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8 May 2023

Submission: Support the request for a temporary closure and netting ban at Tutukaka Harbour, Ngunguru Bay and River, Northland

Submitters

1. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) is a recognised national sports organisation with over 36,700 affiliated members from 50 clubs 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.
2. The New Zealand Angling and Casting Association (NZACA) is the representative body for its 24 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.
3. The New Zealand Underwater Association comprises three distinct user groups including Spearfishing NZ, affiliated scuba clubs throughout the country and Underwater Hockey NZ. Through our membership we are acutely aware that the depletion of inshore fish stocks has impacted on the marine environment and the wellbeing of many of our members.
4. The submitters have supported previous s186A fishing closures where there has been a clear purpose to restore abundance and productivity of the marine environment.
5. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We

look forward to positive outcomes from this process. We would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Helen Pastor secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.

Discussion

6. The **submitters support the application** made by tangata whenua o Ngāti Takapari, Te Waiariki, and Ngāti Korora "Whangai Mokopuna". The request for the two-year temporary closure applies to the harvest of all shellfish (except kina), seahorses, and garfish/piper, as well as the use of scoop, gill, drag and set nets around Tutukaka Harbour and Ngunguru Bay, Northland, under section 186A of the Fisheries Act 1996. Advice was received on 22 March with submissions due by 8 May 2023.
7. We appreciate the effort the applicants have made in terms of community outreach and garnering support, including the undertaking from the applicants that they will not issue customary permits for the species protected under the section 186A application over the closure period.
8. Over the past few years Zone 1 representatives of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council have been actively involved in discussions about establishing a mātaimai in the area proposed in this application. **We support the section 186A application on the basis that a separate consultation on the proposed mātaimai will occur.**
9. Marine restoration projects are ongoing by mana whenua and the local community in the Tutukaka and Ngunguru area. This includes monitoring of shellfish species by mana whenua, community groups and local schools, as well as activation projects involving kina removal and restoration of kelp forests.

Improving availability

10. Many of the marine species the applicants seek protection for are threatened by several ongoing issues, including population and water quality decline.
11. Pipis and cockles populations in Ngunguru estuary are recovering slowly following a harvesting closure of these beds since 2016. Monitoring has been relatively consistent since 2004.
12. There is a limited hard data on the decline of pāua numbers, however there is plenty of strong anecdotal information from Tutukaka coastline locals about traditional fishing areas which have few, if any, pāua.
13. Fishers who have gathered crays in Northland are supportive of rebuilding crayfish stocks. At the beginning of 2023, LegaSea ran a [survey](#) targeting Northland fishers to understand their perceptions of the state of the crayfish population and marine environment around Northland. Around 66% of the 518 respondents had over 20 years' experience fishing for crayfish in Northland waters.
 - a. Over 87% of respondents said there were fewer crayfish in their most fished area, compared to when they first started fishing.

- b. Over half of the 518 respondents who had fished for cray in Northland support conservative catch limits and a reduced recreational daily bag limit for the next five years, to contribute to a significant rebuild of the CRA 1 stock.
 - c. The Minister reduced the commercial allocation by 16 tonnes from 1 April 2023 and the Northland recreational daily bag limit for spiny rock lobster changed from 6 to 3 per person, per day, within a combined bag of 6 including packhorse crayfish from 15 April 2023.
 - d. A survey of recreational catch in CRA 1 in 2013/14¹ found the extensive reefs around the rocky Tutukaka coastline had the second highest catch in the Northland survey area.
14. Crayfish in Northland has been declining for many years. The 2022 updated population model estimated the Northland crayfish vulnerable biomass, males of legal size at the start of the fishing year, to be 462 tonnes, just 14.4% of the unfished biomass.
15. We submit in support of restoring local populations of crayfish and note that it is the statutory duty of the Minister to **ensure sustainability**. Local hapū and coastal communities have limited capacity to restore the overall population of crayfish because the only tools available are customary management tools which only apply to local waters.
16. It is difficult to manage crayfish populations on the northeast coast when the Quota Management Area of CRA 1 extends from the Kaipara Harbour on the west coast, up to the Three Kings islands, across to North Cape and down the east coast to Te Arai Point.
17. To deliver any meaningful change to abundance and management the Minister will need to split the CRA 1 management area at North Cape so catches on the northeast coast can be better managed. Splitting the CRA 1 management area into at least two smaller management units will help support hapū and community initiatives to restore local abundance.

¹ Holdsworth, J.C. (2014). Rock lobster amateur harvest estimates for Northland, New Zealand in 2013–14. New Zealand Fisheries Assessment Report 2014/70.