



Tēnā koe

Changes to recreational daily bag limits for finfish

I write to inform you of decisions I have made on amendments to recreational fishing daily limits for finfish.

I instructed my officials to review the daily bag limits for recreationally caught finfish following reports of people taking hundreds of pink maomao on one day last year.

Some of the species outside of bag limits weren't previously targeted by recreational fishers. But there has been a change in what people now catch and eat, and the rules needed to be updated to reflect this.

The primary proposal was to ensure that all finfish species are subject to some form of daily limit, unless specifically excluded. The three options proposed were:

- **Option 1:** Status quo, retain the current daily limit settings;
- **Option 2:** Include all finfish species, not currently subject to a daily limit, in the combined daily limit (specified individual species daily limits will remain additional to the combined daily limit); and
- **Option 3:** Include all finfish species, including those with additional individual species limits, in the combined daily limit.

In addition, feedback was also sought on whether to:

- a) retain the existing combined daily limits across the five recreational fishing areas or standardise the limit across the country; and
- b) exclude a subset of small finfish species that are generally taken as bait (baitfish) and set a new combined daily limit of 50 for these excluded species.

In taking my decisions, I considered the submissions received and decided as follows:

For the primary proposal, I have decided to implement Option 3.

This option will ensure recreational take for all finfish species is set at a reasonable level while also providing additional sustainability backstops for those species with an individual daily limit. This option will also have the benefit of simplifying the daily limit rules, making it easier for recreational fishers to understand and comply with the rules.

I have decided, however, to keep the freshwater eel individual species limit separate from the combined daily limit as this is largely a separate freshwater fishery.

Option 3 received broad support and was the option that the Government signalled an initial preference for.

In regard to secondary proposal a), above, I have decided to retain the existing combined daily limits across the five recreational fishing areas (20 for the Auckland/Kermadec, Central, and Challenger areas and 30 for the South-East and Southland/Sub-Antarctic areas).

The higher combined daily limits in South-East and Southland/Sub-Antarctic recreational fishing areas were historically set to reflect limited accessibility to fishing grounds due to the exposed coastlines and weather conditions, the larger range of species caught when fishing, and the generally lower number of recreational fishers that fish at these locations. This rationale remains valid and there is no evidence to suggest that a more restrictive combined daily limit cap of 20 is needed for these areas.

I have also decided to exclude a subset of small fish species generally taken as baitfish and set a new combined daily limit of 50 per person per day for these species. This will support existing fishing practices in relation to these species, while mitigating the risk of unconstrained take.

I have also decided to align the recreational daily limit for southern bluefin tuna, currently set under the Gazette Notice, with other finfish and bring it under the *Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013*. This change will not alter the existing daily limit settings for southern bluefin tuna but rather align the offence and penalty settings with other daily limits.

More information on these changes can be found on the Fisheries New Zealand website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Parker', is positioned above the printed name.

Hon David Parker
Minister for Oceans and Fisheries