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Kia ora koutou

Decisions to reopen the Kaikōura pāua fishery

I write to inform you of my decisions to reopen the Kaikōura coastline to recreational and commercial pāua fishing in 2023. This area extends from Marfells Beach/Cape Campbell in the north to Conway River in the south (PAU 3A).

Following the November 2016 earthquakes, the area was closed to fishing of most shellfish and seaweeds, including pāua. An intensive monitoring programme showed that pāua biomass had recovered sufficiently to provide a limited commercial and recreational pāua season from December 2021 to February 2022.

Commercial catch during the season was 23 tonnes as set by the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC). Recreational catch was much higher than expected at 42 tonnes (as estimated by the first recreational survey ever undertaken for pāua in the area) with most fishers coming from outside the region. Scientific modelling suggests this level of recreational catch needs to be reduced going forward to ensure the fishery continues to rebuild.

Fisheries New Zealand recently completed public consultation on reopening the pāua fishery in 2023. Nearly 300 submissions were received with overwhelming support to reopen the recreational fishery at a quieter time of year. There was a range of views expressed on whether the season should be two months in autumn or three months in winter.

Taking into account input from tangata whenua, the recommendations of the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, along with feedback from recreational fishers and others, I have decided to reopen the recreational Kaikōura pāua fishery from 15 April to 15 June 2023. This is a quieter time of year that will still provide good harvest opportunities as warmer sea temperatures and calm conditions do occur around this time.

There was a strong consensus on the need to continue to closely monitor recreational take. Fisheries New Zealand will commission a second recreational survey to estimate catch, with a rolling weekly estimate reported to a reference group of fishery stakeholders including the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura, and fishery representatives. This will allow consideration of in-season management changes if appropriate.

I will receive further advice from Fisheries New Zealand in February 2023 on additional measures for the recreational season including a reduced daily limit and a potential new vehicle and vessel limit. There was a range of views provided during consultation on the priority of such measures, but overall, agreement that some of them are needed to appropriately manage the recreational season.

There is widespread support for a year-round reopening of the commercial fishery, which targets pāua in deeper water and in areas away from recreationally popular beds. Catch is constrained to 23 tonnes by the TACC and is well managed under the PAU 3 Fisheries Plan approved in 2021. Therefore, I have agreed to permanently reopen the commercial fishery from 5 January 2023.

The majority of customary management areas will remain closed to commercial and recreational pāua fishing. The southern Oaro-Haumuri Taiapure, which was less affected by the earthquakes, will again be open to fishing. The Taiapure Committee will provide me with recommendations in the New Year on any additional measures needed to manage fishing within this area.

As well as the recreational pāua survey, the fishery will continue to be closely monitored through in-water surveys and fine-scale reporting of commercial catch. This information will be reviewed by Fisheries New Zealand in collaboration with the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, tangata whenua, and recreational and commercial stakeholders to consider longer-term management strategies for PAU 3A.

The proposal also sought feedback on whether to reopen the Kaikōura coastline to the remaining shellfish and seaweed fisheries that are still closed. Fisheries New Zealand will provide me with recommendations on reopening these fisheries in February 2023.

More information on my decisions can be found on the Consultation Section on the Fisheries New Zealand website (www.mpi.govt.nz).

I would like to thank Te Runanga o Kaikōura, the Kaikōura Marine Guardians, as well as Te Korowai o Te Tai ō Marokura and stakeholders for their support and advice. Fisheries New Zealand will continue to actively engage with all those with an interest as the fishery continues to rebuild.

Yours sincerely



Hon David Parker
Minister for Oceans and Fisheries