

Review of Rock Lobster Sustainable Measures

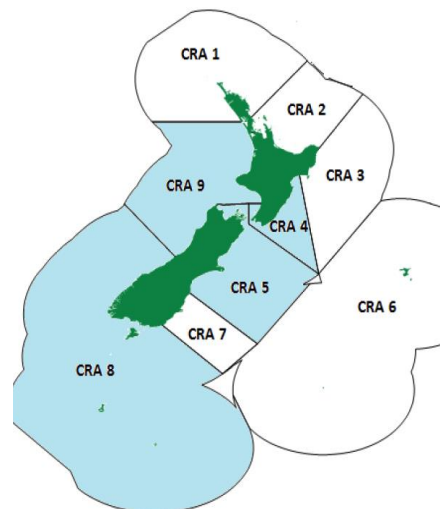
A summary of proposals for the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council

January 2016

The National Rock Lobster Management Group (NRLMG) is seeking tangata whenua and stakeholder views on proposed new Management Procedures to set Total Allowable Catches (TACs) in the CRA 5 (NE South Island) and CRA 8 (SW South Island) rock lobster fisheries. The Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) will remain the same in these areas but an increase in the recreational allowance in CRA5 is proposed.

Decreases in the TACC in CRA 4 (SW North Island) and CRA 9 (west coast Kaipara to Franz Josef) are proposed.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) seeks information and written submissions on the proposals summarised in Table 1. **Submission deadline is 11 February 2016. This document provides a summary of the proposals and a preliminary view from NZSFC.**



The NRLMG's management goal is for all rock lobster fisheries:

“to be managed and maintained at or above the assessed and agreed reference levels, using a comprehensive approach that recognises a range of customary Maori, amateur, commercial and environmental concerns and benefits”.

NZSFC made a strong submission in 2014 that the 15% reduction in TACC in CRA 2 was inadequate to turn this fishery around. Commercial catch rates have continued to decline from 0.4 kg per pot lift to 0.3 kg per pot lift. It will have to fall to 0.285 kg/pot lift to trigger the 5% reduction threshold. The recreational cray catch in CRA 2 has collapsed and the Management Procedure has failed. NZSFC should continue to express its concerns and expectations on the Minister to manage the crayfish stocks to abundant levels to enable all users to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeings.

CRA 4 Management Procedures

Points of interest:

- Commercial catch rates have dropped about 25% since the stock assessment in 2011. It was 0.88 kg per pot lift in 2015.
- The Working Group consider that the CRA 4 stock remains above Bmsy and the reference biomass.
- Under the current Management Procedure the CRA 4 TACC would be decreased by 21 tonnes, to 446 t.
- The CRA 4 Rock Lobster Industry Association (CRAMAC 4) consider that the 21 t decrease does not go far enough to ensure the stock is maintained above agreed reference levels. They propose a 47 t decrease (10%) to the TACC. This would be a rare departure from the Management Procedure.
- Allowances for recreational and customary catch and other mortality will remain the same.

Comments:

NZSFC need to support the conservative approach taken by commercial fishers in CRA 4. The Management Procedure is a guide and we are not convinced that commercial CPUE tells the whole story about stock abundance in most CRA areas. It would be good to get comments from clubs and cray fishers in the area on trends in recreational cray catch.

Table 1: Summary of Options in the Current Review of Rock Lobster Sustainability Measures for 1 April 2016

Stock	Option	TAC	Customary	Recreational	Other mortality	TACC
CRA 4	CRA4_01: Use the <u>current</u> CRA 4 management procedure and decrease the TAC by decreasing the TACC by 4.5 %	641 t ↓	35 t	85 t	75 t	446 t ↓
	CRA4_02: Decrease the CRA 4 TAC by decreasing the TACC by 10% (industry proposal subject to endorsement from CRA 4 quota share owners)	615 t ↓	35 t	85 t	75 t	420 t ↓
	CRA4_03: Retain the current CRA 4 TAC, allowances and TACC	662 t	35 t	85 t	75 t	467 t
CRA 5	CRA5_01: Use the <u>new</u> CRA 5 management procedure and set the following TAC and allowances, while retaining the TACC	507 t ↑	40 t	87 t ↑	30 t ↓	350 t
	CRA5_02: Use the <u>current</u> CRA 5 management procedure and retain the TAC, allowances and TACC	467 t	40 t	40 t	37 t	350 t
CRA 8	CRA8_01: Use the <u>new</u> CRA 8 management procedure and set the following TAC and allowances, while retaining the TACC	1030 t ↓	30 t	33 t	5 t ↓	962 t
	CRA8_02: Use the <u>current</u> CRA 8 management procedure and retain the TAC, allowances and TACC	1053 t	30 t	33 t	28 t	962 t
CRA 9	CRA9_01: Use the <u>current</u> CRA 9 management procedure and decrease the TAC and TACC	101 t ↓	20 t	30 t	5 t	46 t ↓
	CRA9_02: Retain the current CRA 9 TAC, allowances and TACC	115.8 t	20 t	30 t	5 t	60.8 t

CRA 5 Assessment and New Management Procedure

Points of interest:

- There is a new stock assessment for CRA 5. These models seem crazy. It estimates that in 2015 the spawning stock biomass (mature females) was 78 to 97% of the unfished level. Total biomass in 2015 was about 67% of the unfished level.
- Projections using 2014 catch levels and recent recruitments estimate that stock biomass will decline in the next four years by 8 to 10%.
- Feedback from a multi-sector meeting in Blenheim in August 2015 identified common goals that goals to:
 - Maintaining good levels of abundance for all sectors levels of abundance, which is a stock size well above *B_{msy}*;
 - Ensuring sustainability and availability of rock lobsters for all sectors.
- The main difference between the new and current CRA 5 management procedures is in the length of the “plateau”. Under the new procedure the TACC is 350 tonnes between CPUEs of 1.2 and 2.2 kg/potlift, whereas under the current procedure the TACC is 350 tonnes between CPUEs of 1.4 and 2.0 kg/potlift.
- **It is proposed that the 40 tonne recreational allowance for CRA 5 is increased to 87 tonnes** to reflect new survey information that suggests recreational harvest is greater than previous harvest estimates.
- In addition the NRLMG is proposing that additional recreational regulatory measures be consulted upon in different process for implementation in October 2016 to support the ongoing sustainable utilisation of this fishery. These additional measures include the introduction of ‘telson clipping’ and an accumulation limit of 18 rock lobsters (3 daily bag limits) for recreational fishers.
- Frequent monitoring of recreational rock lobster harvest through MPI approved survey methodologies is also proposed.
- It is proposed that the 37 t allowance for other sources of fishing-related is decreased to 30 t.

Comments:

Last year catch rates were lower and the Management Procedure resulted in a 4% reduction in TACC. This was rejected by commercial fishers and the NRLMG as unnecessary and the Minister agreed. This was the first time that a Management Procedure was not followed (also in CRA9 that year). The response was to run a new stock assessment, 2 years early, and a replace the Management Procedure.

The new stock assessment model suggests that CRA 5 is well above the reference biomass. It seems that the commercial fishers and stakeholders don’t believe the model either, as they have not asked for an increase in catch and in fact extended the plateau in the Management Procedure to delay any increase.

The optimistic assessment does make it relatively easy to double the recreational allowance and increase the TAC. Recreational catch was high, especially in the Kaikoura area during the harvest survey in 2012-13. There was also some black market activity around then. Recreational fishers report that catch rates have declined since then.

Telson clipping has been suggested, yet again. NZSFC have not supported this in the past. The 18 cray accumulation limit won’t affect most people but we should check how this would be applied on charter boats. These measures were implemented in the Te Korowai o Te Tai o Marokura – Kaikoura Marine Management Area. Any thoughts from clubs in the area on these issues would be appreciated.

Preliminary input from the Te Waka a Māui me Ōna Toka Forum (the MPI iwi forum that covers the South Island) is that tangata whenua do not support increasing the recreational allowance. Instead the Forum considers better information on recreational catch should be obtained and steps taken to constrain recreational catch before increasing the allowance.

CRA 8 Assessment and New Management Procedure

Points of interest:

- There is a new stock assessment for CRA 8. It estimates that in 2015 the spawning stock biomass in 2015 was 44% of the unfished level. Total biomass in 2015 was about 27% of the unfished level
- With 2014 catch levels, stock biomass is projected to remain near its current level.
- The way that commercial CPUE in CRA 8 is calculated has changed. They no longer count the estimated weight of cray returned to the sea which can be 40% by weight. The CRA 8 industry considered it unrealistic to drive a management procedure with CPUE based on all rock lobsters brought on board when only a part of the catch is retained. **This new CPUE is called “money-fish CPUE”, “\$CPUE”.**
- Under the new or old Management Procedure the TACC will stay at 962 tonnes. The money-fish CPUE for 2015 is 3.06 kg per pot lift while the CPUE with released cray for 2015 is 3.3 kg per pot lift, just a 7% difference.
- What the new Management Procedure does is reduce the CPUE increase required to result in a TACC increase to just 5% above the current level.
- It is proposed that the 28 tonne allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality (i.e. for illegal catch only) is decreased to 5 tonne.

Comments:

This is another stock assessment and review of the Management Procedure bought forward 2 years. Even though CRA 8 CPUE is the highest in the country it has one of the lowest stock levels, estimated to be at B27.

We can agree that not including all the released cray in the CPUE is a good idea. Strange that it makes such a small difference to the standardised CPUE. We will need to compare trends in this and CRA 5 between the old and new assessment.

The allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality should include release mortality and cray that are trapped in lost pots etc, not just illegal catch. NRLMG making up their own rules again it seems.

There are quite large recreational only areas in Fiordland and by all accounts they work for crays in these remote areas where recreational effort is low.

CRA 9 Management Procedure

Points of interest:

- The commercial CPUE in CRA 9 has decreased again in 2015.
- **The 2015 standardised CPUE was 1.885 kg per potlift and it is proposed to reduce the TACC by 25%, from 61 to 46 t.**
- If the Management Procedure is ignored for a second year the NRLMG would consider the Management Procedure to be revoked.
- The current recreational allowance is 30 t, customary allowance 20 t and other mortality 5 t. There is little information in the IPP on the rationale used when setting these allowances and no change is proposed. The National Panel Survey estimate of recreational catch in CRA 9 was 18 t in 2011-12.

Comments:

This fishery covers a large area of exposed west coast in the North and South Islands. Commercial effort is not high and weather conditions and access to suitable rocky reef areas may affect CPUE as much, or more than, abundance. Reportedly there are a lot of large crayfish in areas such as Taranaki, good for recreational fishers, but not the preferred target size for commercial fishers.

Last year the Management Procedure indicated a reduction in the TACC to 46 t was needed. The industry, customary and MPI supported the option to leave it at 61 t because of doubts about “insufficient catch and effort data”. The Minister took their advice.