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2022 Sustainability Review  
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22 July 2022

## Submission: Review of Sustainability Measures for Blue Cod (BCO 7) for 2022/23

### Recommendations

1. **The Minister of Oceans and Fisheries** removes BCO 7 from this consultation period due to missing information, and reviews management and catch settings in 2023 taking into account best available information.
2. **If the Minister chooses to proceed**, we urge the Minister to make precautionary decisions for BCO 7 by -
  - a. Setting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) at **155.4 tonnes**.
  - b. Setting a conservative TACC based on an average of the past 10 year's catches minus 25%. **Setting the TACC at 54 tonnes.**
  - c. Setting aside an allowance for recreational fishing interests based on an average across most recent recreational BCO 7 survey results. **Setting aside 69 tonnes to allow for recreational fishing interests.**
  - d. **Setting aside 27 tonnes to allow for Māori customary fishing interests.**
  - e. Setting aside **5.4 tonnes** to allow for other mortality.

## The submitters

3. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit on the review of sustainability measures for blue cod 7 (BCO 7). Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) advice of consultation was received on 14 June 2022, with submissions due by 22 July 2022.
4. The NZSFC is a recognised national sports organisation of 55 affiliated clubs with over 36,200 members 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](http://www.legasea.co.nz).
5. The New Zealand Angling & Casting Association (NZACA) is the representative body for its 35 member clubs throughout the country. The Association promotes recreational fishing and the camaraderie of enjoying the activity with fellow fishers. The NZACA is committed to protecting fish stocks and representing its members' right to fish.
6. The New Zealand Underwater Association is comprised of 43 clubs nationally who represent a cohort of approximately 160,000 participants in underwater activities in New Zealand. These activities include diving, snorkelling, freediving, fin swimming, underwater hockey, spearfishing, underwater photography, underwater rugby, ghost diving marine clean up and Experiencing Marine Reserves. Through our membership we are acutely aware that the depletion of inshore fish stocks has impacted on the marine environment and our members' wellbeing.
7. Collectively we are '*the submitters*'. 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].
8. 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](mailto:secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz)

## Background

9. Blue cod (rāwaru) are a taonga species for tangata whenua in the South Island. They are important ecologically and are a highly prized catch for their eating qualities. Nationwide around 293 tonnes of blue cod is harvested by recreational fishers annually. Nearly 80% of all recreational harvest is taken from three Quota Management Areas: BCO 3, 5 & 7.
10. Blue cod 7 commercial catch data is available from 1931. Blue cod was introduced into the Quota Management System (QMS) in 1986. In Blue cod 7 (BCO 7), the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) has been set at 70 t (tonnes) since 1995, with a decrease to 50 t only for the 2004-05 fishing year. BCO 7 annual commercial landings have averaged around 55 t of the TACC between 2000 and 2021, around 78.5% of the TACC.
11. Blue cod reach an average size of 30-40cm, but can reach 60cm in length.
12. A National Blue Cod Strategy was published by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) in 2018. FNZ has no immediate plans to protect important spawning or benthic habitats, those measures will be addressed later, while wider habitat and ecosystem impacts will be addressed in the longer-term plan. An outcome from the planning process was the development of a traffic light system and regulation changes to manage recreational fishing in BCO 3. During 2019-20 FNZ managed a Technical Working Group process to develop the traffic light system and discuss regulatory changes. Local New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) club representatives and fishers contributed time and resources to the Working Group process.
13. Local representatives were expecting further consultation with FNZ on proposed regulatory measures, which did not occur, and what has emerged from that process is unsatisfactory. The outcomes do not align with earlier agreements and there are serious concerns of non-compliance by recreational fishers due to the widespread perception that the traffic light system and regulations are unfair and complex.
14. The Minister must be made aware of the widespread public concern about the mismanagement of blue cod and not make the mistake of making an adverse decision for the future management of BCO 7.

## Proposal

15. [Proposal here](#)

16. **Table 1** - Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) propose the following options for the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), and allowances in BCO 7 (in tonnes).

**Table 1: Proposed management options (in tonnes) for BCO 7 from 1 October 2022.**

Option	TAC	TACC	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
Current settings	-	70.005	-	-	-
Option 1	169	63 ↓ (7.005 t)	27	64	15
Option 2	157	58 ↓ (12.005 t)	27	58	14

17. **Option 1:** 51% decrease to TAC, 10% decrease to TACC, 64% decrease to recreational allowance, customary allowance status quo, 78% decrease to other mortality.
18. **Option 2:** 54% decrease to TAC, 17% decrease to TACC, 67% decrease to recreational allowance, customary allowance status quo, 80% decrease to other mortality.

