

Marlborough Sounds blue cod

27 March 2015

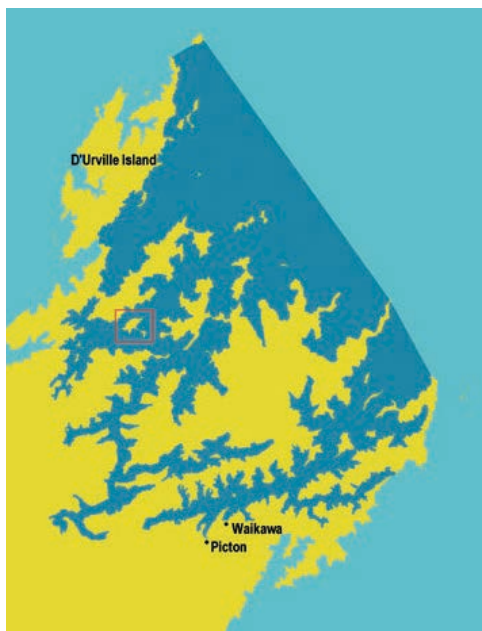


Blue cod are important ecologically and are a highly prized catch for their eating qualities. For generations they were the main target species for recreational fishers in the Marlborough Sounds.

For the first time in four years management of Marlborough Sounds Blue cod is being reviewed, and recreational fishers are encouraged to have their say on the future management of this most prized fishery. Send your feedback to MSbluecod@mpi.govt.nz.

Blue cod catch

In 2011-12 around 26% of the national recreational harvest of Blue cod was caught in the Marlborough Sounds area. Most Blue cod were caught using a rod and reel or line fishing. Potting or spearfishing accounts for only a fraction of total recreational harvest. Blue cod continue to provide for the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of Marlborough residents and visitors.



The situation

After closure in 2008, the fishery was re-opened in 2011 with a range of rules applying to recreational catch. These included a slot rule where only Blue cod between 30 and 35cm can be taken.

There are concerns that too many Blue cod are being killed in Pelorus and Queen Charlotte Sounds because of this slot rule.

There are also concerns of non-compliance by recreational fishers due to the widespread perception that the current rules are unfair and complex.

Marlborough Sounds Blue cod management area.

A multi-stakeholder group, the Blue Cod Management Group, is urging people to have their say on the future management of Blue cod in the Marlborough Sounds.

Potential management options will be developed over the next two months and the Group is keen for your feedback. **NOW.**

LegaSea is promoting this process as a meaningful way for recreational fishers to influence the management options that the Ministry for Primary Industries includes in their formal consultation paper mid-year.

LegaSea encourages you to **make a submission now** and share your views on the rules that ought to apply, or be abolished, in the Marlborough Sounds Blue cod fishery.

Your feedback can be short or long, a few sentences or several pages. Email your comments to the Blue Cod Management Group, at: MSbluecod@mpi.govt.nz.

The formal consultation process will occur mid-year.

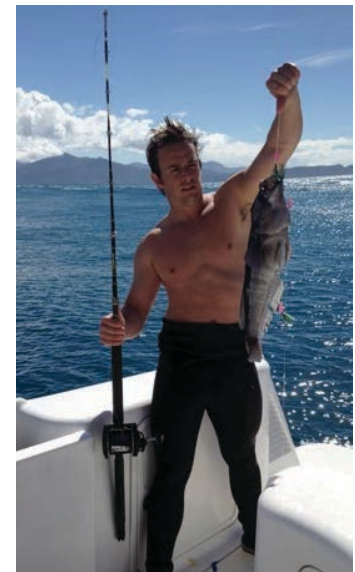
Why should you care?

Anecdotal evidence from long-time Sounds anglers indicates there was no crisis, no problem of significant magnitude to warrant closure of the fishery in 2008.

The research on which the closure decision was based is now considered flawed. Even so, the survey showed abundance increases in the outer Sounds, and no significant change in the inner zones. It was a stable fishery.

Latest research suggests that Blue cod numbers in some areas have not increased since the 2008 closure, this adds to the concerns regarding the destructive nature of the slot rule applying only to recreational catch. Indeed, the commercial catch in the greater zone has increased by 43% and is not subject to a slot rule.

Serious concerns have also been expressed regarding current management, the wastage and mortality associated with releasing fish outside the slot minimum and maximum size limits, the inequitable bag limits, and the impracticality of the filleting and transit rules.



