

Review of MPI Sustainability Measures 2016

Preliminary View Snapper 7 & John Dory 7

As part of the October 2016 sustainability review, MPI are looking at reviewing TAC's for both Snapper 7 and John Dory 7. You are welcome to review this document and provide your to the fisheries team. Contact John Holdsworth or Trish Rea by 4 July. **Submissions are due with MPI by 11 July.**

Snapper 7

Last year the SNA7 stock assessment model showed a marked increase in biomass. This was mainly from very successful recruitment from snapper spawned in 2007. MPI wanted to check this result with a new stock assessment this year. This showed another year of strong recruitment from 2010 and the very steep increase in biomass from about B10 to B30 in 2014 (Figure 1). The five year projection is for the increase to continue.

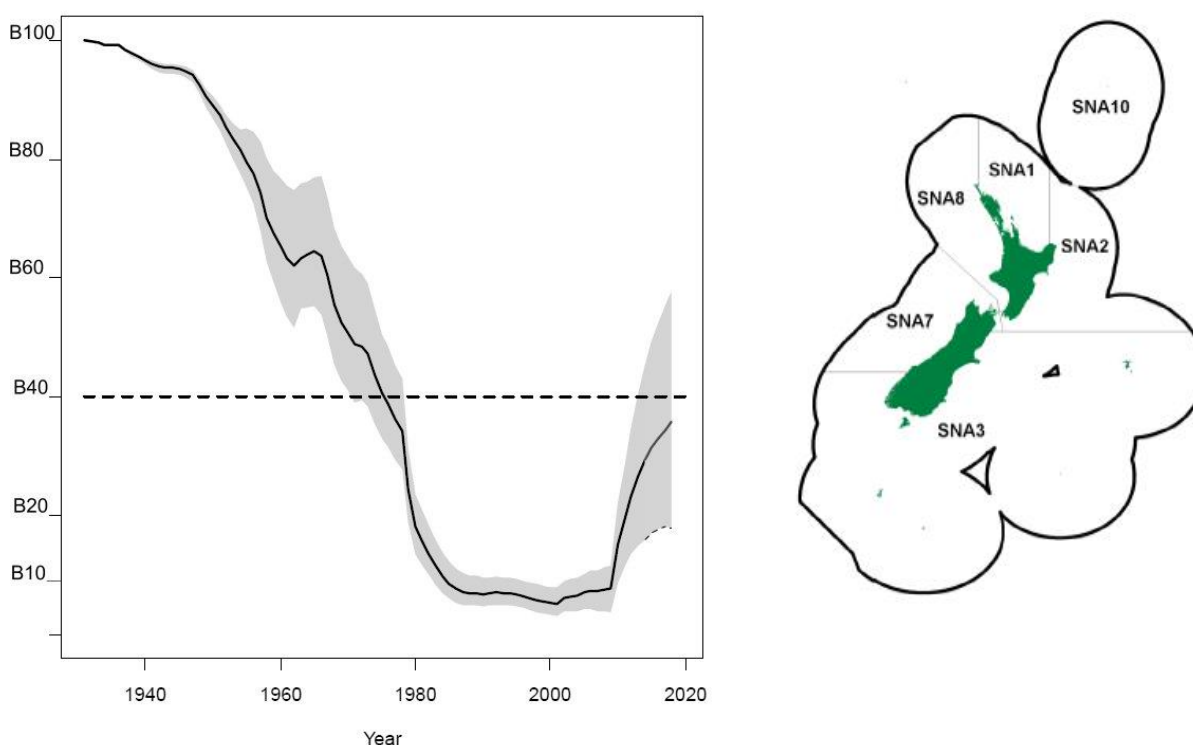


Figure 1: Snapper 7 biomass since 1935. Target biomass is B40. Biomass in 2014 is about B30. The five-year projection is that the stock will continue to rebuild.

MPI Proposed Options - SNA 7

Option 1: The Status Quo. No Change to TACC or Allowances as in Table 1 below.

Option 2: Proposes an increase to the TAC by 78%. The largest increase would be to the recreational allowance (up 178%) to better align with estimated (although uncertain) current catches. The commercial TACC would increase 25% (50 tonnes Table 1 below). MPI say that these increases are not likely to put the rebuild of the fishery at risk.

