



Fisheries New Zealand

Tini a Tangaroa

Reporting requirements for Amateur-fishing charter vessel operators

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Amateur charter vessels (ACVs) are commercial ventures where customers pay for use of the boat and guide services. This activity is regulated by the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013.

1.2 Catch reporting of additional species and the recording of weight

Fisheries New Zealand is seeking information and views from tangata whenua, charter vessel operators, and other stakeholders on proposed changes to reporting requirements for amateur-fishing charter vessel operators.

The proposed changes will:

- extend the requirement to report catch to include scallops, snapper and tarakihi, and extend the reporting requirements for blue cod to northern areas, and
- extend the requirement to report the weight in kilograms of retained catch to all species for which catch reporting applies.

1.3 Need to act

The requirement for amateur-fishing charter vessel operators to report fishing activity and catch information was brought into effect in 2010. Catch reporting has been introduced for eight species of fish, with reporting for blue cod being limited to southern areas. These reporting requirements provide valuable time-series information, and analysis of the available data and trends is used to support fisheries management decisions.

Information of this nature is lacking for other key shared fish stocks. It is considered timely to review the amateur-fishing charter vessel catch reporting requirements and to include four additional species as they have each recently become subject to management strategies, or stock recovery plans. These species will benefit from additional information gathering and monitoring.

Fisheries New Zealand also proposes that the requirement to record an estimate of catch weight (in kilograms) be extended to all species for which catch reporting applies. Currently, other than for Pacific and southern bluefin tuna, operators are only required to specify the number of fish that are retained. Extending this requirement to all reported species would strengthen the available data for fisheries management, and allow monitoring of changes to average fish size over time.

In advance of this review, Fisheries New Zealand has been working to assess how to best improve fishing activity and catch reporting, particularly in these key fisheries. Research was commissioned to provide recommendations for improvement to the reporting system, and to survey amateur-fishing charter operators on these proposals. The majority of operators who responded to the survey agreed that catch reporting of additional species is feasible.

2 Legal basis for Amateur-fishing charter vessel reporting

The charter boat reporting scheme is set out in regulations 53 and 54 of the Amateur Fishing Regulations. Regulation 54(2) (a) specifies that amateur-fishing charter vessel operators must provide information to the Director-General as specified by notice in the Gazette.

3 Current requirements

3.1 Registration

The amateur-fishing charter vessel reporting scheme requires charter vessel operators and their vessel(s) to be registered and to re-register annually to ensure all details are kept current. No changes are proposed to the registration system.

3.2 Activity reporting

The requirement to report is prescribed by the Director-General under regulation 54(2) (a) of the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013. The regulations specify the type of information that may be required. The detail of what must be reported for each amateur-fishing charter vessel fishing trip is specified in the Fisheries (Amateur-Fishing Charter Vessel Reporting) Notice 2012 (Notice MPI No. 81) in the New Zealand Gazette¹. The notice requires the reporting of fishing activity such as the fishing position, target species, fishing method, number of people fishing and time fished for each fishing event. A 'fishing trip' and 'fishing event' are defined, for the purposes of reporting, in the Interpretation clause of the Notice.

3.3 Catch reporting

Catch reporting is currently required for bass, bluenose, hapuku (groper), kingfish, rock lobster, southern bluefin, and Pacific bluefin tuna in Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) 1-9 and blue cod in FMAs 2-8. For these specified species and areas, the number of fish of each species caught and retained during each fishing event must be recorded and reported for each fishing trip.

Operators are required to report the actual or estimated weight of each fish for southern bluefin tuna and Pacific bluefin tuna. This relates to meeting international requirements for catch reporting of these species.

4 Options

4.1 Reporting the catch of additional species and areas

Fisheries New Zealand proposes to include blue cod (FMAs 1, 9 and 10), scallops, snapper and tarakihi into the reporting scheme from 1 October 2019. The proposals are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: (Status quo) and proposal for additional catch reporting, effective 1 October 2019.

Species	FMAs from which catch must be reported	
	Status quo	Proposal
Blue Cod	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	All
Scallops	None	All
Snapper	None	All
Tarakihi	None	All

4.2 Reporting catch weights

Fisheries New Zealand proposes to extend the requirement for amateur-fishing charter operators to report the actual or estimated weight (in kilograms) of the retained catch for all species to which a catch reporting requirement applies (including the new species proposed to be included).

