

Recreational Bag Limits - Discussion document

2 November 2021



Introduction

On 6 October Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) advised they were consulting on [proposals to amend recreational daily bag limits](#) for finfish set under the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013. Some finfish species not currently subject to a daily bag limit are becoming increasingly popular as a target species for recreational fishers. These species are vulnerable to overharvest and [recent reports of excessive harvest](#) of pink maomao around the Coromandel have caused conflict in the community.

FNZ submission deadline is 18 November. Any feedback to the NZSFC is **required by 10 November** to enable development of a draft submission. Feedback can be sent to John Holdsworth john@bluewatermarine.co.nz or Trish Rea trish@legasea.co.nz.

Fisheries New Zealand proposals

1. **Option 1.** Status quo.
2. **Option 2.** Include all finfish species not currently subject to a daily bag limit in the combined daily bag limit of 20 mixed finfish.
3. **Option 3.** Include all finfish species, including those with additional individual species limits, in the combined daily bag limit of 20 mixed finfish.

In addition to the above options FNZ also propose the following –

4. Retain the existing combined daily bag limit caps across the five recreational fishing areas (around the country) or standardise the limit across the country; and
5. Exclude a subset of small fish species generally taken as bait and set a new combined daily bag limit of 50 for these baitfish species.

NZSFC response

At the October AGM the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council amended its Reef Fish Policy to support –

1. The inclusion of pink maomao, blue maomao, grand daddy hapuku (Northern scorpionfish) and pigfish/wrasses in the [‘Sale of Reef Fish’ schedule](#) to make it unlawful for anyone to sell or possess for sale these species taken from the Auckland Fisheries Management Area.

2. A maximum individual daily bag limit of 3 of any of these species taken from the Auckland Fisheries Management Area.
3. The maximum individual daily bag limit of 3 of any of these species to be included within the combined daily bag limit of 20 mixed finfish taken from the Auckland Fisheries Management Area.

Any further review of bag limits needs to be undertaken within a process that respects the impacts any changes have on recreational fishers and the range of views held by the public.

The urgency of closing the loophole on a few reef species should not be lost due to parties wanting to argue all manner of ancillary matters, like recreational harvest estimates, and misguided notions of resource ownership.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council believes Fisheries New Zealand need to simply deal with the matter at hand and frame any wider review in a proper process. After all, the Fisheries Change programme concerning commercial fishing has been underway since 2015 without no end in sight. Let's be reasonable.

Recommendations

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council submits:

1. Fisheries New Zealand prevent the commercial trade of pink maomao, blue maomao, grand daddy hapuku (Northern scorpionfish) and pigfish/wrasses by adding these species to the 'Sale of Reef Fish' schedule¹.
2. Fisheries New Zealand sets a recreational daily bag limit of 3 per person for pink maomao, blue maomao, grand daddy hapuku (Northern scorpionfish) and pigfish/wrasses, within the 20 combined daily bag limit.
3. Fisheries New Zealand retains the existing combined recreational daily bag limit caps across the five recreational fishing areas around the country.
4. Fisheries New Zealand undertake a wider review, at a later date, that takes into account a range of species and areas and allows sufficient time and resources for well informed public debate.
5. Fisheries New Zealand confirms the bag limit of 1 per person per day for southern bluefin tuna.

¹ Fisheries (Auckland and Kermadec Areas Commercial Fishing) Regulations 1986, 20E.