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Sustainability Review 2017
Ministry for Primary Industries
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7 July 2017

Review of sustainability measures for 1 October 2017 – Inshore Stocks DP 2017/17

Review of closure for Earthquake-affected Fisheries DP 2017/21

Submission:

- NZSFC support Option 3 for Bluenose, with a 704 tonne combined TAC for the five main areas.
- NZSFC supports Option 2 for Gurnard in GUR 7, a 65 tonne increase in the TAC.
- NZSFC support Option 2 in Red Cod in RCO 2, a 61 tonne increase in the TAC.
- NZSFC support Option 2 for the proposed Kaikoura closure, full closure under Section 11.
- NZSFC supports Option 1 for PAU3, 50% reduction in TACC.
- NZSFC support Option 2 for PAU7, 10% reduction in TACC.

The submitters

1. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and supporters of our public outreach LegaSea, (the submitters) appreciate the opportunity to submit feedback to the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) on the 2017 Review of sustainability controls for inshore stocks for 1 October, and the Review of closure for earthquake affected fisheries. MPI released their proposals on 7 June 2017. Submissions are due by 7 July 2017.
2. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council is a National Sports Organisation with over 33,000 affiliated members from 56 clubs nationwide and a growing number of contributing supporters to LegaSea. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We look forward to positive outcomes from this review and would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Dave Lockwood, secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.
3. We are committed to ensuring that sustainability measures and management controls are designed and implemented to achieve the Purpose and Principles of the Fisheries Act 1996, including maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations and ensuring sustainability.

Proposal to decrease Total Allowable Catch for Bluenose

Background

4. Bluenose is a long-lived, low-productivity stock which means it is less responsive to management changes than some other species. Significant concerns arose in 2011 when a stock assessment indicated that the combined biomass for the five Bluenose QMAs was between 14 and 27% of the virgin (unfished) biomass (B_0).
5. In 2011 the Minister agreed to a three-year reduction plan aimed at rebuilding Bluenose stocks to 40% of B_0 by 2031-2037. The first two planned reductions of the rebuild plan happened in 2011 and 2012. On the basis of positive signs from the fishery the final phase of catch reductions in 2013 was deferred to allow for further investigation of new information.
6. After three subsequent years of declining CPUE, and an updated stock assessment in 2016, new management action was deemed necessary to meet the rebuild target. The TACC was reduced by 200 tonnes in 2016. This was an interim measure until an agreed Management Procedure was developed to guide Bluenose management into the future. As a Management Procedure has not been agreed upon, further management action is proposed to help ensure the stock reaches the agreed target within the Minister's timeframe.

Proposals

7. MPI proposes to review the total allowable catch (TAC), including allowances and the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) for Bluenose in all quota management areas (QMAs). Reductions, if applied, could be spread proportionally across TACCs for the five QMAs. MPI considers that, at this time, there is no new information to suggest recreational allowances should be changed.

Table 1: Proposed management settings in tonnes (t) for BNS 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8 combined from 1 October 2017

Option	Total Allowable Catch (t)	Total Allowable Commercial Catch (t)	TACC tonnage decrease and % change	Allowances		
				Customary Māori (t)	Recreational (t)	All other mortality caused by fishing (t)
Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	990	900	-	9	63	18
Option 2	888 ↓	800 ↓	100 t ↓ (11%)	9	63	16 ↓
Option 3	704 ↓	620 ↓	280 t ↓ (31%)	9	63	12 ↓

Submission

8. In 2011 our members considered that the Bluenose stock had been significantly fished down and that an immediate, or staged, reduction of the combined TACs to 787 t or below was required to produce a timely rebuild to target biomass.
9. The NZSFC submission in 2016 again expressed concern about the state of the stocks and supported a combined TAC of 704 t, as per the rebuild plan signed off by the Minister in 2011.
10. We highlight the collapse of the Australian fishery for this species as a clear warning that a precautionary approach is needed.

11. NZSFC support Option 3 for Bluenose, with a 704 t combined TAC in the five main areas because half-measures implemented to date have consistently failed to turn this fishery around and start rebuilding the stock to the target level (The 2016 stock assessment results are summarised in Figure 8 from the May 2017 Fishery Assessment Plenary document, below).

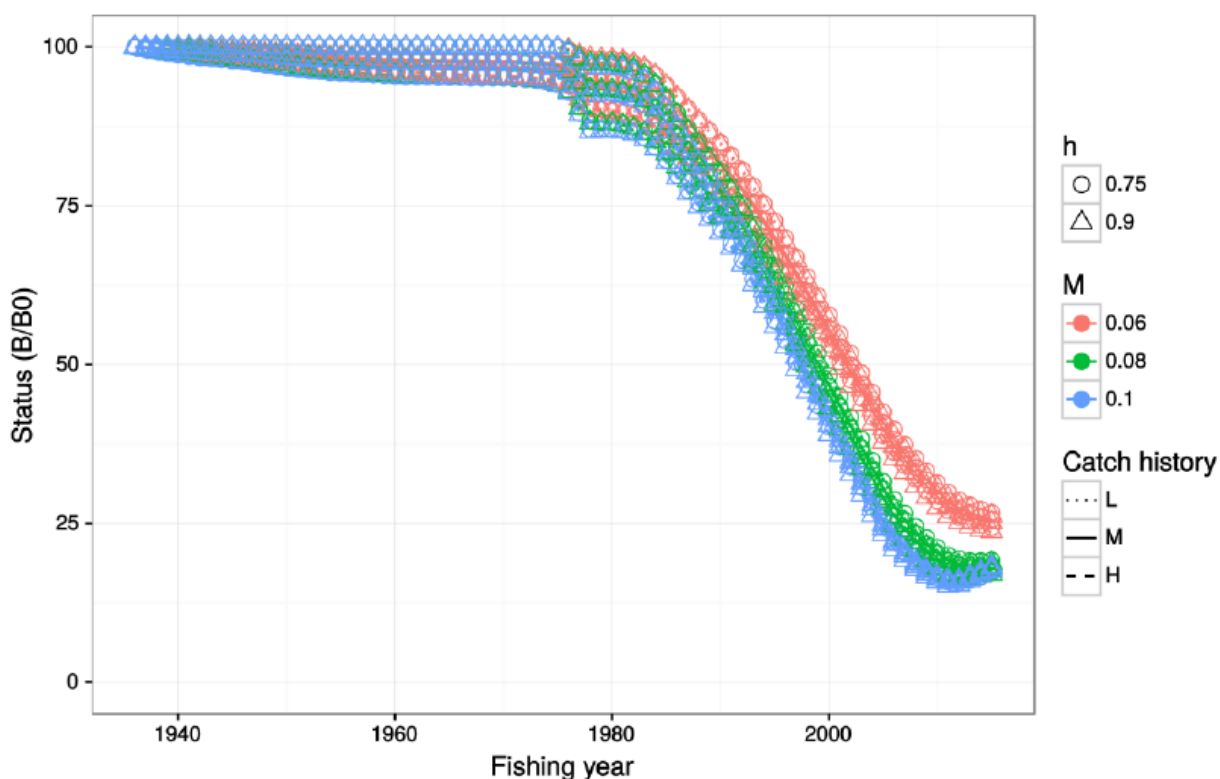
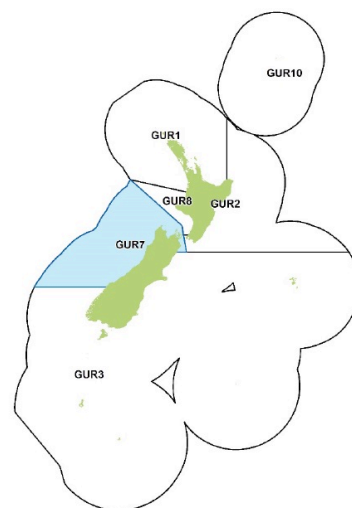


Figure 8: Results of the national Bluenose stock assessment showing the change in biomass as a proportion of the unfished biomass using three different values for natural mortality (M) and two estimates for steepness (h).

