



Proposed management measures for the Northland spiny rock lobster fishery (CRA 1) to help mitigate urchin barrens

 **Closing date**

15 Dec 2024

 **Contact**

Fisheries management (CRA 1)

 **Email**

[FMsubmissio](#)

UPDATE – 15 APRIL 2025

In March 2025, the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries considered the submissions and received advice following this engagement. The minister has directed Fisheries New Zealand to consider further management measures for the Northland spiny rock lobster (CRA 1) and packhorse rock lobster (PHC 1) fisheries under section 11 of the Fisheries Act 1996, including area closure, seasonal closure, and recreational control options.

As outlined on this page, this engagement on a range of measures occurred in late 2024. Management measures were being considered to increase the abundance and size of rock lobster to help address urchin barrens on the east coast of Northland.

Fisheries New Zealand received 40 submissions during this engagement. Many submitters raised concerns about low spiny rock lobster abundance on the east coast of Northland and the proliferation of urchin barrens. Most submitters indicated that further regulated measures are required with mixed support between measures.

We're working to refine options for these management measures, including engaging with stakeholders. Public consultation on the management measures the minister has chosen to progress is planned to take place mid-2025.

The total allowable catch (TAC) for CRA 1 was last adjusted in 2023 in response to a 2022 High Court judgment. The 2023 TAC decision was itself subsequently challenged. The judgment in the latest case was received on 14 February 2025. The applicants' challenge was successful, but the Court did not make an order revoking the 2023 TAC, which currently remains in place. Fisheries New Zealand considers that progressing these regulatory management measures is consistent with the 2025 High Court judgment which recognised that these types of steps are needed to manage the urchin barren problem. An appeal of the 2025 decision has been filed by the minister to clarify certain aspects of the decision. The minister's appeal does not impact the planned approach Fisheries New Zealand has for managing the urchin barren problem.

[2025 High Court judgment decision for Northland rock lobster – Ministry of Justice](#) 

About urchin barrens

Urchin barrens are areas of rocky reef that are dominated by sea urchins. The areas would normally support healthy kelp forest but have little or no kelp due to overgrazing by sea urchins. This leads to a barren seafloor with a loss of habitat and biodiversity, impacting the overall health of coastal environments. Urchin barrens are prevalent in northeastern New Zealand and pose significant ecological risks as they expand, leading to the degradation of marine ecosystems.