



# **Review of sustainability and other management controls for snapper 7 (SNA 7)**

MPI Discussion Paper No: 2013/20

Prepared for the Ministry for Primary Industries  
by the Inshore Fisheries Management Team

ISBN No: 978-0-478-41459-2 (online)

ISSN No: 2253-3907 (online)

**July 2013**

## **Disclaimer**

While every effort has been made to ensure the information in this publication is accurate, the Ministry for Primary Industries does not accept any responsibility or liability for error or fact omission, interpretation or opinion which may be present, nor for the consequences of any decisions based on this information.

Requests for further copies should be directed to:

Publications Logistics Officer  
Ministry for Primary Industries  
PO Box 2526  
WELLINGTON 6140

Email: [brand@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:brand@mpi.govt.nz)

Telephone: 0800 00 83 33

Facsimile: 04-894 0300

This publication is also available on the Ministry for Primary Industries website at <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-resources/publications.aspx>

**© Crown Copyright - Ministry for Primary Industries**

# CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Sustainability review of fish stocks 2013</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Deadline for submissions</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Official Information Act 1982</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Context</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Management approach .....	5
Previous review .....	5
Biological characteristics of snapper .....	6
Stock status .....	6
<b>SNA 7 fishery</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Other key considerations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Proposed Response</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Option 1 ( <i>Status Quo</i> ).....	10
Option 2 .....	10
Other management measures.....	12
<b>Future considerations</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Initial consultation</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>13</b>

## **SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW OF FISH STOCKS 2013**

This Initial Position Paper (IPP) provides the Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI's) initial views on proposals for inshore fish stock sustainability measures and other management controls for the 1 October 2013/14 fishing year.

MPI has developed this IPP for the purpose of consultation as required under the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act). MPI emphasises the views and recommendations outlined in the paper are preliminary and are provided as a basis for consultation with stakeholders.

In August 2013, MPI will compile the Final Advice Paper (FAP) for the attached proposal. This document will summarise MPI's and stakeholder's views on the issues being reviewed, and provide final advice and recommendations to the Minister for Primary Industries. A copy of the FAP and the Minister's letter setting out his final decisions will be posted on the MPI website as soon as these become available. Hard copies will be available on request.

## **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS**

MPI welcomes written submissions on the proposals contained in the IPP. All written submissions must be received by MPI no later than 4pm on Friday, 9 August 2013.

Written submissions should be sent directly to:

Inshore Fisheries Management  
Ministry for Primary Industries  
P O Box 2526  
Wellington 6011

or emailed to [FMsubmissions@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:FMsubmissions@mpi.govt.nz)

## **OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982**

All submissions are subject to the Official Information Act and can be released (along with the personal details of the submitter) under the Act. If you have specific reasons for wanting to have your submission or personal details withheld, please set out your reasons in the submission. MPI will consider those reasons when making any assessment under the Act.

# Review of sustainability and other management controls for snapper (SNA 7)

Figure 1: Quota Management Areas (QMAs) for snapper



## INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is seeking information and views from tangata whenua and stakeholders to inform a review of catch limits and other management measures for snapper in Quota Management Area 7 (QMA 7) (SNA 7) (Figure 1).
2. MPI proposes the following options for the total allowable catch (TAC), total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and associated allowances (Table 1).

Table 1: Proposed TAC, TACC and allowance options for SNA 7

Option	Allowances				Other sources of fishing-related mortality (t)
	TAC (t)	TACC (t)	Customary Māori (t)	Recreational (t)	
Option 1 (Status Quo)	306	200	16	90	0
Option 2 This option includes increasing the recreational daily bag limit from 3 to 5 snapper per day in the Marlborough Sounds	357	220	16	99	22

3. The available information suggests that the abundance of SNA 7 has increased in recent years. There has been an increase in the SNA 7 commercial catch per unit effort (CPUE) over the past

two years and all stakeholder groups report an abundance of snapper in SNA 7. Although the fishery is still considered to be depleted and in a rebuilding phase, there is an opportunity to allow for an increase in utilisation and, therefore, in the benefit obtained from the fishery now. The cost of this increase would be a slower timeframe for the rebuild of the SNA 7 stock to the desired target level.

4. This TAC amendment should be seen in the context that, while trying to move a stock towards  $B_{MSY}$ , small increases in catch could be appropriate as the stock biomass increases. While increased catch could slow the rebuild of the SNA 7 stock, MPI considers that current SNA 7 abundance and recent increases in catchability make snapper hard to avoid while fishing for other species in Tasman and Golden Bays.
5. New information is available regarding the recreational catch in SNA 7. An increase in the recreational allowance would reflect the increased availability of snapper to recreational fishers and the new estimate of recreational take.
6. Under Option 2, MPI also proposes to increase the recreational bag limit from 3 to 5 snapper per day in the Marlborough Sounds Area. Snapper abundance in the Marlborough Sounds has historically been lower than in Tasman and Golden Bays and, hence, the differential in bag limits (3 in the Marlborough Sounds compared to 10 in the remainder of the Challenger Area). However, with the increasing abundance of snapper in SNA 7, MPI considers that an increase in the recreational bag limit (from 3 to 5 snapper per person per day) in the Marlborough Sounds would be appropriate.

## CONTEXT

7. Two years ago, the West Coast South Island (WCSI) Trawl Survey detected a pulse in recruitment of SNA 7 and flagged that CPUE was likely to increase in following years.
8. The CPUE for SNA 7 has subsequently increased, indicating there has most likely been a recent increase in stock abundance.
9. The CPUE index, however, is likely to be over-optimistic. Recruitment into the fishery seems to have coincided with increased catchability of SNA 7 due to changes in environmental conditions in recent years and, therefore, an increase in overlap of snapper with other target species. The SNA 7 CPUE index is, therefore, likely to exaggerate the scale of the increase in stock biomass.
10. In response to this increase in abundance, the commercial stakeholder organisation for SNA 7, Southern Inshore Fisheries Management Company (SIFMC), has requested a TACC increase for SNA 7. Commercial fishers targeting flatfish, red cod, school shark, baracoutta, jack mackerel, gurnard, and tarakihi are finding it difficult to avoid snapper bycatch. The current TACC (200 t) for SNA 7 has been over-caught for the last two years (by 4% and 8%).

11. The FMA 7 Recreational Fishers' Forum has requested a bag limit increase for the Marlborough Sounds based on their perception of increasing snapper abundance.
12. The TAC for SNA 7 is set by the Minister under section 13 of the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act).
13. Before a TAC can be set under section 13(2) of the Act an assessment of  $B_{CURRENT}$ <sup>1</sup> and  $B_{MSY}$ <sup>2</sup> is required. The best available information that MPI currently has on SNA 7 is insufficient to enable reliable estimates of  $B_{CURRENT}$  and  $B_{MSY}$ .
14. Where estimates of  $B_{CURRENT}$  and  $B_{MSY}$  are not available, section 13(2A) of the Act provides for the Minister to use the best available information to set a TAC that is not inconsistent with the objective of maintaining the stock at or above  $B_{MSY}$ , or moving the stock towards or above,  $B_{MSY}$ .
15. The current biomass of SNA 7 is likely to be relatively low and the stock in a rebuilding phase – moving towards  $B_{MSY}$ . While increasing the TAC and TACC will likely slow the rate of movement towards  $B_{MSY}$ , it is likely that both Options 1 and 2 will enable the Minister to set a TAC that is not inconsistent with the objective of moving the stock towards  $B_{MSY}$ .

### Management Approach

16. On 1 July 2011, MPI published a draft National Fisheries Plan (the Finfish Plan) for Inshore Finfish.<sup>3</sup> The Finfish Plan is being trialled for two years before it is refined and improved. Once this has been done, formal approval of the plan will be sought from the Minister. The application of the draft Finfish Plan to SNA 7 stocks is discussed below.
17. The stocks are grouped within the Finfish Plan, with management approaches and objectives tailored accordingly for each group.
18. SNA 7 is in Group 3. Stocks in this Group are important to all sectors and include many iconic species. Although Group 3 stocks provide a lower level of benefits than Group 1, they are also relatively vulnerable. The management approach for this group is relatively cautious to reflect the stocks' vulnerability but also seeks to minimise management costs. The focus is on strategies that can operate effectively with less detailed information than is required for Group 1 stocks. For example, the value of the SNA 7 fishery is not sufficient to support a full stock assessment, and managers rely on proxies for biomass. Because there is significant uncertainty, we must act more cautiously to ensure sustainability.

### Previous Review

19. The SNA 7 TAC/TACC was reviewed in 1990 and 1997. The historical catch data indicated the initial biomass of SNA 7 had been relatively large but, based on a 1986-88 tag estimate of

---

<sup>1</sup> Current biomass. Biomass refers to the size of the stock in units of weight.

<sup>2</sup> The average stock biomass that results from taking an average catch of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Maximum sustainable yield is defined in s 2 of the Act as: '...the greatest yield that can be achieved over time while maintaining the stock's productive capacity, having regard to the population dynamics of the stock and any environmental factors that influence the stock'.

<sup>3</sup> Link Inshore Finfish Fisheries Plan: <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Fisheries+Planning>

abundance and low catches, the stock was assumed to have collapsed. In 1990, the TACC was reduced from 374 tonnes to 160.3 tonnes. In 1997, the SNA 7 model results indicated that the fishery was slowly rebuilding and a TAC was set at 306 tonnes, and the TACC was increased from 160.3 tonnes to 200 tonnes. Allowances were made for Māori customary of 16 tonnes and for recreational of 90 tonnes.

20. The SNA 7 stock, and its catch limits, have not been reviewed since 1997.

### **Biological Characteristics of Snapper**

21. Snapper are demersal fish found down to depths of about 200m. They occupy a wide range of habitats, including rocky reefs and areas of mud and sandy bottom. Snapper are serial spawners, releasing many batches of eggs during spring and summer. Snapper reach maturity from 20 to 28 cm fork length at 3-4 years of age. Water temperature appears to play an important part in the success of recruitment. Generally, strong year classes correspond to warm years and weak classes correspond to cold years.
22. Growth rate varies geographically, and from year to year. The snapper from Tasman Bay/Golden Bay (and the west coast North Island) grow faster and reach a larger average size than elsewhere. They may live up to 60 years, or more.

### **Stock Status**

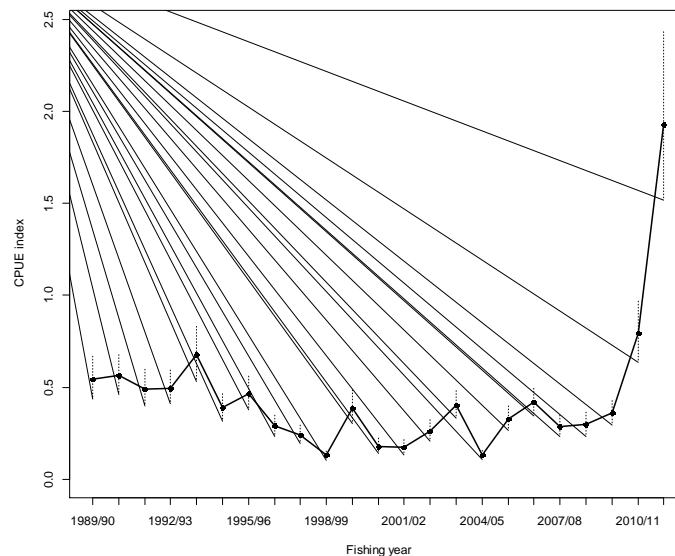
23. The best available information that MPI currently has on SNA 7 is insufficient to enable reliable estimates of  $B_{CURRENT}$  and  $B_{MSY}$ .
24. Trends in stock status for SNA 7 were assessed through: CPUE analysis to assess trends in the catch rates; size frequency analysis (from fish processing sheds); West Coast South Island trawl survey size data; and a population simulation model. All of these indicators suggest increasing SNA 7 biomass.
25. In 2009, the West Coast South Island trawl survey caught a large number of small snapper from the 2007 year class. It was suggested at the time that this was an indication of a large recruitment event, and that it was likely that this high recruitment would enter the fishery in the next few years. As predicted, these fish entered the fishery over the next few years and were particularly noticeable in the fish processing shed data in 2010/11 and 2011/12. The CPUE declined up to 2001, after which it fluctuated without trend but increased markedly in 2010/11 and 2011/12 (Figure 2).
26. However, the magnitude of the increase in SNA 7 biomass is uncertain. While the trawl survey identified a large recruitment pulse in Tasman and Golden Bays, this marked increase in CPUE is too steep for it to be a result of growth and recruitment alone. Catchability (availability of the fish to the fishery) increased at the same time. Catchability has increased because changing environmental conditions have resulted in a greater proportion of the SNA 7 stock overlapping with target fisheries for other species, resulting in increased snapper bycatch. These two things



combined have resulted in the CPUE index increasing, but also suggest that the increase in CPUE overestimates changes in biomass.

27. Further scientific modelling work<sup>4</sup> supports the view that CPUE is overstating the increase in biomass.

**Figure 2: Relative CPUE index derived from the delta lognormal (all years) model for the combined single trawl fishery. The vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals. The confidence intervals were derived using a bootstrapping procedure Langley (2013)**



## SNA 7 FISHERY

28. The SNA 7 fishery is relatively small and is at the southern limit of the distribution of snapper in New Zealand. Historical TACCs and catches are shown in Figure 3.
29. Commercial fishing for snapper in SNA 7 is 48% targeted by bottom trawl and bottom pair trawl. Around 52% of the catch is caught as bycatch of the flatfish, red cod, school shark, baracoutta, gurnard, jack mackerel and tarakihi target fisheries. By far the largest proportion (90%) of this

