



Developing guidance for identifying habitat of particular significance (HoS) Frequently Asked Questions

What is a habitat of particular significance for fisheries management?

A HoS is not defined in the Act. There is scope for a broad range of interpretations being applied to this principle. Our working definition for a HoS is “an area or areas of particular significance in supporting the productivity of fisheries resources”.

Our current priority for HoS identification is nursery and spawning or egg laying habitat due to the particularly significant role these habitats play in supporting productivity of fisheries resources and their sustainability. This working definition sets HoS apart from other habitats that species may utilise for other reasons (e.g., adult habitat, feeding grounds).

We will continue to refine our interpretation of this environmental principle as we progress the identification of HoS and how we take them into account when making fisheries management decisions.

Will specific types of habitats (like kelp forests) be considered as HoS?

Some habitats, such as kelp, provide ecosystem services and habitat for many marine species at a range of spatial scales. While these services are important in a wider fisheries context, under the current definition of HoS, it would require evidence of the habitat's particular significance as a nursery and spawning or egg laying area for the habitat to be considered a HoS.

What information is used to identify a HoS?

We will use the best available information to support our identification of HoS. As well as using available published reports and papers, FNZ is working with experts recognised within New Zealand for their understanding of the biology of fisheries resources and their dependence on specific habitat types during critical life stages.

When will FNZ take into account that a HoS should be protected?

- When a HoS is identified we will consider the risk of adverse effects of fishing to the HoS
- We will take into account that a HoS should be protected when providing advice to decision-makers.
- During science planning processes we will identify and prioritise scientific proposals to fill gaps in knowledge about HoS.



What action will be taken if a habitat is identified as a HoS?

An assessment of risks to HoS will inform advice on whether to alter a decision or propose sustainability measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on HoS. This will be a case-by-case assessment based on HoS sensitivity, exposure to adverse effects, and habitat resilience.

How will tāngata whenua be involved in decisions on the identification and protection of HoS?

We will seek input from tāngata whenua, including through iwi fisheries forums, on HoS identification and how protection of HoS should be taken account of in fisheries management decisions.

Will there be consultation on which areas are HoS?

There will not be public consultation on HoS included on the register of HoS.

Evidence for potential HoS will be reviewed by the FNZ science working groups, the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG) or the Aquatic Environment Working Group (AEWG). Provided the evidence is considered sufficient these will be signed off by FNZ and included on the on-line register of HoS.

Will I get a chance to have a say on measures used to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on HoS?

Yes. We will engage with tāngata whenua and stakeholders on options for managing adverse effects of fishing on HoS. Consultation will be carried out for sustainability tools available under s 11 of the Act if considered necessary to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects of fishing on HoS. This will inform the Minister's decisions on any measures progressed to protect HoS.

Will bottom-contact fishing be removed in areas identified as HoS?

An assessment of risks to HoS will inform advice on whether to alter a decision or propose sustainability measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on HoS. This will be a case-by-case assessment based on HoS sensitivity, exposure to adverse effects, and habitat resilience.



How will new research to collect evidence for identification of HoS be funded?

Each year, Fisheries NZ plans the following year's research to provide the information needed for fisheries management. This research includes both projects to help us understand specific stocks or species, as well as projects that look at the aquatic environment more broadly. A long list of potential research projects for the following year is developed and prioritised for Fisheries NZ funding. About \$22M is spent on research per year. Each project is assessed against a series of cost recovery rules to determine if that project is appropriate to be cost recovered. As a result of this process projects may be supported through a mix of crown and cost-recovered funding.

Priorities for research needed to inform identification of HoS will be influenced by the points discussed in section 12 of the [draft guidelines](#).