

## **NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 18**

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### **Many reasons to celebrate 2012**

Recreational fishermen have much to celebrate in 2012 and even more to anticipate in the next few years. It has been four years since the Minister of Fisheries approved the Harvest Strategy Standard and two years since the historic Kahawai management decision. Just recently the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council adopted our own rebuild strategy for Snapper 1, the largest inshore fishery for recreational interests.

These developments represent a significant shift to managing fisheries at higher stock levels. They also align New Zealand's management with international trends towards maintaining more robust fisheries.

Having more and bigger fish thriving in a productive ecosystem has benefits for our fisheries, the environment, our communities and us.

### **Harvest Strategy Standard**

There are 96 species, or groupings, and 628 individual fishstocks in the Quota Management System. The majority of these stocks have no specified management target. The Harvest Strategy Standard (HSS) requires targets to be set. Stocks are then monitored against specific limits that must not be exceeded.

In 2008 the fisheries Minister and Ministry recognised that conservative targets and limits were required, to mitigate the higher risks associated with managing low-information stocks or uncertainty about stock sizes.

Interestingly, they also noted that some countries were moving towards closing fisheries estimated to be at 20% of original stock level. This was not considered "practicable" for New Zealand because estimates for some of our important stocks were at or below this 20 percent level. Snapper 8 on the North Island's west coast is one example.

Instead, if the default hard limit of 10 percent of original biomass level is breached, "a closure will be recommended as one management option".

### **Kahawai decision**

In 2010 the Minister set new catch levels in Kahawai 1 (KAH1), between North Cape and Cape Runaway. This decision was guided by the Kahawai Legal Challenge Supreme Court ruling that confirmed the Minister could choose to manage a stock at high abundance.

Also, recreational fishers had a right to quality fishing; providing for our social wellbeing was an important part of our interests, and any allowance had to be reasonable.

Phil Heatley decided to allow Kahawai to rebuild to more than 50% of virgin biomass, to better provide for recreational interests.

There have been more and bigger kahawai in the Hauraki Gulf and Waitemata during the past few years. While it is difficult to determine where these fish have come from, it is pleasing to see kahawai schools returning to inshore waters. Hopefully this is permanent and leads to the reappearance of seabirds.

### **Snapper 1 policy**

In September the NZ Sport Fishing Council adopted a policy for rebuilding the Snapper 1 (SNA1) stock, between North Cape and Cape Runaway. The objective is to double the existing biomass, with a target of 40% of the unfished biomass, and allow for stock fluctuations above that target.

A variety of measures will be promoted to achieve this rebuild, including:

- No increase in commercial catch until the target biomass is reached;
- Reducing the numbers of small fish being senselessly killed; and
- Better management of people's impact on the marine ecosystem.

A strategy to restore abundance, by promoting achievable and affordable actions, has also been developed.

In anticipation of a complex and hotly contested SNA1 management review in 2013, the NZ Sport Fishing Council will be defining those actions, canvassing people's views and recruiting public support for this policy.

Our ambitions do not stop at Snapper or Kahawai 1. The NZ Sport Fishing Council aspires to having all stocks managed at higher abundance levels. That will certainly be an outcome worth celebrating.

You can support this action by contributing at [www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz).