



AM25-0646

6 August 2025

Tēnā koe,

Marlborough Sounds blue cod review – decision on the annual seasonal closure

I write to inform you of the decision I have made to extend the closed season for blue cod in the Marlborough Sounds, following public consultation in late 2024.

Potting surveys have shown overfishing of blue cod is very likely to be occurring in the Marlborough Sounds, which led a former Minister for Oceans and Fisheries to reduce the commercial catch limit in 2022, and request a local multisector advisory group deliberate on further measures. This group met throughout 2023 and 2024 and advised that an extension of the existing annual seasonal closure (1 September to 19 December inclusive) to commercial and recreational blue cod fishing in the Marlborough Sounds Area would be an effective way to reduce fishing pressure to sustainable levels, while a range of broader issues are addressed.

During public consultation around 80 percent of responses on this proposal supported an extension to the closed season, with mixed views on the length of the extension. Taking into account this feedback and input from tangata whenua, I have decided to extend the closed season to 10 January (inclusive) annually, which is an intermediate approach between consulted options. This provides confidence of addressing overfishing while seeking to maintain reasonable access to the fishery. Fishing for all other species can still occur during the closed blue cod season.

I have also heard the public feedback on the wide range of other issues affecting the fishery, such as mortality of returned blue cod, reduced spawning capacity, and habitat degradation. Fisheries New Zealand has commissioned research to support a wider package of measures aimed at addressing some of these issues and will work further with the multisector advisory group to provide me with further advice on options later this year.

In the interim, I encourage you to direct friends and family to sign up to the MPI recreational fisheries mailing list¹ (recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz) to get updates on next steps for the management review as well as updated educational material on local fishery issues, recent science, avoiding blue cod during closures, and minimising release mortality ahead of this summer.

I would like to express my thanks to the local multisector advisory group for their significant contribution of time and expertise on this important fishery, as well as tangata whenua, stakeholders, and members of the public who took time to submit their views. Your feedback and submissions have been instrumental in helping to inform my decision.

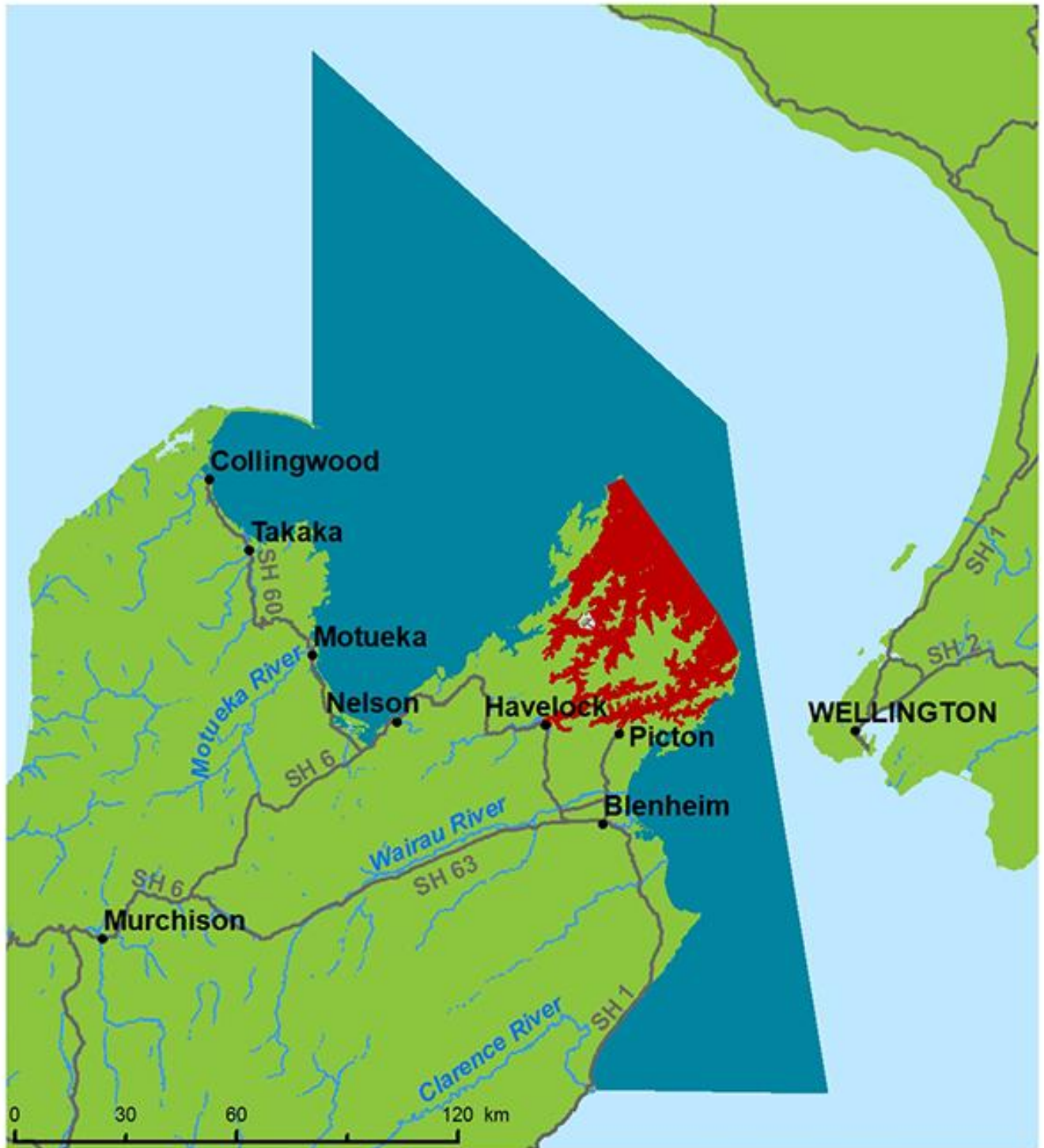
¹ <https://govt.us12.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=5865438dbf58d52c251962cdf&id=197878b8de>

The decision document and public submissions will be made available in the coming weeks on the Fisheries New Zealand consultation webpage: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/consultations/marlborough-sounds-blue-cod-review-measures-to-reduce-fishing-pressure-and-improve-fishery-health/>

Nāku noa, nā,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a series of loops and a wavy line extending to the right.

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Oceans and Fisheries



Map: The Marlborough Sounds Area in red, where the seasonal blue cod closure applies. The blue area is the Challenger East Area, from which you can transport blue cod into the Marlborough Sounds Area during the seasonal closure if you can prove where it was caught.