



Northland Crayfish Review

CRA 1 February 2023

What's happened to Northland's crayfish?

Across Northland crayfish numbers are severely depleted. In some areas along the northeast coast there are few crayfish. Commercial fishing effort is now concentrated around the northwest coast and the Three Kings Islands.

The lack of large crayfish means kina numbers have flourished. Kina can graze down entire kelp forests leaving bare rock and kina barrens. This is significant because kelp is an important source of food and shelter for other species, including juvenile fish.

In the past, crayfish played a significant role in coastal ecosystems. Having lots of crayfish in the water also contributed to our cultural and social well-being. Now, it's important that crayfish numbers along the northeast coast are restored to more natural levels.

LEGAL CHALLENGE

In 2022 the Environmental Law Initiative (ELI) and a Northland hapū challenged decisions by the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries for the future management of Northland crayfish (CRA 1). Recreational fishers supported the legal challenge.

ELI successfully argued the Minister had been misled, using inaccurate and outdated information to make his decisions.

The High Court ruled in November 2022 that the Minister must review catch settings for CRA 1. So, in January 2023 Fisheries New Zealand proposed three options for the future management of Northland crayfish. None were acceptable.

OUR RESPONSE

In February 2023 an alliance of the largest recreational representative marine and fishing organisations in New Zealand submitted in support of conservation. It was vital the Minister set lower catch levels until the rocky reef ecosystem is restored. Crayfish must be allowed to grow big enough to predate on kina.

Splitting the large management area at North Cape will help limit catches on the east coast while the fishery rebuilds to a more natural level.

WHAT NEXT?

The Minister has decided to reduce catch limits by 11% and cut recreational daily bag limits from April 2023. Another review of CRA 1 is expected in 2024.

LegaSea will continue to work with ELI, the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, New Zealand Angling & Casting Association and New Zealand Underwater to restore biodiversity and Northland crayfish to more natural levels.

[CRA 1 timeline](#)

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