



Office of Hon Nathan Guy

MP for Otaki

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Racing

Associate Minister for Economic Development

B17-0175

Dear Stakeholder

Fisheries sustainability measures for 1 April 2017

This letter informs you of my decisions on the review of sustainability measures for rock lobster and southern blue whiting for the 2017/18 April fishing year. My decisions on Total Allowable Catches (TACs), Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACCs) and non-commercial allowances will come into effect on 1 April 2017.

The decisions I have made reflect my desire to maximise the benefits obtained from New Zealand's fisheries whilst ensuring sustainability. Where I consider there to be opportunities for increased utilisation, I have increased TACs and where I consider there to be a sustainability risk or an opportunity to ensure continued sustainability of a stock, I have decreased TACs.

In reaching my decisions I have considered best available information including submissions received from tangata whenua and stakeholders and the final advice provided to me by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the National Rock Lobster Management Group (NRLMG) (on rock lobster stocks). I also considered the relevant legislative provisions and my obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the review of fisheries sustainability measures for April 2017.

The specific decisions for each stock, with supporting rationale, are attached to this letter. The final advice provided to me by MPI and the NRLMG can be found on the MPI website at:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/review-of-rock-lobster-sustainability-measures-for-1-april-2017/> and <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/review-of-southern-blue-whiting-sustainability-measures-for-1-april-2017/>

Yours sincerely

Hon Nathan Guy
Minister for Primary Industries

Rock lobster

My decisions for rock lobster were guided by the National Rock Lobster Management Group (NRLMG), which acts as my primary advisor on rock lobster management matters. The NRLMG provided me with robust and comprehensive final advice that sought to balance utilisation with the continued sustainability of three rock lobster stocks.

For the CRA 3 and CRA 7 rock lobsters fisheries the NRLMG were unable to reach consensus on a preferred option. I understand there are times when there are differences in opinion between sector groups on a preferred management approach, but I urge the group to continue to work together to achieve consensus on rock lobster recommendations.

Each of my rock lobster decisions were based on new stock assessment information and/or the results from the operation of management procedures (decision rules). Management procedures are used to guide catch limit setting in the majority of New Zealand's rock lobster fisheries and are designed to ensure stock biomass is rebuilt to, or maintained at or above agreed reference levels.

My decisions for three rock lobster stocks that were reviewed as part of the April 2017 sustainability round are provided below.

Stock		TAC (t)	TACC (t)	Allowances (t)		
				Customary	Recreational	Other mortality
CRA 3	Current	389.95	260.95	20	20	89
	New	366.86 ↓	237.86 ↓	20	20	89
CRA 4	Current	592	397	35	85	75
	New	484 ↓	289 ↓	35	85	75
CRA 7	Current	117.72	97.72	10	5	5
	New	132.52 ↑	112.52 ↑	10	5	5

CRA 3 (Gisborne) rock lobster fishery

I have agreed to decrease the TAC for CRA 3 from 389.95 to 366.86 tonnes, and decrease the TACC from 260.95 to 237.86 tonnes based on the use of the agreed CRA 3 management procedure. No changes will be made to the non-commercial allowances for this stock.

The CRA 3 stock is still considered to be above my statutory reference level, B_{MSY} , however, there has been an observed decline in CRA 3 stock biomass in recent years. I consider that a TAC and TACC reduction is necessary to prevent a further decline in the CRA 3 biomass and to ensure continued sustainable utilisation of the fishery for the benefit of all fishers.

I note that a number of recreational submitters made comments on the smaller winter commercial minimum legal size (MLS) that applies for three months in CRA 3. I note that MPI is currently undertaking a review of the MLS regime in CRA 3. Community feedback on how the CRA 3 fishery was performing was received late in 2016 and MPI is currently considering this feedback to determine next steps.

CRA 4 (Wellington/Hawkes Bay) rock lobster fishery

The NRLMG provided me with two new CRA 4 management procedure candidates to consider to support my decision on this fishery, called *Rule 24* and *Rule 6*. I acknowledge that both of the procedures are similar in their design and are expected to rebuild the CRA 4 stock towards the target level in the next five years with high probability (stock biomass was 25% below the target in 2016).

I have agreed to use the Rule 6 CRA 4 management procedure to guide the setting of the CRA 4 TAC for the next five years because it is likely to result in a more conservative management approach, in comparison to Rule 24.

I am satisfied that this approach is warranted for this important shared fishery because of its past and current performance and uncertainties associated with future recruitment. There have been significant increases and decreases in the TACC in the last 10 years and some concerns have been expressed that the underlying productivity of the CRA 4 stock may have diminished over time for reasons unknown. I agree with the NRLMG that the reasons for this change in productivity should be explored further.

