

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADJUSTMENTS OF 2011/12 CATCH LIMITS AT
INACCESSIBLE AND NIGHTINGALE ISLANDS IN RESPONSE TO THE
IMPACTS OF SPILLS OF OIL AND SOYA AS A RESULT OF THE OLIVA
INCIDENT**

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In broad terms, the intention of the strategy used to set annual catch limits for lobster at the islands in the Tristan group is to keep catch rates at or near to their recent levels, *inter alia* to maintain an economically viable fishery.

This aim is potentially compromised by the possible impacts arising from the OLIVA grounding and break-up: the effects of the oil spill at both Inaccessible and Nightingale islands, and of the soya spill at the latter. Johnston and Butterworth (2011) present calculations of the extent of catch reductions that would be necessary to broadly restore catch rates at these two islands to recent levels in the short to medium term. These catch losses depend on the magnitudes and nature of the oil and soya impacts on the lobster. A key difficulty is in quantifying the likely extents of these impacts.

The situation is somewhat simpler for Inaccessible island which is affected only by the oil spill. An appropriate approach there could be to base a decision on the “Safe Case” scenario advanced by Drs Franklin and Scott. **This suggests that the catch limit of 95 MT at Inaccessible for the 2011/12 season be reduced to 53 MT.**

The soya spill at Nightingale island has certainly had an impact there as evidenced by the poor catch rates experienced for recent experimental catches. The possibility of serious depletion of the resource as a result of appreciable lobster mortality caused by the soya cannot be ruled out. In these circumstances, harvesting the current catch limit of 65 MT at Nightingale could compromise the resource and future sustainable catches, so that **we recommend that the Nightingale catch limit be set to zero for the time being.**

Reference

Johnston, SJ and Butterworth, DS. 2011. Effect of the oil and soya spill events on rock lobster yields at Inaccessible and Nightingale islands. MARAM document, MARAM/TRISTAN/2011/Sep/13.