



Charter Boat Catch Reporting – Additional Fish Stocks

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Requests for further copies should be directed to:

Publications Logistics Officer
Ministry for Primary Industries
PO Box 2526
WELLINGTON 6140

Email: brand@mpi.govt.nz

Telephone: 0800 00 83 33

Facsimile: 04-894 0300

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CHARTER BOAT CATCH REPORTING – ADDITIONAL FISH STOCKS

1 This Initial Position Paper (IPP) provides the Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI's) initial views on a proposal to include additional fish stocks whose catch must be reported by charter boat operators from 1 October 2012.

2 MPI has developed this IPP for the purpose of consultation. MPI emphasises the views and recommendations outlined in the paper are preliminary and are provided as a basis for consultation with stakeholders.

3 In August 2012, MPI will compile the Final Advice Paper (FAP) for the attached proposal. This document will summarise MPI's and stakeholder's views on the issues being reviewed, and provide final advice and recommendations to the Minister for Primary Industries. A copy of the FAP and the Minister's letter setting out his final decisions will be posted on the MPI website as soon as these become available. Hard copies will be available on request.

Deadline for Submissions

4 MPI welcomes written submissions on the proposals contained in the IPP. All written submissions must be received by MPI no later than 4pm on Tuesday, 31 July 2012.

Written submissions should be sent directly to:

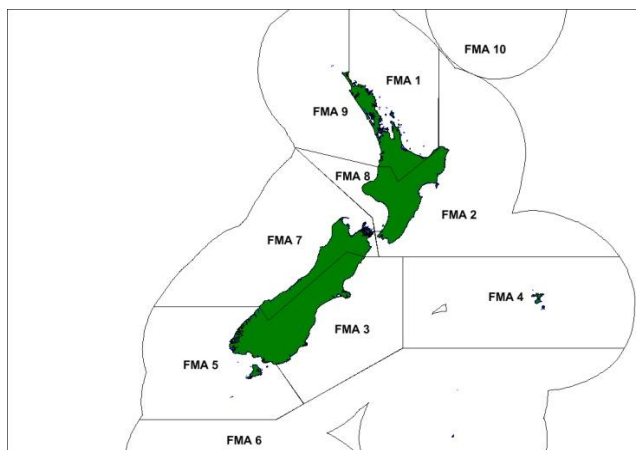
Kara McKelvey
Ministry for Primary Industries
P O Box 2526
Wellington 6011

or emailed to kara.mckelvey@mpi.govt.nz

5 All submissions are subject to the Official Information Act and can be released, if requested, under the Act. If you have specific reasons for wanting to have your submission withheld, please set out your reasons in the submission. MPI will consider those reasons when making any assessment for the release of submissions if requested under the Official Information Act.

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs)



6 The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is seeking tangata whenua and stakeholder information and views on a proposal to include additional fish stocks whose catch must be reported by charter boat operators¹ from 1 October 2012.

7 Currently reporting of hapuku, bass, kingfish, Southern bluefin tuna and Pacific bluefin tuna catch is required when fishing activity is undertaken in Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) 1 and 7 and blue cod and rock lobster in FMA 7 only. MPI proposes to extend catch reporting of species listed above to all FMAs and include on this list for all FMAs one additional species – bluenose from 1 October 2012. This information is required to support management decisions.

¹ Charter boat fishing is an activity that takes people fishing under the amateur fishing regulations and where payment is made for the boat and guide services.

CONTEXT

Need to Act

8 Stocks subject to charter boat catch reporting are managed under the draft National Fisheries Plan (the Finfish Plan) for Inshore Finfish.² The Finfish Plan is an MPI policy document which came into operation from July 2011. It sets out management objectives for inshore finfish stocks. A management action in the Finfish Annual Operating Plan for 2012 is to review catch reporting requirements in charter boat regulations; increasing fish stock coverage. The outcome of this action will be to obtain more and better information to support management decisions.

9 Charter boat catch reporting may be an important gauge of sustainability concerns. In some fisheries, such as the West Coast Pacific bluefin tuna fishery, where catch from charter boats is likely to be a significant proportion of total amateur catch in New Zealand waters, reliable information on catches may help inform decisions on catch allocation. Over time systematic catch reporting will provide a time series from which managers may identify and monitor trends.

10 The charter boat reporting scheme requires the following of all charter boat operators:

Registration

- Register the charter boat operator and their boat(s) annually, providing details and contact details for their business,

Activity reporting

- Record their fishing activity or effort for each trip before returning to port. Activity is reported by location, the target species, fishing method, numbers fishing, and time fished.

Catch reporting

- Where catch includes fish of certain stocks, the number of fish of that stock caught and retained at each location must be recorded.

² The Fisheries Plan has not been formally approved under the Act.