Option	Total Allowable Catch	Total Allowable Commercial Catch	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	Other sources of fishing-related mortality
Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	306	200	16	90	0
Option 2	545	250	20	250	25

NZSFC preliminary view

Snapper 7– The stock assessment shows large increases in abundance in recent years, although it is possible the fishery could support the increase in TACC, there is little understanding of the natural fluctuations. There was a stakeholder working group providing MPI with some feedback on draft proposals earlier this year. The size of the increase is large but it appears that the recreational catch has increased significantly since 2012. NIWA is currently doing an aerial overflight and ramp survey in Marlborough Sounds and the Bays. No change to the TAC could see major cuts in bag limits (currently 10) and an increase in minimum size (currently 25 cm) as soon as the survey results are out.

MPI are taking a more realistic approach to SNA 7 than in SNA1. *"The proposal of 250 tonne for both the TACC and the recreational allowance recognises that both commercial and recreational fishers currently take significant portions of SNA 7 catch. A 50:50 allocation recognises the value of snapper for recreational fishers in this area, which historically hasn't translated to catches because the stock was depleted."*

MPI Proposed Options – John Dory 7

The MPI proposal for an increase in John dory 7 (JDO 7) is based on the 2015 inshore trawl survey of West Coast South Island plus Tasman and Golden Bays. This was a fishery independent survey which showed abundance was the highest in the time series, (survey biomass estimate of 487 tonnes for 2015). However, it seems that most of the good size John dory are on the West Coast while a lot of the fishing is in the Bays where the John dory are small.

Option	Total Allowable Catch	Total Allowable Commercial Catch	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	Other sources of fishing-related mortality
Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	161	150	1	2	8
Option 2	185	170	2	4	9
Option 3	206	190	2	4	10

MPI Initial Views - JDO 7

Option 1: Status Quo, existing TAC, TACC and allowances would be retained.

Option 2: The commercial TACC would be increased by 20 tonnes (approx. 13% Table 1 above). Specific information is not available to assess the likely impact of this level of increase on stock biomass, but MPI believe a 24 tonne increase is relatively small. With current monitoring through the

WCSI trawl survey every two years MPI say they can respond to changes in stock biomass (increases and decreases) in a timely manner in future.

Option 3: The commercial TAC would be increased by 40 tonnes (approx. 27% Table 1 above). MPI accept John dory abundance can go up and down, but say ongoing monitoring is a viable approach to ensuring sustainability of this fishery. This option provides commercial fishers an opportunity to increase utilisation during a period of strong recruitment and elevated biomass.

NZSFC preliminary view

John dory – Currently there is no harvest strategy in place for John Dory. There needs to be some annual monitoring measures in place. The next trawl survey is planned for 2017 and it would be 2018 before any change in TAC could be introduced. By then the damage could have already been done. Despite going through years of lower abundance, there has never been a decrease in the TACC for JDO 7, only increases in response to higher survey results. A project is underway to develop a strategy that includes John Dory.

The information for JDO 7 is thin, with MPI stating they are unable to “assess the likely impact of this level of increase on stock biomass” and that the nature of the natural fluctuations are not clear. It seems John dory stocks are Ok on the West Coast where fishing pressure is lower but stocks in the Bays are small and showing signs of overfishing. So does fisheries management focus on the area which is doing Ok, or surely management is most needed in the areas which are depleted?

MPI state that JDO 7 stock levels are above the target. This target is set as the average of the stock estimates developed from the trawl surveys from 1992-2011. This period encompasses years when the biomass dipped as low as 17t. This low point would be dragging the average down, therefore creating a lower target.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the NZSFC submit, supporting option 1 (status quo) for JDO 7 on the basis of:

- A lack of information voided on the status of JDO in Tasman and Golden Bays,
- No need to a rushed decision if the stock is doing Ok,
- No clear description of what the management targets are or a clear harvest strategy.

The recommendation for SNA7 is for an increase in TAC (option 2) some discussion points are:

- The Snapper 7 stock has been at very low levels for 20 years with steady commercial catches and commercial CPUE. A classic example of sustainable depletion.
- There is no reason to reward commercial fishers for holding it down so long.
- The huge spike in recruitment appears to be real. It is Nature bouncing back, not the result of any management action.
- There has also been a spike in recreational snapper catch in the bays. Fishing effort has moved out of the Marlborough Sounds with the blue cod closure in spring and bag limit of 2.
- Snapper grow fast in SNA 7 and recreational catch from the next survey finishing later this year could exceed the proposed 250 t allowance.
- We need to talk to fishers in the region. Recreational fishers may need to adjust to snapper abundance or MPI will apply catch restrictions.