Proposal to increase Total Allowable Catch for Red Gurnard in GUR 7

Background

12. Red Gurnard have a fast growth rate and relatively short lifespan, and fluctuations in recruitment may result in large fluctuations in stock biomass.
13. The catch limits for Red Gurnard in GUR 7 were last reviewed in 2014 when results from the West Coast South Island trawl survey showed an increasing index of abundance. The TAC was increased from 855 to 919 tonnes and the TACC was increased from 785 to 845 tonnes.
14. The Fisheries Assessment Working Group has set a management target of the average West Coast South Island trawl survey biomass estimate from 1992 to 2013. This is 436 t from the area surveyed.



Proposals

15. MPI proposes the following options for the total allowable catch (TAC), total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and associated allowances for Red Gurnard in GUR 7 (Table 1). These proposals include TACC increases of 7% or 15%.

Table 1: Proposed management settings in tonnes (t) for GUR 7 from 1 October 2017

Option	Total Allowable Catch (t)	Total Allowable Commercial Catch (t)	TACC tonnage increase and % change	Allowances		
				Customary Māori (t)	Recreational (t)	All other mortality caused by fishing (t)
Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	919	845	-	10	22	42
Option 2	984 ↑	905 ↑	60 t ↑ (7%)	11 ↑	24 ↑	44 ↑
Option 3	1062 ↑	975 ↑	127 t ↑ (15%)	12 ↑	25 ↑	50 ↑

MPI rationale for increasing the TACC

16. MPI rationale for reviewing Red Gurnard 7 includes:

- Red Gurnard stock size can be highly variable from year to year.
- Updated information in 2017 shows that the WCSI trawl survey relative biomass is three times higher than the target level and is likely to remain high in the short term as a result of good recruitment.
- Two different options are proposed to allow for consideration of the uncertainty in the available information and the management of sustainability risk. The Information Principles in the Fisheries Act require that caution be applied when making decisions.
- Ongoing monitoring of the stock using trawl surveys (the next is in 2019) will enable responsive management and appropriate adjustments to address risk and possible opportunity.

Submission

17. It is incorrect for MPI to claim there has been a steady increase in the Trawl Index since the 2014–15 review, and a greater opportunity for sustainable utilisation now exists. There has only been one trawl survey since 2015 which shows that the index is effectively at the same level.

18. NZSFC supports the use of data from fishery independent surveys and believes they will become increasingly important as technology changes.

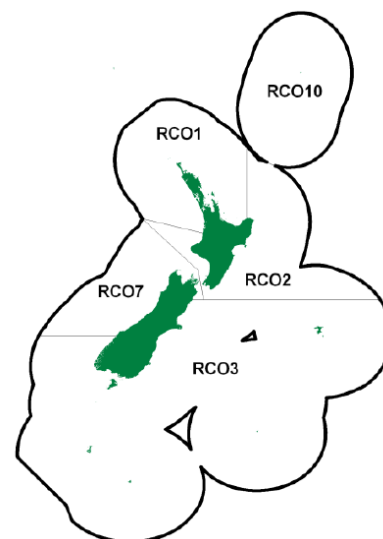
19. It is common that fish stocks have natural cycles in abundance. Significant increases in catch allowances when abundance is at a peak may exacerbate the decline when it comes.

20. NZSFC supports the more precautionary of MPI's proposals for GUR 7, Option 2, a 65 tonne increase in the TAC providing a 7% increase to the TACC in addition to the other two increases in recent years.

Proposal to increase Total Allowable Catch for Red Cod in RCO 2

Background

21. Red Cod are a fast-growing, short-lived species with highly variable recruitment. These factors result in pulses of recruitment leading to variable stock abundance and a large variation in catches between years.
22. Red Cod is a relatively low value species in commercial terms and in RCO 2 they are mostly taken as bycatch in the inshore bottom trawl fishery off the East (FMA 2) and West Coast (FMA 8) of the lower North Island.
23. Primarily, RCO 2 commercial catch comes from fisheries targeting tarakihi (35.7%), flatfish (24.2%) and Gurnard (19.8%). Approximately two-thirds of commercially caught RCO 2 has been taken in and around Hawke Bay in recent years.
24. Since 2013, the Minister has managed RCO 2 using a Management Procedure which uses commercial catch rates in October and November to estimate the likely annual catch and propose an 'in-season' increase in the TAC. In a separate review, MPI is proposing to increase the TAC for 2016–17 and to set non-commercial catch allowances for this year only.
25. To date, no baseline allowances for Māori customary fishing, recreational fishing, and all other mortality caused by fishing in the RCO 2 fishery have been set.
26. In the 2011–12 National Panel Survey of recreational harvest more Red Cod were reported from FMA 2 and FMA 8 (RCO 2) than other quota areas. The total recreational harvest estimate for RCO 2 was 20,000 fish with an estimated weight of 24 tonnes.