- Catch reporting is currently required for blue cod in FMA 7, rock lobster in FMA 7 (except for the area between Bruce Bay and Farewell Spit), hapuku, bass and kingfish in FMA 1 and southern and Pacific bluefin tuna for FMAs 1 and 7.
- From 1 October 2012, additional catch information is planned to be phased into the following areas: hapuku and bass in FMAs 2 and 9, kingfish in FMA 2 and rock lobster in FMAs 2, 3, 5 and 6 and southern and Pacific bluefin in all areas.

11 MPI has been assessing the way to get the most out of catch reporting. Charter boat activity reporting from 2011 has provided the means to better characterise the distribution of fishing effort by the charter boat fleet. MPI has mapped target fishing locations reported in the first year of the schemes operation. MPI has also reassessed the management information needs.

The species whose catch is reported

Hapuku and Bass (HAP, BAS)

12 These large groper species are believed to be somewhat resident. They live within specific local areas on rock reefs. These resident individuals generally stay within this local area over many years. This limits the local population of large fish to the carrying capacity of the reef, and makes them vulnerable to being “fished out.” These fish will eventually be replaced by smaller recruits, but areas may take some time to recover if they are fished too hard.

13 Target fishing for gropers made up almost 5% of the total number of reported trips by charter boats in 2011. This analysis suggests that target fishing locations for hapuku and bass species are more evenly and more widely distributed amongst FMAs than when assessed in 2009.

14 The significance of the charter boat catch as a proportion of the total known amateur catch makes collection of catch information useful to management at the stock level. At a local level, location specific catch data is likely to inform scientific understanding of the fishery and stocks and support management decisions. For gropers it is important to discriminate between the species when reporting so that we can better monitor individual fish stocks.

Kingfish (KIN)

15 Kingfish are large fast swimming species popular with amateur fishers. They exhibit some tendency to long-term local residency, which makes them vulnerable to being locally depleted at least in some areas.

16 Very limited information is available on the stocks and some charter boats specialising in kingfish are believed to contribute significantly to the amateur catch although many of the kingfish caught from these boats are released alive. Target fishing for kingfish made up almost 5% of the total number of reported trips by charter boats in 2011. This analysis suggests that target fishing locations for kingfish is more evenly and more widely distributed amongst FMAs than when assessed in 2009. Catch information taking into account releases from charter boats for kingfish is a potential means to assess the relative state of the stocks.

Bluenose (BNS)

17 This species lives within specific local areas on rock shelves sometimes in association with the gropers and kingfish. The stocks of bluenose have been depleted and are now subject to a recovery plan.

18 Target fishing for bluenose made up only 1% of the total number of reported trips by charter boats in 2011. This analysis suggests that target fishing locations for bluenose is evenly and widely distributed amongst FMAs. The significance of the charter boat catch as a proportion of the total known catch makes catch information useful as a potential opportunity for monitoring the recovery of bluenose.

Blue Cod (BCO)

19 Blue cod is the iconic southern finfish species with significant commercial and amateur take. Key fisheries (Marlborough Sounds, Cook Strait, Kaikoura, Motunau, Banks Peninsula, North Otago, Foveaux Strait/Stewart Island & Fiordland) are important to charter boat operators. Target fishing for blue cod made up nearly 19% of the total number of reported trips by charter boat operators in 2011. This analysis suggests that target fishing locations for blue cod is more evenly and more widely distributed amongst FMAs than when assessed in 2009 but not to the extent of target fishing occurring in FMAs 1 and 9.

20 It is considered that throughout its distribution there are many largely independent sub-stocks resulting in this species being susceptible to localised depletion. There is increasing pressure for management intervention to ensure the continued sustainability of the fishery. While MPI has data on the commercial catch and a developing time series of relative abundance from potting surveys in some areas, additional data from the charter boat sector would contribute significantly to the ability to make justifiable, enduring management decisions that take into account the interests of charter boat operators.

Rock Lobster (CRA)

21 Rock lobster is the key shared fish species for which information on amateur catch is hardest to obtain, and has been most inconsistent in national catch surveys. Target fishing for rock lobster made up nearly 8% of the total number of reported trips by charter boats in 2011. This analysis suggests that target fishing locations for rock lobster is more evenly and more widely distributed amongst FMAs than when assessed in 2009. The inclusion of these stocks

is supported by submissions over a long period of time from Recreational Forums and the National Rock Lobster Industry Council.

Southern Bluefin Tuna and Pacific Bluefin Tuna (STN, TOR)

22 The large size and sporting qualities of these species have captured considerable interest from big game fishers mainly fishing from charter boats on the West Coast of the South Island. New Zealand has international obligations in relation to management of the bluefin tuna species. Southern bluefin tuna is subject to an international quota regime which needs to account for all take including the increasing amateur catch. While making up less than 1% of reported trips in 2011, the majority of the amateur catch is probably taken on trips by charter boats. Reporting of catch from these operators will enable more accurate management of New Zealand's allocation of this species.

