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NZ Sport Fishing Council submission on skipjack tuna

NZ Sport Fishing Council

The NZ Sport Fishing Council is a national sports organisation with over 32,000 affiliated members from 55 clubs nationwide.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has initiated LegaSea, a public outreach organisation, to generate support for the ongoing effort to protect and enhance the public's access to abundant fisheries in a healthy marine environment. www.legasea.co.nz

The intention is to broaden NZSFC involvement in marine management advocacy, research, education and working together on behalf of our members and LegaSea supporters.

We are committed to ensuring that sustainability measures and management controls are designed and implemented to achieve the Purpose and Principles of the Fisheries Act 1996, including "maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations..." [s8(2)(a) Fisheries Act 1996]

NZSFC Submission

NZSFC supports the objective of managing skipjack tuna catch throughout its range as proposed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in their conservation and management measure for tropical tunas ([CMM 2013-01](#)). This requires coastal states (including New Zealand) to apply controls on fisheries for skipjack operating within their Exclusive Economic Zones. The requirement is to establish effort limits or equivalent catch limits that reflect the geographical distributions of skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna that are consistent with the objectives for those species.

Most of New Zealand's commercial fisheries are managed under the QMS. The Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for yellowfin and bigeye tuna far exceeds the current catch (Figure 1 & 2). While this may be aspirational it also imposes a significant administration cost on quota owners and legitimate fishers.

Over the last 10 years the commercial catch for yellowfin tuna in NZ fisheries waters has been just 6% of the TACC and the bigeye tuna catch just 28% of the TACC.

The maximum commercial catch of skipjack tuna over the past 24 years was 13,300 t and they are only available in New Zealand waters for half of the year.

NZSFC is opposed to excessive TACCs for commercial fisheries as it legitimises catch far in excess of any catch history ever achieved. This could lead to effort shifting to the NZ EEZ, not just from the current fleet, which is aging, but the replacement of coastal purse seine vessels with much larger New Zealand or charter vessels. The USA Tuna Treaty also has potential to shift effort to New Zealand (subject to negotiations).

There is no effective fisheries management for yellowfin or bigeye tuna under the New Zealand QMS with allocations far in excess of any catch (Figure 1 and 2). An excessive allocation for skipjack would just be repeating the mistakes of the past and would not be defensible if challenged by other Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission members.

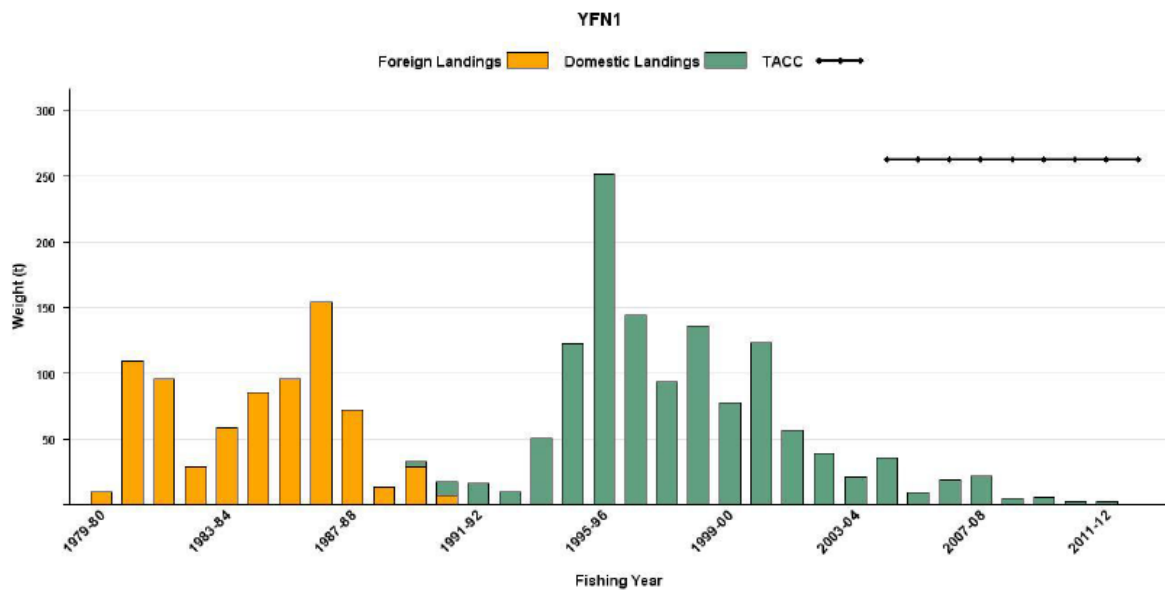


Figure 1: Yellowfin tuna catch by foreign licensed and New Zealand vessels from 1979-80 to 2011-12 within NZ waters.

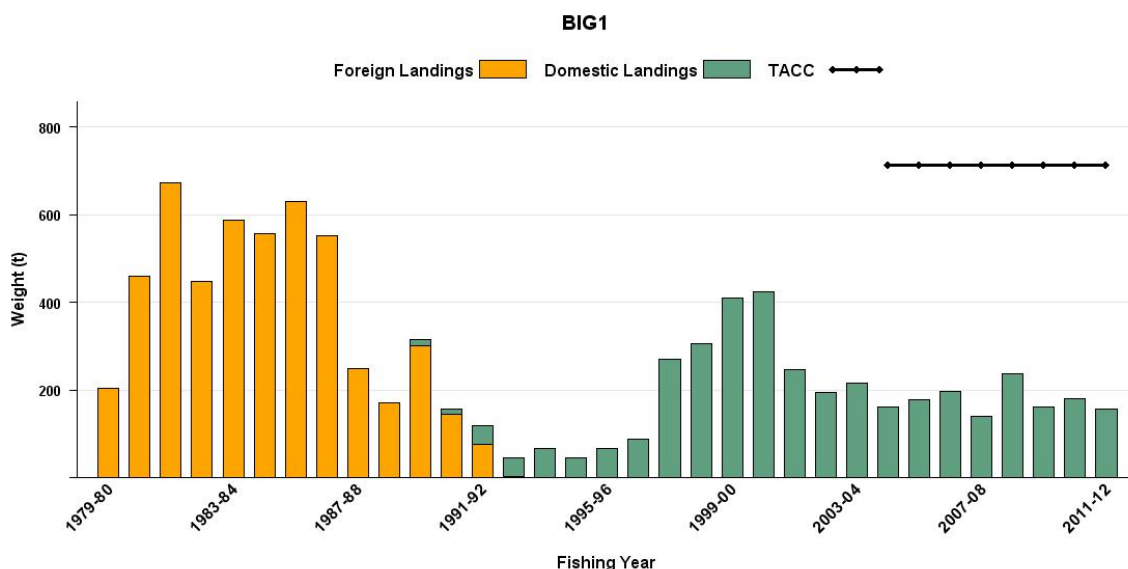


Figure 2: Bigeye tuna catch by foreign licensed and New Zealand vessels from 1979-80 to 2011-12 within NZ waters.

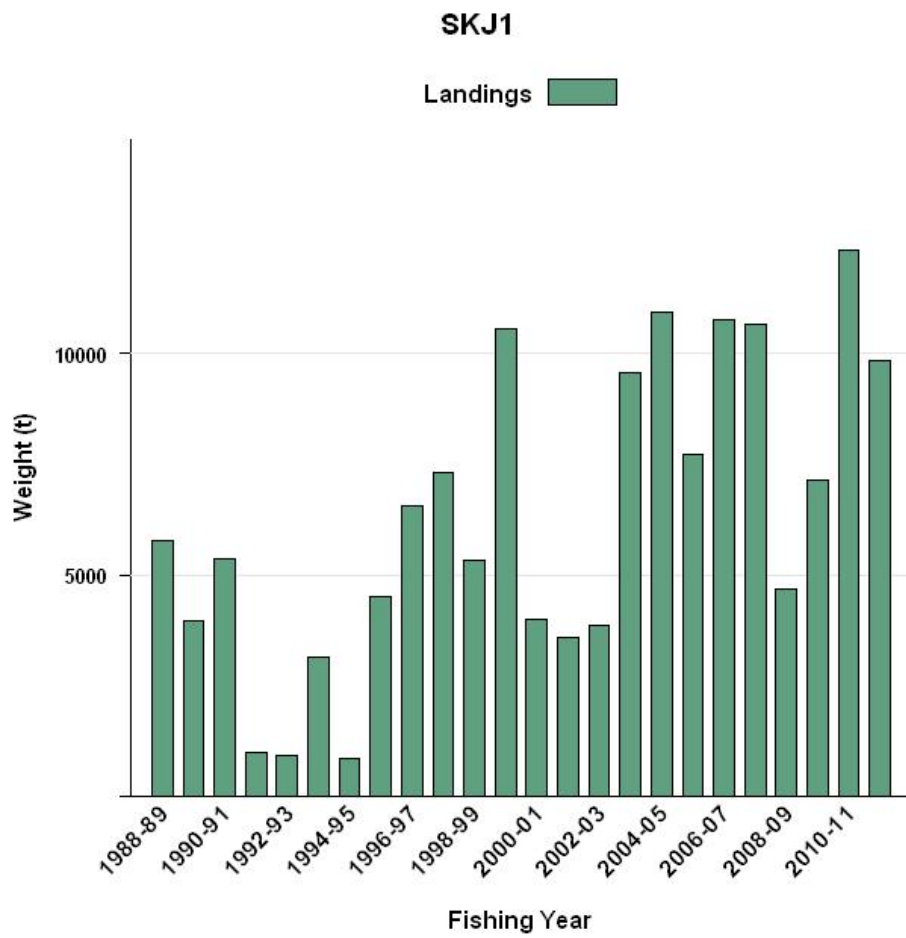


Figure 3: Skipjack tuna catch by New Zealand vessels from 1988-89 to 2011-12 within NZ waters.