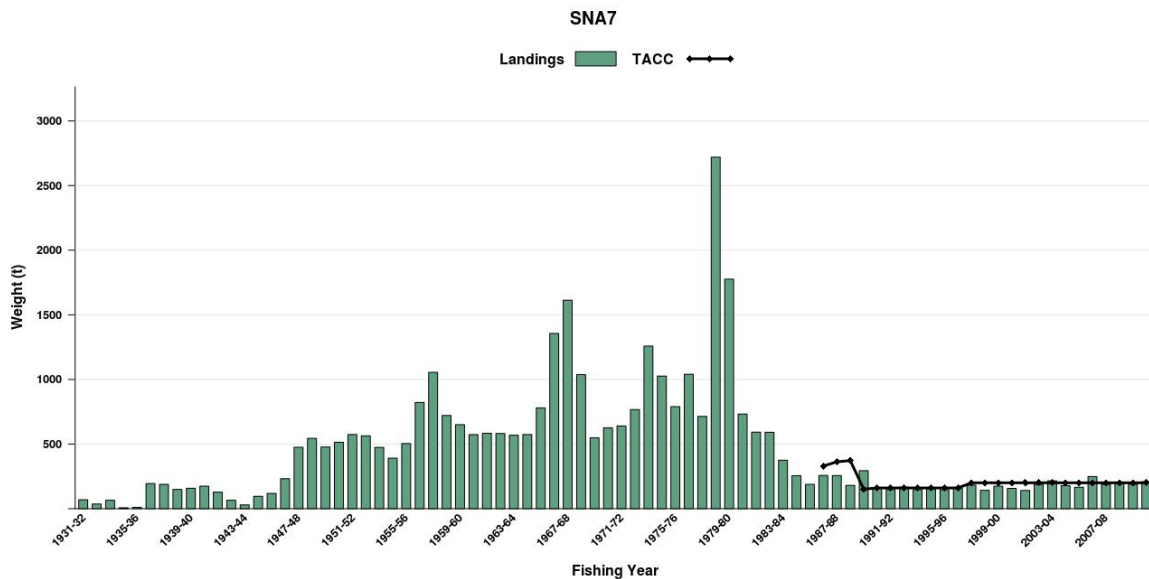
---

<sup>4</sup> An age structured population simulation model for SNA 7 was developed for the evaluation of potential management procedures for the fishery. The model incorporates the CPUE index and SNA 7 size grade data from fish processing sheds. This model integrates these data within the framework of snapper population dynamics. It is not intended for the results of the population modelling to be considered as a formal stock assessment of SNA 7. However, this model places the current trends in an historical context and indicates that the recent increase in biomass was substantially lower than the CPUE index suggests.

bycatch is by bottom trawl, with small amounts from Danish seining, mid-water trawl, and set net.

30. The target commercial fishery is largely an early summer fishery with 80-90% of the targeted catch being caught by the end of December each year.

**Figure 3: Reported Catch Landings and TACC (t) for SNA 7 from the 1931/32 fishing year to the 2011/12 fishing year**



### **Recreational**

31. Snapper is a popular target species for recreational fishers and is mainly taken by line fishing. SNA 7 can only be taken recreationally above a minimum legal size of 25cm. There is a daily bag limit of 10 snapper per person per day, except in the Marlborough Sounds, where the daily bag limit is 3 snapper per person per day.
32. Due to the need for better information on recreational harvests, in 2011-12 MPI commissioned new recreational research (a large-scale, multi-species study, LSMS) to obtain better harvest estimates for a range of stocks. Estimates from the LSMS are available, but have yet to be finalised and are subject to change. The estimates for SNA 7 are based on a relatively small number of events and fishers and, as a result, are subject to a relatively high uncertainty. They also do not include amateur catch taken on charter vessels or by commercial fishers under s111 approvals. The interim estimates have been released at this time only for use as background information for the purposes of this discussion paper and should not be used for any other purposes.
33. The estimated recreational catch of SNA 7 in 2012 from the LSMS is 88.09 tonnes (CV of 0.17).

### ***Māori Customary***

34. Snapper (tāmure) is an important kaimoana species for tangata whenua. It is identified by Te Waka a Māui me Ōna Toka iwi forum<sup>5</sup> as a taonga species in the Te Waipounamu Iwi Fisheries Plan. This plan also includes objectives relating to supporting and providing for the customary and commercial interests of South Island iwi.
35. Information currently held by MPI on Māori customary catch of SNA 7 is uncertain. For those tangata whenua groups operating under the customary fishing regulations,<sup>6</sup> there is a requirement for Tangata Kaitiaki/Tiaki to provide MPI with information on Māori customary harvest of fish. However, for those tangata whenua groups still operating under regulations 27 and 27A of the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986 (the Amateur Regulations), it is not mandatory to report permits that are issued.
36. There have been very few customary authorisations for SNA 7 reported to MPI at this time. This may be a reflection that tangata whenua in the Tasman/Golden Bay and Marlborough Sounds area are still operating under the Amateur Regulations and/or it may suggest that tangata whenua use of the customary fishing regulations to harvest SNA 7 is low at this time.

### ***Other Sources of Fishing-Related Mortality***

37. There are various potential other sources of fishing-related mortality of SNA 7, but these are not able to be quantified precisely. These include high-grading in response to market preference for larger fish, discarding to avoid deemed value penalty payments and incidental mortality caused by the trawling, Danish seining and set netting methods.
38. MPI proposes setting an allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality of 10% of the TACC.

