sized biomass of 16,608 t.</p> <p>Fishing mortality is managed with the aim of restricting catches to beds of mature scallops near the end of their lifespan. The combination of the harvest strategy and depleted biomass has led to a history of closures due to low abundance. In recent times, the fishery was closed between 2000-2002 and again between 2009 and 2010. Areas with commercial density of scallops towards the end of their lifespan were opened to fishing each year between 2013 and 2015. The fishery was closed between 2016 and 2020. The fishery was partly opened in 2021, the first season to open since 2015, but only 44.5 tonnes were landed from the open area due to a major die-off event post survey. The fishery was fully opened to fishing in 2022, with the TAC set at 3,495 t. However, again there had been a major die-off post survey in the open area, which was in the lower east coast region, and only 604 t was landed. However, a new area in western bass Strait was opened under the established TAC, which was later increased to 4,495 t, with a total of 2,793 t landed from the new area.</p> <p>On the basis that biomass has increased during the 2016-20 closure due to wide-scale recruitment events, and current restrictions, particularly the new model of closing some biomass to fishing in the Scallop Fishery Area where fishing is taking place, are effectively limiting fishing mortality, the TSF is classified as recovering.</p> |                                   |
| STOCK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Tasmanian Scallop Fishery         |
| INDICATORS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Size structure, density and catch |

## 6. Bycatch and protected species interaction

Bycatch and protected species interaction from the recreational fishery are effectively nil as scallops are hand collected. Vessels usually anchor at dive locations but anchors are deployed on unconsolidated sediment so there is no concern with habitat interaction.

Bycatch impacts of the commercial fishery are also low because volume is low, and almost all bycatch is returned alive and healthy. Common bycatch species are molluscs such as dog cockles (*Glycymeris* sp.) and the native oyster (*Ostrea angas*). Diogenid hermit crabs (*Paguristes tuberculatus*) and the introduced screw shell (*Maoricolpus roseus*) are also taken as bycatch (see a more detailed list from scientific analysis of scallop dredge catches at White Rock in 2006, Table 10).

Interactions with threatened, endangered, or protected species (TEPS) are rare. There are low levels of interactions with syngnathids (seahorses and related species) observed, but these are usually released unharmed and interactions with syngnathid populations are limited, given that most of the fishing effort takes place in habitats that are not generally favoured by syngnathids (i.e., sandy bottoms with low levels of habitat structure). Gear is towed at low speed so interactions with mobile protected species like seals, sharks, cetaceans, and seabirds are not observed.

When the fishery is opened, scallop fishers need to record any interactions with TEPS, and record retained by-product, no reports were received in 2022. Fishers are only authorised to retain scallop species, so by-product only consists of queen (*Equichlamys bifrons*) and doughboy (*Mimachlamys asperima*) scallops, of which none were retained in 2021. Fishers do not record bycatch caught in the dredge. Scallop fishers participating in statewide surveys may make notes and observations about bycatch in log sheets, but this is not compulsory. For targeted surveys, where there are observers on board, the observers (IMAS or DPIPWE staff) may make some more detailed observations, including any interactions with TEPS, but the bycatch from each dredge tow is not quantified. More detailed collection of bycatch information during surveys should be considered, given that these are the only means of collecting this data for the fishery.

Habitat interaction from the commercial fishery has been of some concern in the past when gear interacted with sponge habitat. This problem is now overcome with the system of smaller spatial boundaries for beds opened in the TSF. This process takes account of sensitive habitats to ensure no gear interaction.

**Table 10.** List of scallop bed species retained in commercial gear during the two scallop dredge surveys conducted at White Rock in 2006.

