

## NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 17

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### Snapper fishery rebuild plan underway

A fisheries management milestone was achieved at the recent New Zealand Sport Fishing Council AGM held in Tutukaka. Fifty-seven clubs, representing 33,000 affiliated members, voted in favour of a dedicated rebuild strategy for Snapper 1, the largest inshore fishery for recreational fishers.

This promises to be the first of many policies developed by amateur fishers for specific stocks around the country.

Snapper 1 (SNA1) extends from North Cape to East Cape in the North Island. It supports the biggest population of recreational fishers from Northland, Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty.

While the rebuild has started, with abundance in the Hauraki Gulf returning to the levels of the early 1980s, overall this stock is less than half the size required by the Ministry's Harvest Strategy Standard. We must continue to build from this base to ensure abundance for future generations.

A rebuilt SNA1 fishery will provide the public and commercial fishers with a healthier ecosystem, more and bigger fish, making them easier to catch using less fuel and reducing environmental impact.

#### Snapper 1 policy

**Objective** – to rebuild the snapper stock in Snapper 1 to the target level of 40% of the original biomass.

#### Policy –

- No increase to the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) in Snapper 1 until:
  - The stock has been restored to the target level;
  - The stock is capable of meeting the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
  - Those needs have been adequately identified and allowed for.
- To improve the yield per recruit by reducing the mortality of small fish.
- To encourage better management of our impact on the marine environment.

Strategies to achieve success include setting a reasonable rebuild timeframe so that this fishery is restored to abundance in our lifetime.

Most importantly, this policy is achievable and affordable.

#### Abundance is achievable

Throughout the fisheries debate we have been reminded of Cabinet restraints that require fiscal neutrality and no re-litigation of the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992.

This Snapper 1 policy meets both of these criteria, by setting realistic goals with a focus on reducing juvenile mortality and fishing smarter.

What's more, these goals are supported by the Ministry's own Harvest Strategy Standard, which has a default target of 40% of the original biomass for slower growing fish such as snapper.

This policy also confirms the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council's aspirations and demonstrates our future commitment to developing similar rebuild strategies for other important stocks.

#### Fishing innovations

Daren Coulston updated the AGM on progress with the T90 square trawl mesh trials in the Hawke Bay. A local trawlerman, Richard Burch, has spent the last decade developing an alternative design to the existing

diamond trawl mesh that captures and kills thousands of juvenile fish every month. He is concerned about wastage, the bins of young fish that are being dumped every day, due to trawling.

Richard's trials have been hampered by a lack of funds. Interestingly, the major backing has come from concerned recreational fishers, through the Guardians of the Sea Charitable Trust. More recently the fishing industry and local iwi Ngati Kahungunu have provided support.

Next, these trials need to be filmed to capture and compare the performance of diamond versus square mesh, and the amount of keepers to 'bycatch' from each design.

These net innovations and the development of stock-specific policies have given the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council a refreshing new approach to achieving 'more fish in the water'. The Council encourages the public to support these advancements by contributing to LegaSea. [www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz)