

# Fish stock reviews for 1 October 2024

## Lower North Island – Rig (SPO 2)

Proposal [online here](#).



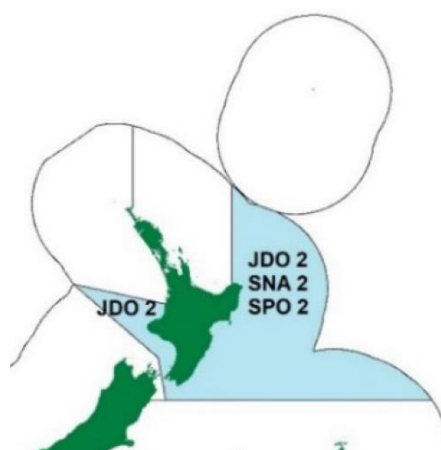
### 1. Current total allowable catch (TAC) settings and proposed options (tonnes).

Stock	Option	TAC	TACC	Allowances		
				Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
SPO 2	Option 1 (Status quo)	146	119	5	10	12
	Option 2	175 (↑ 29)	145 (↑ 26)	5	10	15 (↑ 3)
	Option 3	190 (↑ 44)	159 (↑ 40)	5	10	16 (↑ 4)

Estimated landings – 2022-23	
Commercial	122 t
Recreational	2.4 t

### 2. What is the current status of this fish stock?

Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) reports the last assessment was in 2023 using event-based Catch Per Unit of Effort (CPUE) data for bottom trawling targeting flatfish, red gurnard or tarakihi. FNZ note that the lack of historical information on stock abundance during the 1970s to 1980s when the stock was believed to have been heavily fished means the current relative stock status is difficult to determine. FNZ currently assess SPO 2 as being very likely (>90%) to be at or above the management target. FNZ advise that current catches are unlikely (<40%) to cause the stock to decline<sup>1</sup>.



### 3. Is overfishing occurring?

FNZ advise overfishing is unlikely (<40%) to be occurring<sup>2</sup>.

### 4. What is the primary fishing method used to catch rig in this area?

Rig in SPO 2 is caught equally by trawl and set net<sup>3</sup>. Both trawl and set net fisheries have significant bycatch rates.

### 5. What are the associated species and habitats?

Rig are taken as bycatch in bottom trawl fisheries targeting mainly flatfish, tarakihi and red gurnard, while the set net fisheries mainly target rig and school shark<sup>4</sup>. FNZ has limited information on predators of rig, and the potential interdependence with other stocks. The proposed TAC and TACC increase for SPO 2 could have some effect on associated prey species, but the impacts are uncertain and cannot be quantified based on the available information. In 2023 higher catch rates of SNA 2 and SPO 2 were observed offshore, FNZ suggest this may mean that adult fish moved into deeper water

<sup>1</sup> Fisheries Assessment Plenary – Volume 3: Red gurnard to Yellow-eyed mullet. May 2024. Fisheries New Zealand. At [p.1381-3]

<sup>2</sup> At [p.1381]

<sup>3</sup> Review of sustainability measures October 2024: SNA 2, SPO 2, and JDO 2. Fisheries New Zealand. At [p.9]

<sup>4</sup> At [p.1383]

following Cyclone Gabrielle in early 2023. There is a known nursery area for finfish in Wairoa Hard, Hawkes Bay. There were significant impacts on this area from sedimentation and debris after the cyclone however, the effects on FMA 2 stocks will not be fully apparent for 4-5 years.

**6. What are the primary concerns of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council & LegaSea for this review?**

- a. Subject to further discussion prior to finalising a submission for SPO 2, our preliminary recommendation for the Minister is that he either **retains the status quo or increases the TAC and TACC to reflect recent commercial catches**. Our preference is to retain the status quo because rewarding excessive catches above the TACC with an increase is counterproductive to sustainable management. However, we accept the stock has increased so a modest increase to the TACC to around the current catch level, 122 t, would be a prudent approach after resetting the TAC to 149 t and retaining the current allowances.
- b. The Minister has a statutory obligation to ensure sustainability of all fish stocks including SPO 2. Ensuring sustainability includes maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to provide for current and future generations' needs, and to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of fishing<sup>5</sup>. New Zealand also has international obligations under the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks ([NPOA Sharks 2013](#)) to maintain rig and other elasmobranchs at or above target. While SPO 2 is currently estimated to be at or above the management target, FNZ note that the stock may have been depleted when it was introduced into the Quota Management System (QMS) in 1986.
- c. Given that SPO 2 is largely a bycatch fishery its stock status will be influenced by associated fisheries for flatfish, tarakihi and red gurnard. Increasing the TAC and TACC for SPO 2 may jeopardise the time-bound rebuild plan for TAR 2. TAR 2 is currently fully caught so unless there is a change from bottom trawl, it is inevitable the catch of tarakihi will increase if the TACC for SPO 2 is increased.
- d. In terms of red gurnard, the GUR 2 TACC is only half caught, so there is currently no constraint on commercial targeting of gurnard and any increased effort and capture of gurnard will expectedly impact on SPO 2.
- e. In these mixed species fisheries, it is the fishing method that is the common problem. Single trawl has poor selectivity and the species most abundant and susceptible to trawling will be caught in greater numbers, regardless of the TACCs for any of the species. So, there is a selectivity issue not a quota issue.
- f. Given the apparent abundance of snapper compared to JDO 2 and SPO 2, and the widespread opposition to bottom trawling, now would be the ideal time to transition more of the trawl fleet to a longline fishing, to enable more selective fishing and avoiding the capture of other species. This would support regional development, whanau businesses and innovation.
- g. There is negligible observer coverage (<5% based on event-level data), and limited onboard camera coverage in Fisheries Management Area 2 (FMA 2)<sup>6</sup>. Monitoring cameras are due to be activated on trawl vessels in FMA 2 later in 2024, however, the Minister has earlier indicated [a review of the camera programme](#) so these installations may not proceed as planned.
- h. We note the [1 April 2024 MPI report](#) that highlights the change in fisher reporting for vessels operating cameras, compared with the period from 2018 until cameras were operating. That report notes 1) A 3.5 times increase in albatross interactions, 2) 6.8 times increase in dolphin captures, 3) 34% increase in the number of fish species reported in catch, and 4) a 46% increase in the volume of fish discards.

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<sup>5</sup> Fisheries Act 1996. Section 8.

<sup>6</sup> At [p.9]

- i. Our previous advocacy for SPO 2 and North Island fish stocks are summarised [online here](#).

**7. Who can you contact?**

- a. Email submission to: [FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:FMSubmissions@mpi.govt.nz)  
 b. Email NZSFC fisheries team: [FM@legasea.co.nz](mailto:FM@legasea.co.nz)  
 c. Submissions are due with Fisheries New Zealand by 29 July 2024.

**Appendix – Rig 2 associated species**

**Commercial landings (tonnes)**

Species and fish stock	2021-22	2022-23	TACC (2022-23)	% TACC caught (22-23)
John dory – JDO 2 Lower North Island	98 t	90 t	270 t	33%
Red gurnard – GUR 2 East coast lower North Island	405 t	338 t	725 t	47%
Rig – SPO 2 East coast lower North Island	128 t	122 t	119 t	103%
School shark – SCH 2 East coast lower North Island	171 t	214 t	199 t	108%
Snapper – SNA 2 East coast lower North Island	337 t	339 t	315	108%
Tarakihi – TAR 2 East coast lower North Island	1230 t	1117 t	1104 t	101%

**Recreational harvest estimates (tonnes) <sup>7</sup>**

Species and fish stock	2022-23	2017-18
John dory – JDO 2 Lower North Island	1.4 t	3.1 t
Red gurnard – GUR 2 East coast lower North Island	54 t	39 t
Rig – SPO 2 East coast lower North Island	2.4 t	4.8 t
School shark – SCH 2 East coast lower North Island	N/A	N/A
Snapper – SNA 2 East coast lower North Island	121.9 t	93.1 t
Tarakihi – TAR 2 East coast lower North Island	44 t	108 t

<sup>7</sup> Recreational harvest totals include recreational fishers estimates from National Panel Surveys, amateur charter vessel reported catch and recreational take from commercial vessels under s111 landings, where available.  
 SPO 2 TAC review for 1 October 2024. NZSFC Preliminary view. July 2024.