23 Pacific bluefin tuna is a similar species caught in the same fishery. It is not subject to an international quota regime, but New Zealand has obligations to ensure sustainable management of this species under international agreements. While making less than 1% of reported trips in 2011, the majority of the amateur catch is being taken on trips by charter boats. The amateur allowance of Pacific bluefin tuna was increased from 1 tonne to 25 tonnes in October 2011. This is the first time an amateur allowance has been increased based on information supplied by charter boat operators. Catch reporting of this species in conjunction with Southern bluefin will allow comprehensive monitoring of this high value charter boat fishery.

PROPOSED MEASURE

24 MPI proposes two options as set out below (Table 1).

Table 1: Current and proposed options for listing additional fish stocks (FMAs) to Charter boat catch reporting effective 1 October 2012.

Species	Current	Option 1	Option 2
Bass, Hapuku	1	1, 2, 9	All
Bluenose	NIL	NIL	All
Blue Cod	7	3, 5, 6, 7	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Kingfish	1	1, 2	All
Rock Lobster	7 ³	2, 3, 5, 7 ²	All
Southern Bluefin Tuna	1, 7	All	All
Pacific Bluefin Tuna	1, 7	All	All

Option 1

25 Charter boat catch reporting is targeted at stocks – assessed in 2009 – that would make a significant direct contribution to the information needs of management. The stocks included reflect catch reporting designed to minimise compliance costs. The inclusion of these stocks means that on any trip, a charter boat operator is unlikely to have to report catch of more than two stocks.

Option 2

26 In response to further assessment and feedback MPI propose that the planned extension of charter boat catch reporting from 1 October 2012 be modified by:

- Extending catch reporting of bass, hapuku, kingfish and rock lobster to all areas;
- Extending catch reporting of blue cod to FMAs 2–8 inclusive;
- Requiring catch reporting of bluenose on all FMAs.

27 MPI assesses there would be additional benefit of extending the charter boat catch reporting of the key species to more FMAs and to include bluenose as an additional species in all areas. For simplicity the proposal is to extend to all areas, apart from blue cod where no target fishing is reported in the northern FMAs (1 and 9).

28 The inclusion of bluenose as a species for which catch should be reported in all stocks is justified as follows. Bluenose is often sought in association with species for which charter boat catch reporting is required – hapuku, bass and kingfish. The stocks of bluenose have

³ FMA 7 except for the area between Bruce Bay and Farewell Spit.

been over fished and are now subject to a recovery plan. Target fishing for bluenose currently contributes only 1% of the total number of reported trips by charter boats in 2011. However, the significance of the charter boat catch as a proportion of the total known amateur catch makes catch information useful as a potential opportunity for monitoring the recovery of bluenose.

29 MPI considers that the benefits of Option 2 outweigh the costs and in addition creates a simpler regime for operators to understand than the Option 1 requirements. All other aspects of charter boat registry and activity reporting would remain unchanged, including the facility to voluntarily report the catch of all species.

Other implementation considerations

30 MPI considers that in many areas activity reporting will provide enough information to help inform management decisions, particularly those involving spatial management measures.

31 MPI assesses that requiring catch information for any other stocks – apart from bluenose - would increase the administrative and stakeholder compliance costs of the charter boat reporting scheme while providing marginal additional benefits for management. For some stocks, such as SNA 1, the total catch from charter boats may be relatively large, compared to the catch in stocks nominated for catch reporting. However, in these stocks, the Ministry considers that catch from charter boats is likely to be a small proportion of the total amateur catch. Consequently, in these fisheries, requiring catch information from charter boats would not be cost effective.

32 In addition, practical difficulties in logging the numbers caught and retained of popular species would require costly systems to verify sufficient accuracy and ensure meaningful results. For many of these stocks other methods are likely to be more effective in estimating amateur catch.

33 To minimise costs overall, any changes to the reporting forms and instructions will align with changes – such as the need to re-brand to the Ministry for Primary Industries logos – that would need to be made as part of business as usual. Where possible MPI may replace forms once existing stocks have been used up.

CONCLUSION

34 MPI's initial view is to support Option 2. The proposed changes are minor, simplify the requirements and an up to date assessment of the distribution of charter boat fishing activity and management information needs suggests that benefits outweigh the costs.

35 Because any change to the reporting scheme for charter boat operators only requires the approval of the Director-General these changes could be in place on 1 October 2012. If the measure is approved, all registered charter operators will be formally advised of the changes and when the measure would come into effect.

36 The Ministry invites tangata whenua and stakeholders to provide additional information pertaining to this proposal.