Proposals

27. MPI proposes the following options for the total allowable catch (TAC) allowances for Māori customary fishing, recreational fishing, and all other mortality caused by fishing for Red cod in RCO 2. (Table 1).

Table 1: Proposed management settings in tonnes (t) for RCO 2 from 1 October 2017

Option	Total Allowable Catch (t)	Total Allowable Commercial Catch (t)	Allowances		
			Māori Customary (t)	Recreational (t)	All other mortality caused by fishing (t)
Current (baseline) settings	500	500	-	-	-
Option 1	554 ↑	500	5	24	25
Option 2	561 ↑	500	5	31	25

MPI rationale for increasing the TAC

28. MPI rationale for reviewing Red Cod 2 includes:

- For the 2017–18 fishing year, MPI is proposing to set the TACC at the current level. The initial setting of the baseline non-commercial allowances would necessitate an increase to the baseline TAC.
- The best available information suggests that both options proposed (see Table 1) for setting the baseline TAC could provide for an appropriate baseline allowance for the non-commercial harvest and all other mortality caused by fishing of Red Cod in RCO 2.

Submission

29. Information in the discussion document on the proposed in-season increase in the TAC for RCO2 suggests that Red Cod abundance is currently high. NZSFC accepted this, but opposed the increase because it was unlikely to be caught in the time remaining in the 2016–17 fishing year, and if it was caught, it would be because trawl fishing effort had significantly increased. Any increase in trawl effort will be counter-productive to the effort by our Hawke's Bay team to negotiate meaningful inter-sector agreements and reduce trawling inshore in Hawke Bay.

30. MPI need to be more careful about implying that the allowance for “all other sources of mortality from fishing” is part of the non-commercial allowances (Paragraph 263). Clearly this is set at 5% of the TACC, which consists largely of trawl catch. This language is also creeping into the rock lobster discussion documents and will be challenged.

31. NZSFC support Option 2 in RCO 2, a 61 tonne increase in the TAC. The Minister has a statutory duty to ‘allow for’ non-commercial fisheries within the TAC, and if stock abundance is increasing it is essential that any increase in availability is considered when making these allowances.

Proposal Closure of Earthquake effected fisheries in the Kaikoura Region

Background

32. On 20th November 2016, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake caused large portions of seabed to be raised by up to 6 metres in the Kaikoura region. This caused parts of the coast to be raised out of the water, affecting the marine inhabitants of these areas and their reproductive capabilities.

33. The Minister used the emergency closure powers held in Section 16 of the Fisheries Act 1996 to immediately close the fishery to all harvest. After one month the rock lobster fishery was reopened, after research showed it was unlikely this event caused any real damage to the fishery.

34. After consultation in February, the Minister extended this closure of the shellfish and seaweed fisheries to the maximum period allowed under section 16. This closure will expire on 20th November 2017, allowing harvest at the same levels as before the earthquake. It is believed that the stocks would be unable to handle this level of harvest and may lead to further decline.

Proposals

35. MPI proposes to enact another closure of the Kaikoura area (Figure 1) under section 11 of the Fisheries Act 1996. This closure would prohibit all harvest except customary. The local iwi have voluntarily agreed to limit their harvest to tangi only. This proposal would allow the Minister to manage the closure of individual species as science reveals when/if these can be reopened and the management that would be required to facilitate this.

Table 1: Proposed options for the earthquake-affected fisheries in Kaikōura and Cape Campbell

Management action	
Option 1	Take no action. The current emergency closure will expire at 5pm 20 November 2017 and the affected shellfish and seaweed fisheries will be reopened.
Option 2	Replace the emergency closure with a closure under section 11 of the Fisheries Act 1996.



