

Bob Gutsell
President
NZ Sport Fishing Council
PO Box 54242, The Marina
Half Moon Bay, Auckland 2144
secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz



Fisheries New Zealand
PO Box 2526
Wellington 6140
FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz

27 July 2021

Submission: We support an increase to the Southern bluefin tuna (STN 1) Total Allowable Catch and an allowance of 34 tonnes for recreational fishing interests.

Recommendations

1. The Minister increases the Southern bluefin tuna (STN 1) Total Allowable Catch (TAC) by 14 tonnes (t) and increases the recreational allowance by 14 t, from 20 t to 34 t.
2. FNZ recognise that a significant recreational fishery has developed for southern bluefin tuna off northeastern New Zealand.
3. FNZ advise the Minister that setting the right allowance for a new recreational fishery is critical to avoiding allocation disputes in the future.
4. FNZ advise the Minister that the submitters support an increase of 14 tonnes to allowance for recreational harvest and maintain that an annual allowance of 40 tonnes is required to allow this fishery to develop responsibly.
5. FNZ advise the Minister that the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea will continue to promote voluntary limits and responsible fishing practices in this fishery.

The submitters

6. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit on the proposals for the future management of Southern bluefin tuna (STN 1). Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) advice of consultation was received on 23 June, with submissions due by 27 July 2021.
7. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council is a recognised national sports organisation with over 36,000 affiliated members from 55 clubs nationwide. The Council has initiated LegaSea to generate widespread awareness and support for the need to restore abundance in our inshore marine environment. Also, to broaden NZSFC involvement in marine management advocacy,

research, education, and alignment on behalf of our members and LegaSea supporters. www.legasea.co.nz. Together we are *'the submitters'*.

8. The submitters are committed to ensuring that sustainability measures and environmental 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...” [s8(2)(a) Fisheries Act 1996]
9. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We look forward to positive outcomes from these reviews and would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Helen Pastor, secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.

Background

10. Management of southern bluefin tuna (SBT) throughout its range is the responsibility of the Commission for Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) of which New Zealand is a founding member. Japanese longliners were catching 1000s of tonnes of SBT a year in New Zealand waters (1960s to 1980), mostly prior to the establishment of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) supported the “New Zealandisation” of our tuna fishers in the 1980s and early 1990s.
11. Historically, there has been a small recreational fishery based out of Fiordland and SBT are taken as a by-catch of the Pacific bluefin tuna fishery out of Greymouth and Hokitika. In 2017 a new, more accessible recreational fishery off Cape Runaway developed. Good catch rates and favourable weather attracted hundreds of anglers to the eastern Bay of Plenty at short notice.
12. Southern bluefin tuna had a domestic catch limit of 420 tonnes (t) since early 1990s. On introduction to the QMS in 2004 the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) was set at 413 t, with a recreational allowance of 4 t, a customary allowance at 1 t and other sources of fishing related mortality at 2 t. There have been a series of in-season increases following allocation decisions by the CCSBT. In 2018 the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) was set at 1088 t, with a TACC of 1046 t, a recreational allowance of 20 t, a customary allowance at 2 t and other sources of fishing related mortality at 20 t (Figure 1). The NZSFC continues to advocate that an annual allowance of 40 t is required to allow the responsible development of recreational fishing for southern bluefin tuna.
13. The reported catch worldwide was around 14,000 t for a long time. CCSBT agreed to reduce global catches by 20% in 2010 to 2011 (to 9,449 t). The Commission has since determined that the spawning stock biomass of SBT is on track to meet the international management target of 30% of the unfished spawning stock biomass by 2035 at current catch levels. A technical adjustment to the stock assessment has increased New Zealand’s SBT allocation by 14 tonnes for the next 3 years.

Proposals for southern bluefin tuna

14. The options in the Fisheries NZ discussion document include: Option 1. Increase the commercial catch limit (TACC) by 14 tonnes; Option 2. Increase the allowance for recreational interests by 14 tonnes (Table 1).

Table 1: Current and proposed catch settings for STN 1 from 1 October 2021. Figures in tonnes.

Option	TAC	TACC	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
Status Quo	1,088	1,046	2	20	20
Option 1	1,102 ↑ (14 t)	1060 ↑ (14 t)	2	20	20
Option 2	1,102 ↑ (14 t)	1,046	2	34 ↑ (14 t)	20

15. There have been significant increases in the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) since the introduction of southern bluefin tuna to the QMS in 2004, and little change to the recreational allowance. The addition of 14 t to the allowance for recreational fishing from October this year will take it from 1.8% to 3.0% of the revised Total Allowable Catch (TAC). (Figure 1).

