



B18-0261

Dear Stakeholder

In-season increase to the total allowable catch for southern bluefin tuna

This letter outlines my final decision on a proposal for an in-season increase to the Total Allowable Catch for southern bluefin tuna, for the 2017/18 fishing year. My decision to increase the Total Allowable Catch, Annual Catch Entitlements (ACE), and recreational allowance for southern bluefin tuna comes into effect on 20 April 2018.

In reaching my decision, I have considered submissions received from tangata whenua and stakeholders on initial proposals, final advice from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), my relevant domestic legislative obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act), and my relevant international obligations.

I have decided on an in-season increase to the 2017/2018 fishing year southern bluefin tuna Total Allowable Catch of 88 tonnes which will be achieved by:

- Retaining the customary Māori allowance of 1 tonne;
- Increasing the recreational allowance by 12 tonnes to 20 tonnes;
- Retaining an allowance for other fishing mortality of 20 tonnes;
- Retaining the Total Allowable Commercial Catch of 971 tonnes; and
- Increasing the available Annual Catch Entitlements for commercial fishers by 76 tonnes.

The decision I have made reflects my desire to provide for sustainable utilisation of New Zealand's southern bluefin tuna fishery, while recognising the growing importance of the southern bluefin tuna recreational fishery along with the potential for greater commercial gains from this fishery.

My decision to increase the Total Allowable Catch is in keeping with the decisions made by the Commission for Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (the Commission) to increase the global level of catch, which included an increased allocation for New Zealand.

I note that based on advice from the Commission, this increase in catch will still allow for the stock to rebuild and reach its interim rebuild target by 2035.

It is my view that the decision for New Zealand to apply its increased country allocation through an in-season change is consistent with the relevant provisions of the Fisheries Act 1996, and New Zealand's international obligations.

I have chosen to raise the recreational allowance by 12 tonnes to acknowledge the increased levels of recreational catch witnessed in 2017. The 2017 recreational catch represents a significant increase from previous historical catch by this sector and there is some uncertainty surrounding the ongoing nature of this shift. Therefore, I have chosen a recreational allowance of 20 tonnes this year recognising that MPI's plan to review the stock as part of the 1 October 2018 sustainability round will provide me with a further opportunity to adjust the management of this fishery should high recreational catch persist.

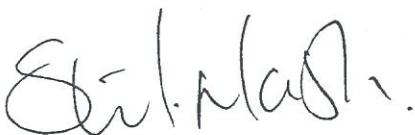
MPI will also be gathering additional information and consulting stakeholders on the recreational southern bluefin tuna fishery this year, which will inform future management decisions.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed submissions and discussion on the proposals for an in-season increase to the Total Allowable Catch for southern bluefin tuna.

The entire decision document which outlines the advice from MPI can be found on the MPI website at:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/proposal-for-an-in-season-increase-to-the-total-allowable-catch-for-southern-bluefin-tuna/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Nash'.

Hon Stuart Nash
Minister of Fisheries