| Category           | Common Name               | Scientific Name                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Commercial Scallop | Commercial Scallop        | <i>Pecten fumatus</i>             |
| Bivalves           | Doughboy Scallop          | <i>Mimachlamys asperima</i>       |
|                    | Queen Scallop             | <i>Equichlamys bifrons</i>        |
|                    | Mud Oyster                | <i>Ostrea angasi</i>              |
|                    | Mussel                    | <i>Mytilus edulis</i>             |
|                    | Dog Cockle                | <i>Glycymeris striatularis</i>    |
|                    | Razor clam                | <i>Atrina tasmanica</i>           |
| Other Molluscs     | New Zealand Screw Shell   | <i>Maoricolpus roseus</i>         |
|                    | New Holland Spindle Shell | <i>Fusinus novaehollandiae</i>    |
|                    | Tulip Shell               | <i>Pleuroploca australasia</i>    |
|                    | Triton Shell              | <i>Charonia lampas</i>            |
|                    | Cowrie                    | <i>Cypraea hesitata</i>           |
|                    | Pale Octopus              | <i>Octopus pallidus</i>           |
| Crustaceans        | Southern Keeled Octopus   | <i>Octopus berrima</i>            |
|                    | Hermit Crab               | <i>Strigopagurus strigimanus</i>  |
|                    | Unidentified Hermit Crab  | Unidentified sp.                  |
|                    | Spider Crab               | <i>Leptomithrax gaimardii</i>     |
|                    | Hairy Shore Crab          | <i>Pilumnus tomentosus</i>        |
|                    | NZSS Hermit Crabs         | Unidentified spp.                 |
| Seastars           | 11-Arm Seastar            | <i>Coscinasterias muricata</i>    |
|                    | Astropectinid             | <i>Bollonaster pectinatus</i>     |
|                    | Oreasterid                | <i>Nectria ocellata</i>           |
| Urchins            | Common Urchin             | <i>Heliocidaris erythrogramma</i> |
|                    | Pencil Urchin             | Unidentified sp.                  |
| Fish               | Crested Flounder          | <i>Lophonectes gallus</i>         |
|                    | Lachet                    | <i>Lepidotrigla vanessa</i>       |
|                    | Shaw's Cowfish            | <i>Aracana aurita</i>             |
| Rays               | Tasmanian Numbfish        | <i>Narcine tasmaniensis</i>       |
|                    | Banded Stingaree          | <i>Urolophus cruciatus</i>        |
| Other Species      | Pumpkin Sponge            | Unidentified sp.                  |

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

The 2022 preseason survey suggested that scallops remained in low to moderate densities around most of the Tasmanian coast, however, higher densities were found in parts of Areas 1 and 5.

FRDC 2008-022 (Mendo *et al.*, 2014b; Semmens *et al.*, 2015) demonstrated that individual scallops are more likely to spawn when at higher densities and at closer proximity to other scallops, with the potential benefits of increasing encounter rates between gametes (eggs and sperm), and the likelihood of spawning success. Maintaining regions of high scallop density is, therefore, considered an important strategy to enhance recruitment success, partly due to the improved fertilization rates at greater densities, but also due to the indirect effect on synchronization of spawning, i.e., more scallops spawn at the same time when there are more of them, and they are closer to each other (higher density beds).

The strategy of maintaining areas of 'higher' scallop density has now been adopted by the TSF and commenced during TAC setting for the 2022 season and in many ways mirrors that employed in the BSCZSF. Six scallop areas (Figure 7) are considered for opening for commercial harvest following a targeted survey. To open an area for commercial scallop harvest with an allowable catch equal to or greater than 1,000 t, an area with a minimum biomass of 1,000 t of scallop that meets the discard criteria must be closed to commercial fishing for the entire season as a spawning biomass closure. To open an area with an allowable catch of less than 1,000 tonnes the equivalent biomass of scallops that meets the discard criteria must be closed to commercial fishing for the entire season. Importantly, there is density criteria for spawning biomass closure, with a target density of ~0.6 individuals per m<sup>2</sup>, as per Mendo *et al.* (2014b).

Notably, surveys since the most recent fishery closure (2016-2020) have shown evidence of wide-scale recruitment that has occurred during the closure period and fishing has occurred in 2021 and 2022, although this has been hampered somewhat by sudden bed die-off events in the eastern portion of the fishery, which may become more common with warming waters from the east Australian current pushing further southward and predicted heatwave events. Note however, that recruitment events post the recent closure have been limited and will be needed in the coming years to continue the recovery of the fishery.

Video surveys offer an advantage over dredge surveys due to: (i) lower costs for data collection; (ii) enhanced precision of size structure; (iii) information on recruitment in recent years; (iv) minimal impact on the seafloor and benthic biota and (v) no mortality of sub-legal scallops. Their continued use is recommended for providing data for management of the TSF, in conjunction with dredge surveys. However, adoption of video surveys will require review of the criteria for closures in the fishery to account for the difference in selectivity of dredge surveys compared to video surveys. Dredge surveys, both industry standard and modified to account for recruits, could be conducted in parallel with video surveys for a pre-determined period to correctly calibrate closure criteria of the latter. It is also recommended that concurrent with this use of the technique, further development of the video survey method is undertaken, such as methods to reduce the processing costs of video analysis through techniques such as machine learning. These recommendations are being undertaken in the FRDC project 2020-030 "Wider investigation of the use of video survey techniques to determine commercial scallop abundance in inshore and offshore waters, closed areas and juvenile beds", which commenced in January 2022.

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