

Review of the Minister's fisheries management decisions for 1 October 2020



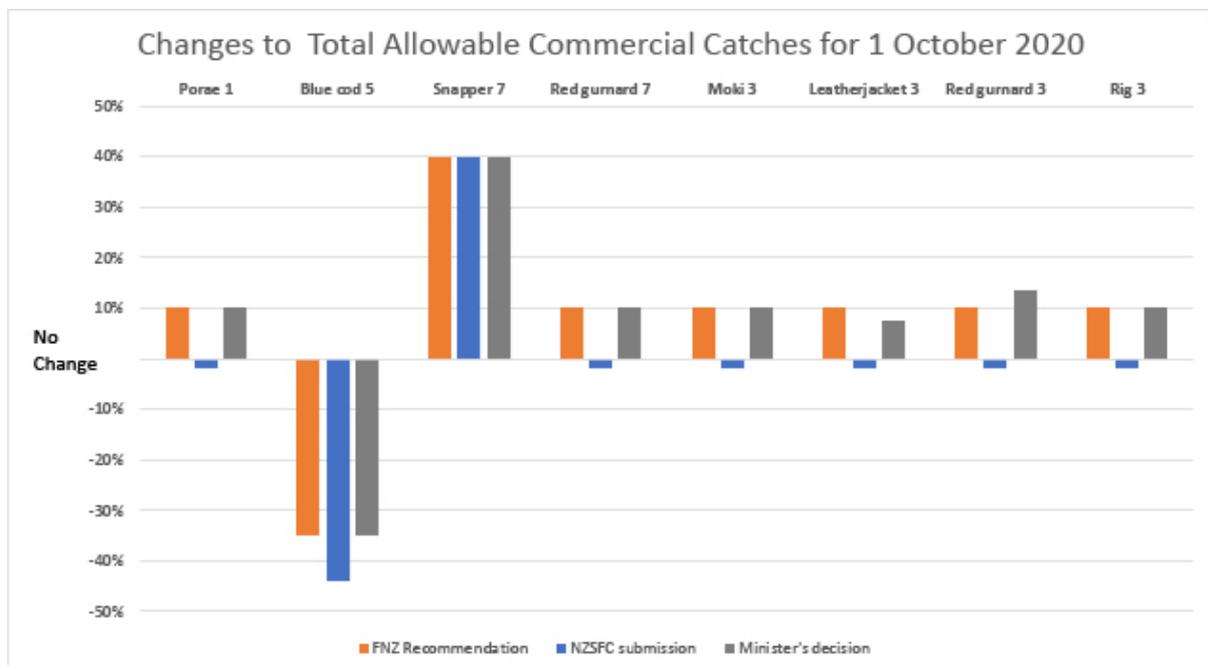
September 2020

In May 2020 Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) released proposals that would affect the future management of 29 fish stocks, 11 deepwater stocks and 18 inshore finfish and shellfish stocks. In June FNZ also released a proposal to subdivide Paua 3 into two separate areas to better manage the impacts of fishing following the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea teams worked with the New Zealand Angling & Casting Association to develop six submissions in response. Those responses were sent to Fisheries New Zealand in July and the Minister announced his decisions on September 11th. All new catch limits apply from 1 October 2020.

No decisions have been made in response to the Paua 3 subdivision proposal or the earlier proposal for a network of [marine protected areas on the southeast coast](#) of the South Island, which the NZSFC submitted on in August.

Figure 1: Summary of Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) recommendations, submissions, and Ministerial decisions to change the Total Allowable Commercial Catch for 8 fish stocks from 1 October 2020.

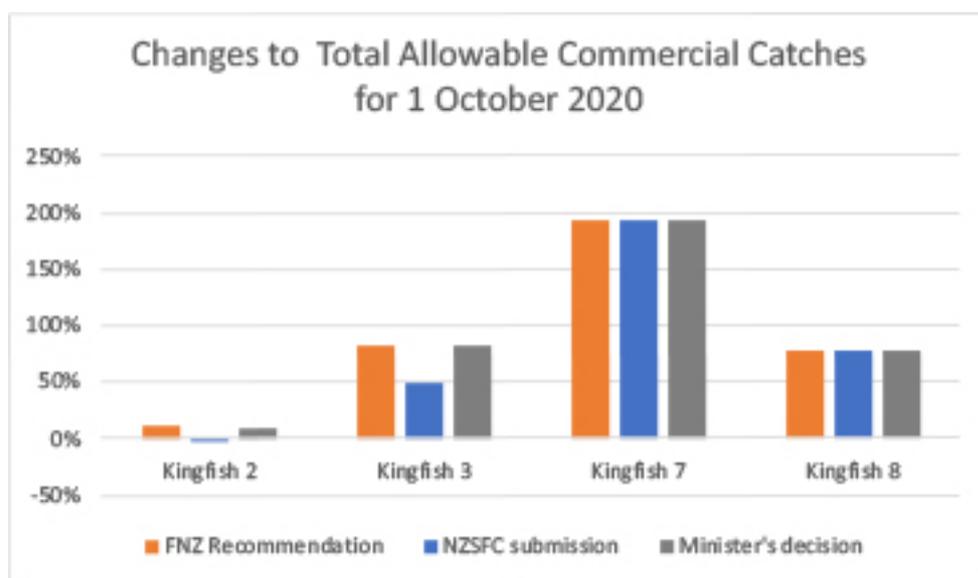


We are particularly disappointed with the Minister's decisions for Blue cod 5 and Kingfish 3. We submitted that the Minister ought to act in a more precautionary manner. We have ongoing concerns about proposals to increase TACCs in fish stocks where there is no clear supporting evidence that abundance has increased, and where the main reason for the proposed increase is commercial catches in excess of the TACC.