## Discussion

19. We reject the proposal on the basis that there is missing information about the BCO 7 fishery, and the most recent information concerning BCO 7, Marlborough Sounds, is still under review.
20. The Fisheries New Zealand [discussion document](#) justification of ‘setting’ a Total Allowable Catch does not match [recent plenary \(page 151\)](#) or [historical information of Total Allowable Catch \(page 6\)](#), or the [National Blue Cod strategy](#), of BCO 7, where a TAC had already been set at 343 tonnes a TACC of 70 t, recreational allowance of 177 t, and customary non-commercial allowance of 27 t. While we understand this change was announced by the Minister in 2003, it is unclear why they were not gazetted. Fisheries New Zealand have been using the TAC and other allowances in their plenaries and blue cod-related plans.
21. There is confusion over the catch settings applying in BCO 7. It is totally inadequate for Fisheries New Zealand to issue a discussion paper that does not include accurate details. The submitters object to such fundamental details being omitted or worse, misrepresented. Submitters cannot be expected to respond to inaccurate data.
22. The Minister has a statutory duty to decide based on best available information. That information also needs to be made available to the public so we can make an informed submission. Given the lack of accurate data supplied the Minister is obliged

to forgo this process and direct Fisheries New Zealand to reissue more complete consultation papers later.

23. From the available data we submit our comments on the basis that the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), allowances set aside for Māori customary and recreational fishing interests and other mortality, and the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) are as described in Table 1 below.

24. **Table 2** – Catch settings in the blue cod fish stocks as of October 1st, 2021. (Source: Fisheries New Zealand Plenary, May 2022)

**Table 1: Recreational and Customary non-commercial allowances (t), other mortality (t), TACCs (t), and TACs (t) for blue cod by Fishstock as at 1 October 2021.**

Fishstock	Recreational Allowance	Customary non-commercial allowance	Other mortality	TACC	TAC
BCO 1	2	2	–	46	46
BCO 2	–	–	–	10	10
BCO 3	83	20	10	130	243
BCO 4	20	10	40	759	829
BCO 5	85	20	20	800	925
BCO 7	177	27	69	70	343
BCO 8	188	2	2	34	226
BCO 10	–	–	–	10	10

25. The rationale for a decrease in the TACC and the recreational allowance is that recent potting survey data estimates very high fishing mortality in some areas.

26. Recent information shows the Marlborough Sounds area has been overfished, but BCO 7 is a large QMA including areas with difficult access and limited fishing effort.

27. We suggest a conservative approach to blue cod management that reflects the desires of different fishing interests.

28. As the TACC has only been caught twice in the past 20 years, we strongly suggest a decrease in TACC based on 25% of the average landings over the past decade.

29. The current stock status of BCO 7 is currently in relation to a target has been the subject of recent stock assessment plenary meetings, and overfishing is likely to be occurring.

30. Commercial landings from the past 3 years is on average around 59 tonnes, 11 tonnes less than the current commercial catch limit of 70 tonnes.

31. According to the 2015/16 NIWA aerial survey, the recreational harvest from BCO 7 in 2015–16 was about half that in 2005/06, almost with all the decrease being in the

Marlborough Sounds. 2015/16 aerial survey showed average recreational catch estimated to be 75 tonnes, compared to 149 tonnes in the 2006 survey.

32. The last National Panel Survey was conducted in the 2017/18 fishing year, showing recreational catch at 63 tonnes, compared to the NPS in 2011/12 where recreational catch tonnage was 77 tonnes. The daily bag limit (DBL) in the Marlborough Sounds has remained at 2 per person per day since 2011, whereas the DBL was changed in 2020 for the Kahurangi area to 10 and the Westland area to a DBL of 15.
33. The combined aerial and NPS surveys show recreational catch has steadily decreased over time.
34. In the Marlborough Sounds, the prominent recreational fishing area for blue cod in BCO 7, FNZ have stated 'recent changes', such as the implementation of traffic light system under a red setting, means there is a predicted increase in biomass over the coming years.
35. Local fishers still object to the process FNZ undertook to implement the National Blue Cod Strategy, and, the resultant 'Traffic Light System', (TLS). FNZ implemented the TLS without discussing the significant changes with the Technical Working Group or engaging in the last stakeholder's consultation process advised earlier by FNZ. In the Marlborough Sounds a red light setting is in place, meaning a 2-DBL applies.