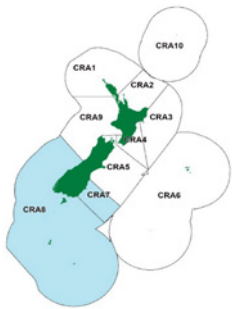


CRA 7 & 8 2024

February 2024

Crayfish management challenges



Crayfish are an important species for everyone including commercial, Māori customary, recreational and environmental interests.

In early 2024 the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries reviewed the catch limits for crayfish in southern waters.

Two crayfish stock management areas were reviewed: Otago (CRA 7) and jointly Southland, Stewart Island and Fiordland (CRA 8). Both stocks have different characteristics, so they require specialised management.

In the absence of reliable data, the law requires the Minister to make a conservative decision, to ensure a thriving ecosystem and so crayfish populations are sustained for future generations.

COLLECTIVE SUBMISSION

LegaSea, the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, New Zealand Underwater and New Zealand Angling & Casting Association collaborated in early 2024 to develop a submission urging the Minister to make a decision using more reliable and independently sourced data.

In terms of commercial catch limits, we supported the status quo, and a modest allowance increase of six tonnes to cover existing recreational catches from Southland to Fiordland. CRA 8 is significant because it has the most crayfish, which are significantly bigger in size compared to other areas around the mainland.

DIFFERENT LEGAL SIZES MUST GO

In southern waters commercial fishers can legally take crayfish smaller than the recreational minimum legal size. The Minister must revoke this unfair rule that has been in place since the early 1990s. There is no biological, ecological or environmental reason for the Minister to retain this outdated concession.

WHAT NEXT?

The Minister must insist on gathering more reliable data on catches, including information on how many crayfish below the recreational minimum size are being taken commercially and sold.

It's important that the Minister acts decisively to ensure everyone benefits from a thriving rock lobster fishery in southern waters. Any new changes will apply from 1 April 2024.

legasea.co.nz | nzsportfishing.org.nz