We recommended no increase in these stocks because rewarding over-catch just encourages “fishing for quota”. The Minister supported modest TACC increases in those stocks and these were generally less than what commercial interests had advocated for.

There is evidence that the abundance of kingfish on the West Coast of the North Island and most of the South Island has increased. While the TACC increases are large, relative to many of the other decisions, they are coming off a low base and are generally lower than current catch so the release of live fish is still encouraged. The Minister supported the NZSFC policy for kingfish of commercial bycatch only to support New Zealand’s world class recreational kingfish fishery.

Figure 2: Summary of Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) recommendations, our submission and the Minister’s decisions to change the Total Allowable Commercial Catch for 4 kingfish stocks from 1 October 2020.



Snapper 7 proposed catch limit increases

Background

On 25 May 2020 Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) advised they were reviewing the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) and allowances in Snapper 7. Proposal options are below in Table 1. Submissions in response were due by 1 July with any changes approved by the Minister applying from 1 October 2020.

The stock started rebuilding from a low level in 2011 and there followed several years of strong recruitment. The TAC was reviewed in 2016 and the commercial catch increased from 200 tonnes to 250 t and the allowance for recreational fishers from 90 tonnes to 250 t. SNA 7 was closely monitored following these increases and the stock continued to rebuild.

The stock assessment in 2019 estimated that the total weight of snapper spawning stock in SNA 7 had increased from about 2,000 t in 2010 to about 6,300 t.

Considering the results of the latest stock assessment and discussions in SNA 7 stakeholder meetings it seemed that some increase in overall catch was warranted.

Table 1: Fisheries NZ proposed options for TACs, TACCs and allowances for snapper in tonnes.

Stock	Option	Total Allowable Catch	Total Allowable Commercial Catch	Allowances		
				Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
SNA 7	Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	545	250	20	250	25
	Option 2	545	300 ↑ (20%)	20	200 ↓ (20%)	25
	Option 3 (working group preferred)	645 ↑	350 ↑ (40%)	20	250	25

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) saw value in supporting a more precautionary approach to what FNZ had proposed, with a TACC increase smaller than 100 tonnes. That is because we support an alternative stock management target of 50% of unfished biomass, in alignment with international opinion to ensure a resilient population of fish and to restore ecosystem function.

During June 2020 local fishers from the upper South Island urged the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea to support the SNA 7 working group's preference, which was supportive of FNZ's option 3. The local advocates did not want the NZSFC-LegaSea submission to propose an alternative solution that did not align with FNZ's options in Table 1 (above).

Also, they did not want the NZSFC-LegaSea submission to support FNZ's option 2 because the locals wanted to retain the recreational allowance at 250 tonnes per annum, despite the most recent National Panel Survey estimating total annual recreational snapper harvest of 147 t (+/- 16%).

Snapper 7 submission

On 1 July the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council-LegaSea team submitted offering conditional support for FNZ's option 3 - a 100 tonne TACC increase from 1 October 2020.

Those conditions were based on -

1. Concerns for maintaining stock abundance.
2. Support for local advocates and the SNA 7 working group's preference.
3. The need to mitigate both the effects of trawling on inshore biodiversity and productivity, and any additional threats to Hector's dolphins; and
4. The need for the Minister and FNZ to support local negotiations over benthic protections, by excluding bottom trawling and dredging from inshore areas of SNA 7.

Best available information

Prior to the TAC review our representative had been involved in the FNZ inshore science working group meetings. Those meetings reviewed the data that went into the stock assessment, and later the stock assessment results. The results show that the Snapper 7 stock had been overfished and remained severely depleted from the mid 1980s to 2010. Since then there have been several years of strong recruitment of young snapper into the fishery, although there is some uncertainty regarding recent recruitment levels.

The Snapper 7 fishery is now considered to be at or above FNZ's interim management target of 40% of the unfished biomass. The latest stock assessment is the 'best available

information' that the Minister is obliged to use to inform his decisions, as per section 10 of the Fisheries Act 1996.

More information - Submissions

1. Snapper & Gurnard 7 - [submission](#).
2. Porae 1 – [submission](#).
3. Blue cod 5 – [submission](#).
4. Moki, Leatherjacket, Gurnard & Rig 3 – [submission](#).
5. Kingfish 2, 3, 7 & 8 – [submission](#).
6. Subdivision of Paua 3 – [submission](#).
7. South Island southeast coast marine protected areas – [submission](#).