Figure 1 - Proposed Kaikoura closure

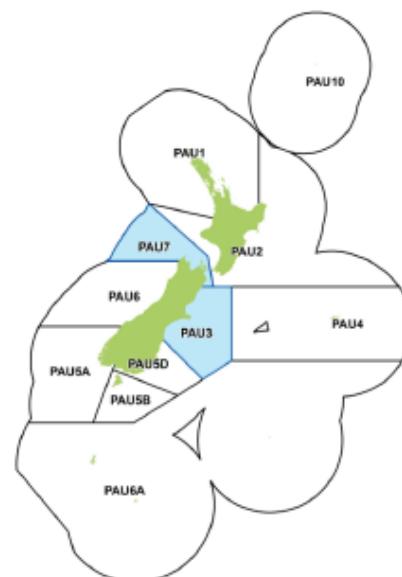
Submission

36. The NZSFC support the full closure of shellfish and seaweed fisheries in this area until such a time that the best available science deems it safe to reopen.
37. We acknowledge the cooperation from local iwi to refrain from the harvest during this closure, the need for all users to allow this at-risk fishery to recover is clear.

Proposal to decrease Total Allowable Catch for PAU3 and PAU7

Background

38. The continued closure of the earthquake affected areas has the potential to cause problems for the surrounding areas by shifting the paua catch effort from the closed areas.
39. To combat this problem, the Minister proposes a reduction in the Paua TAC to remove effort from the fishery.
40. The Minister has proposed two changes, representing reductions equal to the maximum and minimum estimate harvest in the closed area over the last 15 years.



Proposals

41. MPI proposes the following options for the total allowable catch (TAC), total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and associated allowances for Paua in PAU3 (Kaikoura – Christchurch) and PAU7 (Marlborough/Tasman/Cape Campbell)

Table 1: Proposed management settings in tonnes (t) for PAU 3 and PAU 7 from 1 October 2017

Stock	Option	Total Allowable Catch (t)	Total Allowable Commercial Catch (t)	TACC tonnage decrease and % change	Allowances		
					Customary Māori (t)	Recreational (t)	All other mortality caused by fishing (t)
PAU 3	Current settings	-	91.615	-	-	-	-
	Option 1	79.3	45.8 ↓	45.8 t ↓ (50%)	15	8.5	10
	Option 2	57.6	27.5 ↓	64.1 t ↓ (70%)	15	5.1	10
PAU 7	Option 1 (Status quo)	133.6	93.6	-	15	15	10
	Option 2	121.8 ↓	84.2 ↓	9.4 t ↓ (10%)	15	12.6 ↓	10
	Option 3	116.5 ↓	79.6 ↓	14 t ↓ (15%)	15	11.9 ↓	10

Submission

- NZSFC supports Option 1 for PAU3, 50% reduction in TACC.
 - NZSFC support Option 2 for PAU7, 10% reduction in TACC.
42. The above options are based on the previous 15 years harvest, and represents the minimum and maximum estimated harvest from within the closed area.
43. NZSFC notes that the last assessment of PAU7 revealed an estimate of 18% B0. It is important that caution is taken when dealing with a fishery that has recently been under pressure.
44. It is our understanding that a system was put in place in 2001 to spread commercial effort more evenly across PAU3. This system meant that closer to 50% of the commercial harvest was taken from inside the closed zone.
45. NZSFC is aware that there is some concern for the displacement of recreational pressure. While we agree there will be some displacement, paua abundance and accessibility in other areas is lower for recreational fishers than it was in many areas on the Kaikoura coast. NZSFC believe there will be a significant decrease in recreational fishing effort and harvest in these QMAs due to the closures.
46. New estimates of recreational harvest and information on areas fished will be collected during the next National Panel Survey in 2017–18.
47. NZSFC has discussed the proposals with the Paua Industry Council (PIC) and acknowledge their views and efforts to restore this fishery. However, the NZSFC do not support shelving as a first-choice management option as the TAC represents all available catch. If catch is not available, the TAC needs to be reduced.