The Blue Cod Management Group is asking for feedback on what measures ought to apply in the future.

Their intention is to strike a balance between ensuring a healthy population of Blue cod and ensuring the ongoing use and enjoyment of the fishery.

Once the new rules are decided it is likely they will apply to recreational Blue cod fishing for a minimum of six years.

Many Marlborough fishers have long-term interests in the Sounds, holding a wealth of knowledge and a perspective passed down from previous generations. If you want more practical rules that are designed by the community and widely accepted then now is the time to have a say.

A local solution

Public consultation has already started, with drop-in meetings held in Picton and Nelson. Many people with interests in the Marlborough Sounds have been denied the opportunity to have their say as no meetings have been held in Blenheim, Christchurch or Wellington.

To address these concerns the Marlborough Recreational Fishers Association (MRFA) and the Coalition of the Combined Clubs of Wellington (CCCW) have worked together to formulate sensible, durable rules that ought to apply to recreational Blue cod fishing in the future. LegaSea is supporting this range of recommended measures because:

1. They align with our Principles, specifically Principles 1, 2 and 4.
2. The public wants to contribute to improving the state of the Marlborough Sounds Blue cod fishery.
3. They will simplify management, encourage higher levels of compliance and help to reduce conflict between sectors and managers.

LegaSea encourages you to consider supporting the Groups' recommendations as described in the table below and online at www.legasea.co.nz/bluecod.php.

Description	Summary of current Marlborough Sounds Blue cod management measures	MRFA & CCCW recommendations for the future management of Marlborough Sounds Blue cod
Bag limit		
Marlborough Sounds:	Maximum of two Blue cod per person, per day.	Maximum of two or three Blue cod per person, per day to apply across the entire Top of the South Island.
Top of South:	Maximum of three Blue cod per person, per day.	
Seasons		
Season open:	20 December to 31 August	20 December to 31 August
Season closed:	1 September to 19 December Closure only applies to recreational fishers.	1 September to 19 December Closure applies to commercial and recreational fishers.
Slot rule	Minimum legal size: 30cm Maximum legal size: 35cm	Slot rule to be revoked.
Size limit	Minimum legal size: 30cm	Reset the minimum legal size (MLS) to 30cm or 33cm, and this MLS to apply across the entire Top of the South Island.
Transit rule	All Blue cod transported through the Marlborough Sounds must comply with the rules applying in that area.	Transit rule is impractical and needs to be abolished.
Hook limit	Maximum of two hooks per rod and reel line or hand line when fishing for any species.	Existing rules open for discussion and amendment. Rules for Blue cod management to apply to recreational fishing across the entire Top of the South Island.
Accumulation limit	Personal accumulation limit of two Blue cod (one daily bag limit).	
Filleting rule	Recreational fishers to only possess Blue cod in a whole or gutted state, unless for immediate personal consumption.	

Summary

What: Review of Marlborough Sounds Blue cod management

What can I do: Send your comments to MSbluecod@mpi.govt.nz as soon as possible.

What next: A formal consultation process will occur mid-year.

Formal submission deadline: 15 June 2015.

MRFA

The Marlborough Recreational Fishers Association was formed in 1997 in response to controversial reduction to the snapper daily bag limits applied in the Marlborough Sounds. Today the Association advocates for more conservative fisheries management measures and reasonable public access to fisheries. While the Association is based in Blenheim it promotes the social, economical and cultural wellbeings of local, regional and other visitors who have an interest in the ongoing management of the fisheries at the top of the South Island.

CCCW

In May 2013, the Coalition of the Combined Clubs of Wellington (CCCW) was created to represent Wellington region recreational fishing and community groups. The CCCW member mandate is to have the current unsustainable Blue Cod fishery management rules replaced with a management regime that enhances Blue Cod fishery recovery and which can be supported by recreational fishers.

CCCW member clubs and organisations, with a combined affiliated membership of over 20,000 people, include:

- Upper Hutt Cosmopolitan Club – Fishing and Boating Adjunct
- Mana Aquatic Divers
- Petone Working Men's Club – Diving Adjunct
- Mana Cruising Club
- Twin Harbours Fishing Club
- Plimmerton Boating Club.

LegaSea

LegaSea is a public outreach initiative of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. The Council has an experienced fisheries management, science, policy and legal team. On behalf of the Council LegaSea raises funds and provides public-friendly information about a variety of processes that are important to the sustainable management of Blue cod stocks for future generations.