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Submission: Proposed further temporary fishing closure of Te Mātā and Waipatukahu, west Coromandel

Recommendations

1. **The Minister of Oceans and Fisheries** approves the request for a 24-month temporary closure of the Te Mātā and Waipatukahu (Tapu) Mahinga Mātaitai to the taking of kūtai (mussels), pipi, oysters (tio), and tuangi (cockles), under s186A of the Fisheries Act 1996.
2. **The Minister of Oceans and Fisheries** recognises and takes appropriate action to address the long-standing concerns of depletion, environmental stressors, and poor recruitment in our shellfish fisheries. Te Mātā and Waipatukahu (Tapu) Mahinga Mātaitai have been closed to shellfish harvest since 10 January 2020, and there is still no sign of recovery of pipi and cockle populations.

The submitters

3. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit on a further temporary closure to the harvest of pipi, cockles, mussels and oysters, from Te Mātā and Waipatukahu, west Coromandel. Fisheries New Zealand's (FNZ) request was received on 23 May 2022, with submissions due by 20 June 2022.
4. The NZ Sport Fishing Council 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. legasea.co.nz.
5. The New Zealand Angling and 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. Collectively we are 'the submitters'. The joint 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].
7. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We look forward to positive outcomes from this review and would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Helen Pastor, secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.

Submission

8. **The submitters support** the request by Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust for an extension period of 24-months for their current temporary closure of the Te Mātā and Waipatukahu (Tapu) Mahinga Mātaitai to the taking of kūtai (mussels), pipi, and tuangi (cockles), and oysters (tio), under s186A of the Fisheries Act 1996.
9. We acknowledge that Ngāti Tamaterā are concerned at the lack of recovery of some shellfish species in the area.
10. We also support the **‘Pou rāhui, pou tikanga, pou oranga: reigniting the mauri of Tīkapa Moana and Te Moananui-ā Toi’** inter-generational project introduced by the Settlement Trust in their application. We support efforts in localised management and the re-introduction of mātauranga Māori science and tikanga-based approaches to protect shellfish in rohe moana.
11. We reiterate our earlier submissions that there is a need for a public awareness campaign to educate the wider public of the potential benefits in implementing local area management tools. Currently, the only tools available are customary initiatives. Yet we know from experience that the protection of shellfish, finfish and the marine ecosystem benefits the wider community. The submitters are keen to participate in such a campaign to raise public awareness.
12. We acknowledge and appreciate Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust for their foresight and effort to enhance the fisheries and marine ecosystem along the Thames coast, for current and future generations. Kia kaha.
13. We submit it is the failure by FNZ to protect and manage the shellfish fisheries and regional councils to improve water quality that leaves mana whenua in a position where they have to act on behalf of the community to protect the remaining beds from overharvesting and external stressors.
14. We encourage Fisheries New Zealand to get working on effective measures to protect and enhance our intertidal species.

Background

15. Indications are that the pipi beds at Te Mata have continued to decline over the last year and Fisheries New Zealand should include the final Te Mata survey results of project AKI2018-01 – Northern North Island bivalve surveys in their advice to the minister.
16. What's more, persistent declines in shellfish beds, even those closed to harvest, is not a new phenomenon nationally or locally. We note the Hauraki Māori Trust Board initiated a s186A closure in 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 for the coastal area encompassing Te Mātā and Waipatukahu. In 2004 our team submitted in support of the closure. The Settlement Trust reports the 2004 application was refused on the basis that a s186A closure was not a permanent tool for the management of customary fisheries.
17. While a s186A closure may not be considered a suitable tool for managing customary fisheries, what is the alternative that can be applied to adequately protect our shellfish fisheries from a range of inputs that are causing depletion?
18. Over time our population has changed and for years there have been increasing reports of bulk harvesting by groups of people who travel to beaches close to Auckland. There does not seem to be any effective management of this activity by Fisheries New Zealand nor adequate measures to protect the intertidal habitat on which these species depend.