Based on the use of the Rule 6 management procedure, I have agreed to decrease the TAC for CRA 4 from 592 to 484 tonnes, and decrease the TACC from 397 to 289 tonnes from 1 April 2017. No changes will be made to the non-commercial allowances for this stock.

I acknowledge that my decision will have significant economic impacts on the CRA 4 industry. However, the Rule 6 management procedure is expected to have a greater probability of rebuild in five years and have higher commercial catch rates in the short and medium terms, when compared to Rule 24. I consider that this will provide the industry with improved benefits in time.

An important part of the rebuild of the CRA 4 stock will be to ensure that recreational catches do not increase to the point where the rebuild is threatened. MPI informs me that the 2017/18 National Panel Survey should provide a robust estimate of recreational harvest for CRA 4, which will be considered to determine whether further changes are needed to current management settings.

CRA 7 (Otago) rock lobster fishery

I have agreed to increase the TAC for CRA 7 from 117.72 to 132.52 tonnes, and increase the TACC from 97.72 to 112.52 tonnes based on the use of the agreed CRA 7 management procedure. No changes will be made to the non-commercial allowances for this stock.

This increase is in response to improved stock biomass since 2012. Considering that there are no sustainability concerns for the CRA 7 stock at this time, the increase to the CRA 7 TACC will provide opportunities for greater utilisation.

Concerns about the smaller CRA 7 commercial MLS were also raised by some recreational submitters. The CRA 7 MLS was reviewed in 2012 and 2014 with no

changes made to the size regime. MPI informs me that since these reviews, no new information has become available to suggest that the size needs to be looked at again. The CRA 7 commercial MLS is based on the biological characteristics of the fishery, which relate to the fishery habitat not supporting an abundance of larger rock lobsters and the movement of large numbers of smaller-sized rock lobsters into the neighbouring CRA 8 fishery.

Other comments

The NRLMG recommended that MPI urgently work on better estimation of illegal and recreational removals from rock lobster fisheries, and efforts to constrain illegal take. I acknowledge the importance of accurate removal estimates in informing stock assessments and improving the effectiveness of managing rock lobster fisheries. MPI advises that estimating illegal removals is inherently difficult, but they will continue to work with the NRLMG on ways to more accurately estimate and minimise illegal take. Likewise, MPI will continue to work with the NRLMG on ways to obtain better recreational harvest estimates.

Southern blue whiting

My decisions for two southern blue whiting stocks that were reviewed as part of the April 2017 sustainability round are provided below.

Stock		TAC (t)	TACC (t)	Allowances (t)		
				Customary	Recreational	Other mortality
SBW 1	Current	8	8	0	0	0
	New	100 ↑	98 ↑	0	0	2 ↑
SBW 6B	Current	3,000	2,940	0	0	60
	New	2,426 ↓	2,377 ↓	0	0	49 ↓

Mainland (SBW 1) southern blue whiting fishery

I have agreed to increase the TAC for SBW 1 from a nominal 8 tonnes to 100 tonnes, and increase the TACC from 8 to 98 tonnes. I have also decided to set an allowance for other sources of fishing related mortality for the first time of 2 tonnes, set to be 2% of the TAC to remain consistent with allowances in the other southern blue whiting fisheries. There is no known customary Māori or recreational take of southern blue whiting, therefore, I have maintained the zero allowances for these interests within the TAC.

The previous TAC of 8 tonnes was set when SBW entered the Quota Management System (QMS) in 1999. I consider that the TAC increase better reflects improved reporting since introduction to the QMS and the apparent increase in abundance of southern blue whiting in this area. The abundance change is thought to be related to changes in the distribution and abundance of this species outside traditional stock boundaries.

Bounty Platform (SBW 6B) southern blue whiting fishery

I have decided to decrease the TAC for SBW 6B from 3,000 tonnes to 2,426 tonnes and the TACC from 2,940 tonnes to 2,377 tonnes. I am also reducing the allowance for other sources of fishing related mortality from 60 tonnes to 49 tonnes to retain it at

2% of the TAC. I have maintained the zero allowances for customary Māori and recreational interests, because like SBW 1 there is no known take by these groups in the fishery.

My decisions are based on the best available science which indicates that the SBW 6B stock is below the management target and the previous catch limit was too high to move the stock back to the target and compensate for natural fluctuations of the stock level. The revised catch limit is based on a management strategy evaluation completed in 2016 which calculated the annual yield that would be expected to return the stock to the target level, taking into account natural fluctuations of the stock.