## **OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

39. The SNA 7 stock is considered to be in a rebuilding phase. The SIFMC has agreed to fund a catch sampling project to collect commercial catch-at-age data. This will provide valuable information on whether this increase in abundance is due to one or more age classes in the fishery, giving us an indication of how long the increase could be expected to persist. In addition, these data could be used in future stock assessment of SNA 7.
40. Water temperature appears to play an important part in the success of recruitment of snapper. Generally strong year classes correspond to warm years and weak classes correspond to cold years. Recent strong recruitment to the fishery may be due to warmer sea temperatures. It is unclear how long these conditions will persist.

---

<sup>5</sup> The Te Waka a Māui me ōna toka iwi forum represents the nine iwi of the South Island, each holding mana moana and significant interests (both commercial and non-commercial) in South Island fisheries.

<sup>6</sup> Fisheries (Kaimoana Customary Fishing) Regulations 1998 and/or Fisheries (South Island Customary Fishing) Regulations 1999.

## PROPOSED RESPONSE

41. MPI is consulting on the following management options for the Minister to set the TAC, TACC and associated allowances for SNA 7 (Table 2).

Table 2: Proposed TACs, TACCs, and allowances for SNA 7

Option	Allowances				Other sources of fishing-related mortality (t)
	TAC (t)	TACC (t)	Customary Māori (t)	Recreational (t)	
Option 1 (Status Quo)	306	200	16	90	0
Option 2 This option includes increasing the recreational daily bag limit from 3 to 5 snapper per day in the Marlborough Sounds	357	220	16	99	22

### Option 1 (*Status Quo*)

42. Under Option 1, the existing TAC would be retained. The current TAC is not inconsistent with the objective of maintaining the stock at or above, or moving the stock towards or above, a level that can produce the maximum sustainable yield. This option reflects a cautious approach to change, reflecting the uncertainty in information about the SNA 7 stock status relative to target levels and the uncertain level of the increase in biomass.
43. Benefits of Option 1 are that as the SNA 7 stock rebuilds, the recreational fishing experience will improve (bigger fish and more of them); and there could also be benefit to commercial fishers in a faster rebuild of the SNA 7 stock.
44. On-the-other- hand, retaining the current TACC may result in opportunity loss for the commercial sector. This is because this option does not enable industry to respond to elevated biomass in a way that could allow them to maximise value.
45. Further, \$109 808.00 in deemed values was paid for over-catch in the 2011/12 fishing year. Abundance and catchability of snapper in SNA 7 currently seems such that commercial over-catch in the flatfish, red cod, school shark, baracoutta, gurnard, jack mackerel, and tarakihi target fisheries is difficult to avoid.

### Option 2

46. Option 2 proposes:

- The TAC be increased from 306 tonnes to 357 tonnes.
- The TACC be increased from 200 tonnes to 220 tonnes (an increase of 10%).
- The allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality be set at 22 tonnes (10 % of the TACC).

- The customary Māori allowance would remain at 16 tonnes.
  - The recreational allowance be increased from 90 tonnes to 99 tonnes.
  - The recreational daily bag limit be increased in the Marlborough Sounds area from three snapper per day to five snapper per day, within the overall Challenger bag limit of 10 snapper<sup>7</sup>. Note this proposal will not change the overall Challenger bag limit of 10 snapper.
47. Increasing the TAC will provide an opportunity to allow for an increase in utilisation and, therefore, in the benefit obtained from the fishery now. The cost of this increase would be a slower timeframe for the rebuild to the desired target level. It is not possible to say what effect a 10% increase in TAC would have on the rate of stock rebuild without catch-at-age information.
48. A TAC increase at this time could be seen in the context that, while trying to move a stock towards  $B_{MSY}$ , small increases in catch could be appropriate as the stock biomass increases. While increased catch could slow the rebuild of the SNA 7 stock, MPI considers that current SNA 7 abundance and recent increases in catchability make snapper hard to avoid while fishing for other species in Tasman and Golden Bays.
49. Increasing the TACC will provide the commercial sector with an opportunity to increase utilisation in response to a period of increased biomass of SNA 7. Based on the 2012 port price of \$5.70 per kilogram, an additional commercial catch of 20 t would be worth approximately \$114 000 annually. Given the SNA 7 stock is still rebuilding, a 10% increase in the TACC represents a significant response to the increased SNA 7 biomass.
50. MPI proposes providing an allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality (OSFRM) at 10% of the TACC. While there is no information available to quantify other sources of fishing related mortality, MPI considers that, given various other sources of fishing-related mortality described in paragraph 378, an allowance should be set. An allowance for OSFRM at 10% of the TACC is consistent with other snapper stocks and other stocks that have similar catch profiles and characteristics.
51. New recreational fishing information has become available in the form of the LSMS, indicating that recreational snapper catch in SNA 7 is currently around 89.5 tonnes, falling just within the current allowance of 90 t. MPI proposes to increase the recreational allowance by 9 tonnes (10%) and to increase the recreational bag limit from 3 to 5 snapper per person per day in the Marlborough Sounds Area. (MPI notes that such a regulation change would not be able to be implemented until 2014 because of the timeframes required by the regulatory process.) Both of these measures reflect the increasing abundance of snapper in SNA 7 and the increasing catchability for recreational fishers.

---

<sup>7</sup> MPI notes that such a regulation change would not be able to be implemented until 2014 because of the timeframes required by the regulatory process.

52. There is no new information available on customary Māori take in SNA 7. Therefore, MPI does not propose any change to the customary Māori allowance at this time.
53. In view of the current increase in abundance, and on-going monitoring, MPI considers both the options proposed are consistent with the objective of moving the stock towards or above  $B_{MSY}$ .
54. Given the uncertainty in the CPUE index, discussed in paragraph 27 above, Option 2 involves a higher risk to the sustainability of the stock than maintaining the *status quo*. But, this should be seen in the context that, while trying to move a stock towards  $B_{MSY}$ , small increases in catch could be appropriate as the stock biomass increases. However, an increase in commercial catch will likely slow the rate of rebuild of the SNA 7 fishery.
55. When making a decision concerning the TAC for a stock, the Minister for Primary Industries<sup>8</sup> (the Minister) must have regard to interdependence of stocks, the biological characteristics (discussed above) and any environmental conditions affecting the stock.
56. SNA 7 is taken as bycatch in the target red cod (RCO 7), flatfish (FLA 7), school shark (SCH 7), barracouta (BAR 7), tarakihi (TAR 7), jack mackerel (JMA 7) and gurnard (GUR 7) commercial fisheries. Interdependencies between these stocks and other species occur as a consequence of being taken as part of a mixed inshore fishery. There is a risk that under the current TACC and increasing biomass, snapper bycatch would increase and be discarded at sea. This would result in increased mortality but with no extra benefit to the fishery and no way of accounting for that portion of the catch.
57. Under Option 2, any increase in targeting of SNA 7 may result in increased catch of associated target and bycatch species. All the associated species (except FLA 7) are monitored by the West Coasts South Island trawl survey and changes to their biomass would be detected quickly, thereby reducing the risk of a SNA 7 TACC increase to other stocks.
58. MPI is not aware of any potential relevant impacts on protected species arising from Option 2. Because of the increased CPUE, MPI does not expect the increase in TACC to result in a significant increase in fishing effort targeting snapper.

## Other Management Measures

59. In the Challenger Fishery Management Area, fishers can take a maximum of 10 snapper per person per day. Within the bag limit of 10 snapper is a sub-limit of 3 that can be taken from the Marlborough Sounds Area.
60. MPI is proposing that the sub-limit of 3 snapper that can be taken from the Marlborough Sounds Area be increased to 5. Alteration of recreational bag limits will require an additional regulatory process and changes would not be implemented until 2014.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Minister for Primary Industries now exercises the powers and responsibilities of the Minister of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act 1996.

## **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

61. The SNA 7 stock is considered to be in a rebuilding phase. The SIFMC has agreed to fund a catch sampling project to collect commercial catch-at-age data. This will provide valuable information on whether this increase in abundance is due to one or more age classes in the fishery, giving us an indication of how long the increase could be expected to persist. In addition, these data could be used in future stock assessment of SNA 7.
62. Current monitoring through the WCSI trawl survey and CPUE indices, and the new catch-at-age information, mean it will be possible for MPI to respond to future changes in stock biomass of snapper (whether up or down) ,and the associated catch, in a timely manner.

## **INITIAL CONSULTATION**

63. During March 2013, MPI had preliminary discussions with some stakeholder representatives. MPI sought views on the options to be included in this paper.
64. South Island commercial representatives support an increase in the TACC of SNA 7. The SIFMC has agreed to fund a catch sampling project to collect catch-at-age data representative of the commercial catch. This will provide valuable information to be used in future assessment of the SNA 7 stock – particularly with respect to whether this pulse of increased abundance is due to one or several age classes in the fishery.
65. The FMA 7 Recreational Fishers’ Forum does not support an increase in the TACC because they are concerned that the higher TACC will slow the rebuild of the fishery and detract from the recreational fishing experience. They would prefer that these fish be left in the water to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the stock and increased availability of snapper to recreational fishers.
66. The FMA 7 Recreational Fishers’ Forum supports a small increase in the recreational bag limit in the Marlborough Sounds.

## **CONCLUSION**

67. Available information suggests the abundance of SNA 7 has increased in recent years. Although the fishery is still considered to be depleted and in a rebuilding phase, there is an opportunity to allow for an increase in utilisation and, therefore, in the benefit obtained from the fishery now.
68. The cost of a TAC increase would be a slower timeframe for the rebuild of the SNA 7 stock to the desired target level. It is not possible to quantify the effect of a TAC increase on the rebuild of the SNA 7 stock without catch-at-age information.
69. Option 1 is the status quo and reflects a cautious approach to change, reflecting the uncertainty in information about the SNA 7 stock status relative to target levels and the uncertain level of the

increase in biomass. Benefits of Option 1 could include improvement of the recreational fishing experience as the SNA 7 stock rebuilds and possible benefit to commercial fishers in a faster rebuild of the SNA 7 stock.

70. However, retaining the current TAC may result in opportunity loss for the commercial sector. This is because this option does not enable industry to respond to elevated biomass in a way that could allow them to maximise value.
71. Option 2 provides for a 10% increase in TACC and a 10% increase in the recreational allowance.
72. Increasing the TAC and TACC during periods of abundance creates opportunities for the fishing industry to increase the economic benefits that can be obtained from the fishery. Increasing the recreational bag limit and recreational allowance will also provide opportunities for increased benefits from the fishery.
73. An increase in the recreational allowance would reflect the new information available from the LSMS survey and the increased availability of snapper to non-commercial recreational fishers. An increase in the recreational bag limit in the Marlborough Sounds could be appropriate given the increasing abundance of snapper in SNA 7 and that the bag limit in the Marlborough Sounds is considerably less than in the rest of SNA 7.
74. Option 2 provides for the greatest economic return from SNA 7 during this period of increasing abundance. Under this option, MPI would recommend continued monitoring of the fishery and, possibly, a future stock assessment. To ensure the sustainability of the stock, MPI stresses the need to obtain the catch-at-age information from the commercial catch.
75. MPI is seeking information and views from tangata whenua, fishery stakeholders and other interested parties to inform the review of catch limits of SNA 7.
76. It is important to note that the Minister has broad discretion in exercising his powers of decision-making. He will make his own independent assessment of the information presented to him by both the Ministry and stakeholders before making a final decision.