



## **Media Release – for immediate release**

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### **Snapper on the line**

Recreational fishers are shocked at proposals by the Ministry for Primary Industries to slash snapper bag limits while the commercial sector is largely unaffected.

“It’s a national disgrace that all options proposed by the government force recreational anglers to shoulder the responsibility for rebuilding snapper 1 stocks, while the commercial sector continue to kill hundreds of thousands of juvenile fish with antiquated and indiscriminate bulk trawl methods”, says Mandy Kupenga, spokesperson for the recreational advocacy group LegaSea.

Management proposals released last Friday by the Ministry outline three options for New Zealand’s largest recreational fishery, the snapper 1 fishery, spanning the Bay of Plenty, Hauraki Gulf and East Northland. Under the guise of the status quo, the Ministry proposes to cut individual daily bag limits by two thirds, from 9 to 3, and leave commercial quota unchanged.

If implemented, these drastic cuts could see fewer fishers on the water and have a huge economic impact on the marine leisure industry according to industry stalwarts.

Grant Dixon, editor of the popular fishing magazine, New Zealand Fishing News says, “such a drastic reduction in the snapper bag limits for Snapper 1 recreational take would have an immediate, and negative effect that reaches far beyond the snapper stocks themselves.

“There is a huge industry based around the snapper fishery in this region. It is not just the individual anglers affected but recreational fishing media, charter boats, tackle stores, bait companies, accommodation providers and the marine industry as a whole.

“It is a short sighted approach, especially when you stack up the recreational and

economic benefits to the community when compared to the value of the commercial catch.”

The irony is that these cuts are predicted to improve the stock size less than 1% by the end of 2018, less than the margin of error.

Overall the snapper stock is rebuilding and generally commercial and recreational catch rates have increased. Except in the Bay of Plenty, where that part of the stock is considered 'collapsed', at just 6% of its original size. It is no accident that recreational fishers have resorted to targeting other species in the absence of reasonable size and numbers of snapper.

Option 2 is to increase the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) by 500 t but the Ministry's preferred option is give 300 t of this to commercial fishers and add just 200 t to the 1997 recreational allowance.

Under this option the Ministry propose recreational bag limit reductions to 4 fish greater than 27 cm or an increase in the legal size to 36 cm, allowing a daily bag of 9 snapper. Option 2 gives the commercial sector 60% of the increase and they retain the right to catch 25cm snapper.

Mandy Kupenga, LegaSea spokesperson says current commercial quota of 4500 t is similar to 1986 levels. This has been made possible by recreational anglers taking a 70% reduction in bag limits and increased minimum size limits in that same period. Those reductions were made in the interests of conserving fish for future generations of New Zealanders, not propping up commercial shareholder interests.

“New Zealanders are being sold out by the Government. The options proposed are quite frankly disgraceful and just another example of the willingness of our decision makers to turn their backs on the rights and wellbeing of the people to cash in on short term economic gains for a few fishing corporates”.

Unlike commercial fishers, recreational and customary fishers do not have a quota. An allowance is set aside by the Minister to provide for recreational and customary interests and their future needs. By law, this allowance needs to be set first, after which a commercial catch allocation can be set. In reality the reverse is occurring.

Ms. Kupenga continues, “The options proposed have nothing to do with increasing the rate of rebuilding the fishery and everything to do with strong arming the public into accepting an antiquated allowance which was set in 1997 based on unreliable research. What's more, that allowance was set at a time when the fishery was in dire need of rebuilding.”

There is no doubt recreational fishers are willing to continue to conserve fish and reduce their impact on the marine environment even further. In a recent survey over 78% of respondents felt that protecting the wellbeing of fish caught in New Zealand was important and said they are willing to change the way they catch and handle fish.

But recreational fishers need to be treated fairly and the Minister has a duty to act reasonably.

“This proposal is a slap in the face for New Zealanders and we intend to fight to defend our rights.”

In the coming weeks, LegaSea will be taking action to defend the rights of Kiwi fishers. Submissions to the MPI on the proposed management options close on 23 August, visit <http://www.legasea.co.nz/snapper1.php> to find out more.

### Ends

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### Background information

1. Over 1 million Kiwis enjoy fishing every year. Protecting our marine environment, the fish and our access to it, is vital to our culture and our national well-being, now and in the future.
2. LegaSea was launched in February 2012 and is the public outreach brand for the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. Our aim is to collectively protect our precious fishing resources for people, our communities and future generations of New Zealanders. LegaSea raises awareness facilitates people working together, promotes education initiatives and provides an opportunity for people to unite in action, to stand up for and protect our rights to better fisheries management.

[www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz)

3. Background information for the snapper 1 fishery, a copy of the Ministry for Primary Industries proposal paper (IPP – Initial Position Paper) and the NZ Sport Fishing Council Snapper Policy is available here. Regular updates will also be available on this site.

<http://www.legasea.co.nz/snapper1.php>

4. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) has been advocating for recreational interests in the marlin fishery since its inception in 1957. In more recent years it has extended its advocacy to many other fisheries management, policy and marine protection issues. The NZSFC has 56 member clubs with 32,000 affiliated members.

[www.nzsportfishing.org.nz](http://www.nzsportfishing.org.nz)

5. Attached is a table that summarises the three management options proposed by the Ministry for Primary Industries.
6. Section 8 of the Fisheries Act 1996 outlines the purpose of the act as follows:

### **Purpose**

(1) The purpose of this Act is to provide for the utilisation of fisheries resources while ensuring sustainability.

(2) In this Act— **ensuring sustainability** means —

- (a) maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of fishing on the aquatic environment

**Utilisation** means conserving, using, enhancing, and developing fisheries resources to enable people to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being.

### **Glossary of Terms**

Quota Management System (QMS). The QMS was introduced in October 1986 and controls the overall catches for most of the main fish stocks found within New Zealand's exclusive economic zone.

Quota. Quota is a commercial fishing right that allows people to own a part of the 100 million shares available for a particular fish stock in a defined area. Quota can be bought or sold. Ownership of quota generates an annual catch entitlement to catch that fish commercially.

Total Allowable Catch (TAC). The total quantity of each fish stock that can be taken by commercial, customary Maori interests, recreational fishery interests and other sources of fishing-related mortality, to ensure sustainability of that fishery in a given period, usually a year.

Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC). A catch limit that applies to fish stocks in the QMS, the TACC is the total quantity of each fish stock that the commercial fishing industry can catch in a given year. The TACC is a portion of the TAC that is set after allowances have been made for customary and recreational fishing, and for other sources of fishing-related mortality.

Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE). An entitlement to harvest a quantity of fish, aquatic life, seaweed or other stock, taken in accordance with a fishing permit and any conditions and limitations imposed by or under the Fisheries Act 1996.

Allowance. Is unlike quota, which is a fixed amount. The allowances are a tonnage set aside by the Minister to cover expected, overall mortality caused by non-commercial fishing. That mortality can vary depending a range of factors, including weather and fish availability. The TACC is set after allowances have been made for customary and recreational fishing, and other sources of fishing-related mortality.