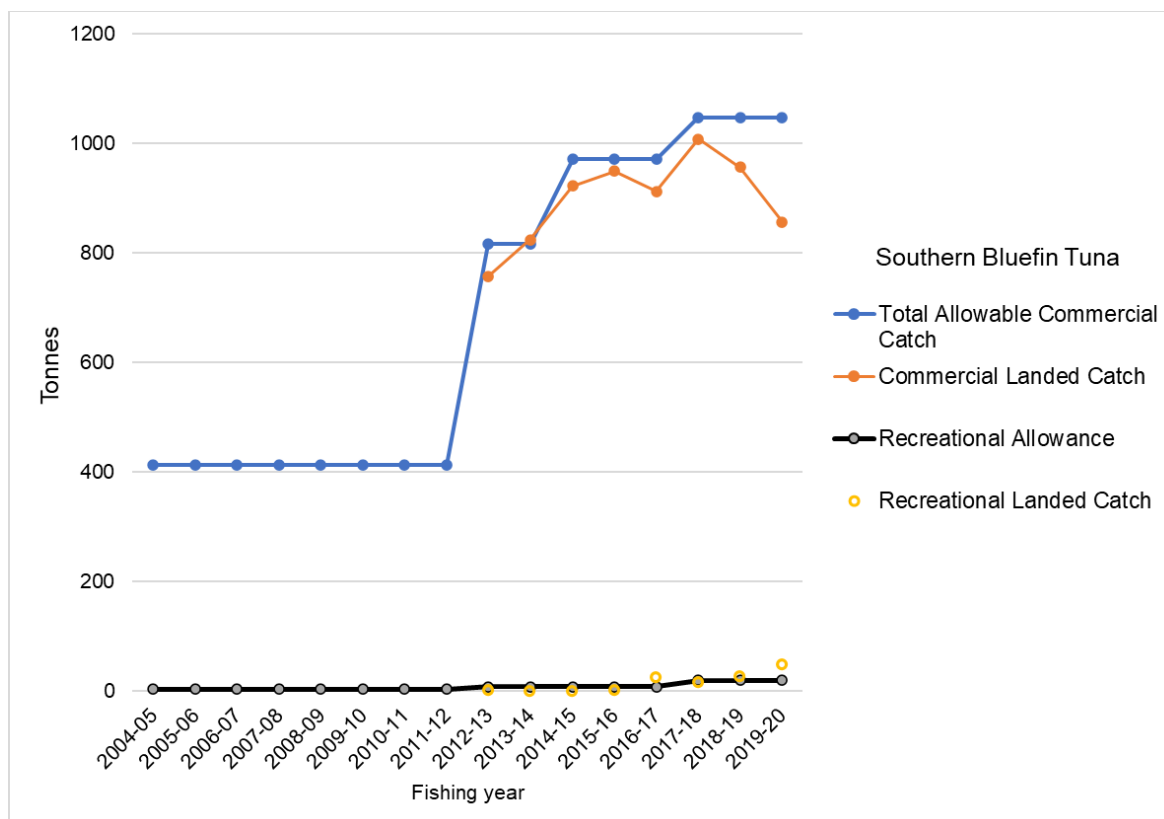


Figure 1: The allowances for commercial and recreational fishers for southern bluefin tuna made under the Quota Management System including the in-season adjustments made in 2017–18 and the TAC decision in 2018.

Response to proposals

16. The submitters support the increase in the STN 1 TAC of 14 t as allowed for by the CCSBT. It represents just 0.07% of the 2021 Global TAC, and not allocating this increase would have no effect on the spawning stock biomass which is currently rebuilding.
17. The New Zealand TAC has been regularly under caught in recent years. The recreational allowance of 8 t was under caught prior to 2017. In 2016-17, when the recreational catch did exceed the allowance for the first time, the TACC was under caught by 58 t and ACE under caught by 15%.

Recreational catch

18. The rapid development of the recreational fishery for southern bluefin tuna off Cape Runaway in 2017 caught many people by surprise. Information from tuna longline fishers and a social media storm saw hundreds of anglers gamefishing in July. Thanks largely to the hard work by members of the Waihou Bay Sport Fishing club and the patience of returning anglers, we have weigh station data for a high proportion of landed catch. This is useful for describing the fishery and estimating total recreational harvest.
19. NZSFC clubs recorded 266 landed southern bluefin tuna and 13 released from the east coast recreational fishery, mostly during late June and July 2017. Most of the tuna caught in the North Island were over 60 kg and the average weight was 72 kg. Worldwide it is rare to find large southern bluefin tuna reasonably close to the coast in large numbers.
20. The total landed weight of southern bluefin tuna recorded by clubs in 2016-17 was 19.4 tonnes. The Amateur Charter Vessel logbooks recorded 47 SBT with an estimated average weight of 40 kg from the South Island in 2016-17. A conservative estimate of a total recreational catch in 2016-17 was 24.3 t.
21. Fisheries NZ contracted a project to survey fishers at the Waihou Bay boat ramp in 2018 and to compile weigh station records from fishing clubs, Amateur Charter Vessels records, and recreational catch taken on commercial vessels (s111) from around New Zealand. The recreational harvest estimate in 2017-18 was 15 tonnes. This estimate includes an additional allowance of 15% for unaccounted recreational catch (Table 2).

Table 2: Current and proposed catch

Fishing Year	Number of SBT landed	Harvest weight (t) recorded	Harvest weight (t) adjusted for unaccounted catch
2016-17	313	21.3	24.3
2017-18	202	12.3	15.0
2018-19	349	21.2	25.9
2019-20	587	42.6	48.9

22. In 2018 the submitters supported a 40 t allowance for recreational harvest as the best option to allow this fishery to develop responsibly. The southern bluefin tuna stock is increasing and there remains strong interest in catching large tuna in June and July when few other gamefish are around. Prior to this, the 8 tonne allowance was primarily for the summer and autumn fishery off the south west of the South Island.
23. A recommendation from the Waihou Bay Sport Fishing Club in 2018 asked fishers to limit their landed catch to one southern bluefin tuna per boat, per day. This voluntary measure was promoted by other NZSFC clubs that year and included in the LegaSea FishCare guide¹ prior to the regulation change to one southern bluefin tuna per angler, per day.
24. The FishCare guide includes information on [best practice methods for handling SBT](#) prior to release and the importance of looking after the fish that are kept, to maintain quality and avoid waste of these valuable fish.
25. This year the submitters support the Minister in implementing Fisheries New Zealand's Option 2: increase the TAC by 14 t and use that increase to set aside an allowance for recreational fishing interests of 34 tonnes from 1 October 2021, noting also that an annual allowance of 40 tonnes is required to allow this fishery to develop responsibly.

¹ https://fishcare.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/fishcare-bluefin-update_june21.pdf