

LegaSea commentary on the Ministers decision.



Blue = LegaSea comments

The main changes are:

- The Minister accepted a new 5 year Management plan for Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty (CRA 2). This year the plan reduces commercial catch limits by 36 tonne (15%) to 200 tonne per year
 - According to their own figures, this will only limit further damage in this already heavily depleted fishery – not rebuild it.
 - This decision will lock in an average commercial catch of less than half a kg per pot lift for the next 5 years – the lowest in the country.
 - Recreational fishers can expect little improvement to the total lack of size and numbers of crayfish in many areas of this fishery and will continue to see excessive commercial potting.
- A new 5 year Management plan for Westland/Taranaki (CRA 9) will increase commercial catch limits by 14 tonne to 61 tonne a year.
 - This is one of the smallest commercial fisheries in the largest quota area.
 - Wind and swell can limit access.
 - Recreational catch is reasonably good when we can get out there.
- The Minister accepted the changes proposed from existing management plans in three crayfish areas.

A 35 tonne increase in commercial catch limits for crayfish in Gisborne (CRA 3),

- The loophole granted to commercial fishers in 1992 to temporarily catch undersized crayfish to help them “get by” after the fishery collapsed under excessive pressure, still exists 22 years later.
- The minister has now rewarded this behaviour with a 22t increase in quota, but despite our repeated requests, won’t tell us how many undersized crayfish are being taken, or the percentage of undersized compared to legal sized fish they take.
- Recreational fishers can expect to continue to experience the frustration of throwing back lots of crays that they are not allowed to take, but commercial fishers can.

A 33 tonne decrease in Wellington/Hawkes Bay (CRA 4).

- We supported the reduction in commercial catch levels.
- Currently real catches are being constrained by a lack of crayfish, not the TACC.
- Given the state of the fishery, the Minister’s decision will not likely make a material difference.
- The decision reverses a 33 t increase made last year.

A 22 tonne increase for Otago (CRA 7)

- Another fishery based on small crays where commercial fishers have clung on to a concession to take undersized fish.
 - The stock appears to be coming back from a low point over the last few years.
 - No data on the numbers or proportion of concession, undersized crayfish landed by commercial fishers.
- A decrease to the scallop commercial catch limit at the top of the South Island from 747 tonnes to 400 tonnes.
 - Possibly the most bewildering decision of the lot.
 - For the last few years, commercial catch of scallops in this area has been less than 50t.
 - Quota is supposed to be a limit to ensure that stocks do not get over fished. How can a quota that is almost 10 times more than the amount they are able to catch currently be seen as a limit?
 - The Minister is leaving it up to commercial fishers to fish within sustainable limits in the Marlborough Sounds and respect areas important to non-commercial fishers.
 - Recreational fishers should be deeply concerned not just because of the impact of these industrial-scale dredges damaging the ecosystem, but also the prospect of reduced bag limits in future if they get it wrong. Public pain for commercial gain. It's the snapper of the South!

Quotes from the Minister

“We need to ensure the fisheries are maintained at healthy levels for all New Zealanders,” says Mr Guy.

- He has clearly not achieved this in many of these areas.
- Commercial fishing interests have pushed for options which suit them. The National Rock Lobster management Group has produced biased advice and the Minister has taken the bait.
- Recreational fishers get absolutely hammered with the majority of these decisions

“These changes apply to the commercial sector and there is no change to any recreational or customary fishing limits across the country”.

- Cold comfort.
- No change to recreational limits simply because recreational fishers are not able to catch their current allowance.
- In CRA2, recreational fishers are only able to catch 28% of their tonnage allowance.
- Recreational fishers in a number of areas have never seen the stocks so low. These measures are too little too late.
- There is a concern that these decisions further alienates recreational fishers from management processes. The Minister should not underestimate how strongly people feel about being denied access to their fisheries.

“I have also approved a new management approach for CRA 2 that will closely monitor performance. If the numbers of crayfish don’t improve then I will be looking to make further changes.”

- We will be keeping a very close eye on this and reminding Mr Guy or the next Minister of his duty to act.

“If there is evidence to suggest the scallop management framework is not ensuring sustainability and providing opportunities for all sectors, then I will consider further action.

- Sounds like an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff management style.
- Mr Guy completely ignored a letter sent to him by 34k people.
- He did not undertake any meaningful public consultation
- The public can justifiably feel ripped off and let down overall.