



Office of Hon David Carter

Minister for Primary Industries

B11-605

Dear Stakeholder

This letter outlines my final decisions on rock lobster sustainability measures for the 2012-13 fishing year beginning 1 April 2012.

In reaching my decisions I have considered advice from the National Rock Lobster Management Group (NRLMG), the NRLMG's analysis of tangata whenua and stakeholder submissions and available rock lobster stock assessment information. I also considered the relevant legislative provisions and my obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996.

You can find copies of the NRLMG's advice papers on the Ministry's website at: www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Consultations/Archive/default.htm

The specific decisions for each rock lobster fishery are outlined in the table below:

<i>Stock</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>TAC</i>	<i>Customary Allowance</i>	<i>Recreational Allowance</i>	<i>Other Mortality</i>	<i>TACC</i>
CRA 3	Guided by the existing CRA 3 Management Procedure increase the TAC and TACC	322.3 t	20t	20t	89 t	193.3 t
CRA 4	Guided by the new CRA 4 Management Procedure retain the TAC and allowances	661.9 t	35t	85t	75 t	466.9 t
CRA 5	Guided by the new CRA 5 Management Procedure retain the TAC and allowances	467 t	40t	40t	37 t	350 t
CRA 7	Guided by the existing CRA 7 Management Procedure decrease the TAC and TACC	83.9 t	10t	5t	5 t	63.9 t

CRA 3 (Gisborne) Rock Lobster Fishery

I have decided to increase the CRA 3 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) from 293 to 322.3 tonnes, and increase the CRA 3 Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) from 164 to 193.3 tonnes.

The setting of the TAC for CRA 3 is guided by a management procedure that was agreed for use from April 2010 onwards. The management procedure in place for CRA 3 is designed to move the stock to a level at or above the target by 2016. Best available information suggests the stock has rebuilt from its state of low abundance and may now be above the desired target level.

I am confident ongoing application of the CRA 3 Management Procedure will ensure sustainability management objectives are met for this stock. The management procedure is designed to be responsive to annual changes in stock abundance; it ensures TAC levels do not lag behind stock abundance. Should the reliable indicator of relative stock size in CRA 3 – catch-per-unit-effort (or CPUE) – decline in the future, a TAC reduction will be recommended by the management procedure.

The allowances for customary Maori (20 tonnes), recreational interests (20 tonnes) and other sources of fishing-related mortality (89 tonnes) will remain unchanged at this time because best available information suggests the current allowances adequately allow for these interests.

CRA 4 (Wellington/Hawkes Bay) Rock Lobster Fishery

I have agreed to use the new CRA 4 Management Procedure to guide TAC setting in CRA 4 from the 2012-13 fishing year onwards. Based on the application of the management procedure, I have also decided to retain the current CRA 4 TAC of 661.9 tonnes and retain the current allowances for the 2012-13 fishing year.

Best available information on CRA 4 stock status suggests the current stock size is well above the target level. Therefore, my decision to retain the CRA 4 TAC does not pose a risk to stock sustainability.

I applaud the approach taken to developing the new CRA 4 Management Procedure last year where representatives of all three fishery sectors met and agreed on common goals for the fishery: “high abundance”, “high catch rates”, and a stable fishery. I am confident ongoing application of the CRA 4 Management Procedure will ensure the shared management objectives are provided for, including greater stability in the fishery and maintenance of stock size above the target level.

The allowances for customary Maori (35 tonnes), recreational interests (85 tonnes) and other sources of fishing-related mortality (75 tonnes) will remain unchanged at this time because best available information suggests the current allowances adequately allow for these interests.

CRA 5 (Canterbury/Marlborough) Rock Lobster Fishery

I have agreed to use the new CRA 5 Management Procedure to guide TAC setting in CRA 5 from the 2012-13 fishing year onwards. Based on the application of the management procedure, I have also decided to retain the current CRA 5 TAC of 467 tonnes and retain the current allowances for the 2012-13 fishing year.

Best available information on CRA 5 stock status suggests the current stock size is well above the target level. Therefore, my decision to retain the CRA 5 TAC does not pose a risk to stock sustainability. Also, ongoing application of the CRA 5 management procedure is expected to maintain the stock above the target level.

The allowances for customary Maori (40 tonnes), recreational interests (40 tonnes) and other sources of fishing-related mortality (37 tonnes) will remain unchanged at this time. Although best available information suggests the current allowances for customary and other sources of mortality adequately allow for these interests, this may not be the case for recreational interests. Given the considerable uncertainty on the current level of recreational removals, I strongly encourage the collection of robust information on recreational catch in the CRA 5 fishery so that an informed assessment can be made. This new information will ensure the recreational allowance and/or daily bag limit are appropriately set for CRA 5.

CRA 7 (Otago) Rock Lobster Fishery

I have decided to decrease the CRA 7 TAC from 95.7 to 83.9 tonnes, and decrease the CRA 7 TACC from 75.7 to 63.9 tonnes.

The setting of the TAC for CRA 7 is guided by a management procedure that was agreed for use from April 2011 onwards. Best available information suggests the CRA 7 fishery is going through a period of cyclic decline; however, ongoing application of the management procedure is expected to maintain the stock at or above the target level. I am confident application of the CRA 7 Management Procedure will provide a mechanism to rebuild the CRA 7 fishery.

The allowances for customary Maori (10 tonnes), recreational interests (5 tonnes) and other sources of fishing-related mortality (5 tonnes) will remain unchanged at this time because best available information suggests the current allowances adequately allow for these interests.

Other Matters

I note a number of submitters on the NRLMG's sustainability advice commented on the review of rock lobster commercial concession area regulations (ie, areas where commercial fishers can harvest rock lobster at a smaller size in CRA 3, CRA 7 and CRA 8 rock lobster fisheries than other parts of New Zealand).

The Ministry is to provide me with final advice on the concession area review in April this year. Therefore, it is likely that I will announce my decision on the Concession Area review in next 2-3 months. This will provide sufficient time to consider any potential impacts from Concession Area changes on TAC setting for the 2013-14 fishing year beginning 1 April 2013.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the rock lobster sustainability process for the 2012-13 fishing year.

Yours sincerely



Hon David Carter
Minister for Primary Industries