¹ Available at: <https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2012-go6688>

Table 2: Options for catch reporting, effective 1 October 2019

Proposed additional species in bold	Estimate landings in kilograms	
	Status quo	Proposal
Bass and Hapuku	No	Yes
Bluenose	No	Yes
Blue Cod	No	Yes
Kingfish	No	Yes
Rock Lobster	No	Yes
Scallops	No	Yes
Snapper	No	Yes
Tarakihi	No	Yes
Pacific and Southern Bluefin Tuna	Yes	Yes

5 Evaluation of proposals

5.1 Reporting the catch of additional species and areas

Amateur-fishing catch reporting for charter operators is currently focused on stocks that can make a significant direct contribution to fisheries management. Several of these species are considered vulnerable to localised depletion and for others, the amateur-fishing charter fleet is believed to take a significant proportion of the catch as part of the recreational fishing sector.

Information on catch from charter vessels supports improvements in the ability to assess spatial management issues and ensure the sustainability of the fish stocks being caught. The information collected is also used in several other important contexts, such as supporting international reporting requirements for some highly migratory fish stocks, and to supplement the National Panel Survey, which is the primary tool used to estimate take from recreational fishing.

Snapper and tarakihi stocks in some areas are subject to formal rebuilding plans, and the fishery for scallops in FMA 7 is currently closed because the biomass is so low. Charter vessel operators are in a position to contribute to an improved understanding of the recovery of these stocks, by providing the amounts, and potentially weights, of fish and shellfish caught. Additionally, extending the catch reporting requirement to all blue cod stocks will support the implementation of the National Blue Cod Strategy².

Charter vessel operators are not required to report scallop catches at present, but it is important to monitor the harvest of scallops from all sectors. Over time, catch reporting of scallops by charter vessel operators will also provide trends and the ability to track the effectiveness of management strategies.

Among the species for which catch reporting is not currently required, snapper is by far the most commonly-caught finfish species by recreational fishers in New Zealand, and it is the species from which the most charter vessel income is derived.

Tarakihi is the fifth most-caught species and is a popular target species in some areas. Charter vessel fishing takes a significant proportion of the snapper and tarakihi catch as part of the recreational fishing sector.

Fisheries New Zealand acknowledges that requiring additional catch information, especially for snapper, would likely increase the administrative and compliance costs of the charter vessel reporting scheme. However, we note that about half of registered charter vessel operators already report catches of snapper and several other species voluntarily.

Requiring the reporting of catches of blue cod, scallops, snapper and tarakihi across all FMAs would improve the quality and quantity of information obtained from the charter vessel reporting system, and

² <https://www.fisheries.govt.nz/dmsdocument/32533-2018-national-blue-cod-strategy-v2-pubdec18-web-pdf>

contribute substantially to more informed management of these key shared fisheries. On balance, Fisheries New Zealand considers the benefits of the improved information will outweigh the additional costs to operators.

5.2 Reporting catch weights

Fisheries New Zealand proposes to extend the catch reporting requirement to include the actual or estimated weight of the retained catch to all species for which catch reporting is required. This will make a significant direct contribution to the monitoring and management of the species to be included, as the weight of fish is the primary metric used for fisheries management. It will also allow assessment of average retained fish size and monitoring of changes in fish size over time.

The facility for recording retained catch weight is already available on the reporting forms used by amateur-fishing charter operators, however it is an optional field that may currently be left blank. It is proposed to make recording of catch weight mandatory.

Under the proposal, the estimated aggregate weight of the retained catch would be required for the eight species specified in the Notice (eleven species if scallops, snapper and tarakihi are included). No reporting of the weight of other species not specified in the Notice would be required. Since some of these species, such as bluefin tuna, are caught only rarely and some of the specified species are seldom caught together, it is unlikely that a charter operator will have to report the landing weights of more than four species for a given fishing event.

It is also acknowledged that, for charter-vessel fishing in FMAs 1 and 9, snapper landings can be substantial, and accurately monitoring and recording the weight of snapper retained may be difficult for some operators. In addition, implementing this proposal could require Fisheries New Zealand to develop more costly systems to check and store data and verify accuracy. On balance, Fisheries New Zealand considers the benefits of the improved information will outweigh the additional costs to operators and government.

6 Questions for submitters

- Do you agree with proposals to report the catch of additional species? If not why not?
- Do you think there are there any additional species for which catch should be reported?
- Do you agree with proposals to report the landed weight for species whose catch must be reported? If not why not?

7 Other implementation considerations

Changes would be in place by 1 October 2019. If the measures are approved, all registered charter operators will be formally advised of the changes and when the measures would come into effect.

8 How to get more information and have your say

Fisheries New Zealand invites you to make a submission on the proposals set out in this discussion document. We must receive your submission by 5pm on 26 July 2019. Please see the Fisheries New Zealand sustainability consultation webpage (<https://www.fisheries.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/review-of-sustainability-measures-for-1-october-2019>) for related information, a helpful submissions template, and information on how to submit your feedback. If you cannot access the webpage or require hard copies of documents or any other information, please email FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz.