

Fish stock reviews for 1 October 2024

North Island west coast – Snapper (SNA 8)

Proposal [online here](#).

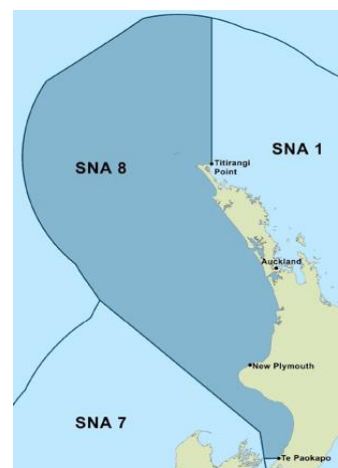


1. Current TAC settings and proposed options (tonnes).

Table 1: Proposed management options (in tonnes) for SNA 8 from 1 October 2024.

Option	TAC	TACC	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
Option 1 (<i>Status quo</i>)	3,065	1,600	100	1,205	160
Option 2	3,505 (↑ 440)	2,000 (↑ 400)	100	1,205	200 (↑ 40)
Option 3	3,637 (↑ 572)	2,120 (↑ 520)	100	1,205	212 (↑ 52)
Option 4	3,769 (↑ 704)	2,240 (↑ 640)	100	1,205	224 (↑ 64)
Option 5	4,165 (↑ 1,100)	2,600 (↑ 1,000)	100	1,205	260 (↑ 100)

Estimated landings – 2022-23	
Commercial	1728 t
Recreational	702 t



2. What is the current status of Snapper 8?

In the 2024 stock assessment the biomass of SNA 8 was estimated to be above the previous management target¹ of B40. Since that assessment the management target has changed and the status of the SNA 8 stock in relation to the new, interim management target is 'About as Likely as Not (40-60%) to be at or below the target'². This means SNA 8 is estimated to be at a sustainable level. Abundance is 'Very Likely (>90%)' to increase over the next 5 years.

3. Is overfishing occurring?

Overfishing is 'About as Likely as Not' (40-60%) to be occurring in SNA 8. The probability of current catch or TACC settings causing overfishing to continue or to commence is 'Unlikely (40%)'³.

4. What is the primary fishing method used to catch snapper?

Bottom trawling. Since 2010-11, most (>80%) of the commercial catch of snapper has been taken by trawlers nominally targeting trevally and red gurnard⁴. The NZSFC has received reports there is more commercial longlining in SNA 8.

5. What are the associated species and habitats?

The primary species caught in association with snapper in the SNA 8 bottom trawl fishery are trevally, red gurnard, John dory and tarakihi. Seabirds are also captured in this mixed trawl fishery. Increased trawling for snapper will increase potential catches of associated species. The Minister has a statutory obligation to consider the status of these associated stocks when managing snapper. In

¹ Management target is the level that a fish stock should be managed around to ensure sustainable use. The current management target setting for SNA 8 is an exploitation rate (USB40%). Being below this target is estimated to be sustainable.

² Fisheries Assessment Plenary – Volume 3: Red Gurnard to Yellow-eyed mullet. May 2024. Fisheries New Zealand. At [p.1672]

³ At [p.1673]

⁴ At [p.1674]

addition, bottom trawling is non-discriminative, catching target and non-target species or organisms in its path whilst leaving extensive, long-term damage to the seafloor. This impacts benthic productivity and function.

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

- a. We recommend a transition from trawling to longline commercial fishing, and align with the west coast Iwi Fisheries Forums in recommending:
 - i. No TAC or TACC increase; or
 - ii. Option 2, a 400 t TACC increase based on –
 1. Smaller spatial area management; and
 2. Application of ecosystem based management.
- b. Increasing targeting and catch of snapper will shift fishing inshore, increasing both the catch of other species and seafloor contact.
- c. SNA 8 abundance has increased from a long period at a low level and is now at the default target level. Stock projections provided by FNZ have estimated that abundance will continue to increase under current catch settings.
- d. Stock projections suggesting the spawning biomass has trebled since 2010 seem highly optimistic. There could be multiple reasons for any increase, including warmer waters, no fishing in the trawl exclusion zone, the pulse of high recruitment in 2016, and the Minister’s precautionary decision in 2021. Not all of the probable biomass increase can be attributed to management. Given this uncertainty and the Minister’s statutory obligations to manage fish stocks to meet the foreseeable needs of future generations, a precautionary decision encompassing the purpose and principles of the Fisheries Act 1996 (ss8, 9 & 10) must be applied.
- e. The most recent trawl survey in 2022-23 indicated a lower availability of mature fish compared to the 2019-20 and 2020-21 trawl surveys. This correlates with reports from recreational fishers who are catching fewer large snapper.
- f. There have been major concerns that trawl fishing is prevalent off Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe 90-Mile Beach due to the trawl exclusion zone ending at Ahipara. This concentrated effort is impacting on the availability of finfish and shellfish inshore, and potentially on the valuable mussel spat fishery. Localised depletion is not limited to this area, highlighting the inability to manage SNA 8 at this scale.
- g. In SNA 8 most quota and ACE are held by two fishing companies. One of those companies will get almost all of any new quota issued to redeem their historic 28N rights. Smaller companies will have to continue to avoid catching snapper.
- h. We do not accept snapper is a ‘choke’ species. Single trawl has poor selectivity and the species most abundant and susceptible to trawling will be caught in greater numbers, regardless of the TACC. So, it’s a selectivity issue.
- i. Given the apparent abundance of snapper and the widespread opposition to bottom trawling, including from the west coast Iwi Fisheries Forums, now would be the ideal time to transition more of the trawl fleet to a longline fishery, to enable more selective fishing and avoiding the capture of other species. This would support regional development, whanau businesses and innovation.
- j. We do not agree with the proposal to reduce the allowance for Other Mortality from 10% to 8.4% of the TACC. Given the prevalence of small fish and the recent revelations of misreporting [captured by onboard cameras](#) it is imperative the Minister acts in a precautionary manner.
- k. Our previous advocacy for SNA 8 and other North Island stocks are summarised [online here](#).

7. Who can you contact?

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

Appendix – Snapper 8 associated species

Commercial landings (tonnes)

Species and fish stock	2021-22	2022-23	TACC (2022-23)	% TACC caught (22-23)
Red gurnard GUR 1 - West & east coast upper North Island	700 t	615 t	800 t	77%
Jack mackerel – JMA 7 West coast New Zealand	27 782 t	34 549 t	32 537 t	106%
John dory – JDO 1 Taranaki north to North Cape, south to East Cape	271 t	235 t	354 t	66%
John dory – JDO 2 East Cape south to Wellington to Taranaki	98 t	90 t	270 t	33%
Kingfish – KIN 8 West coast North Island	83 t	69 t	80 t	87%
Pilchard – PIL 8 West coast North Island	92 t	61 t	65 t	94%
Snapper – SNA 8 West coast North Island	1720 t	1728 t	1600 t	108%
Snapper – SNA 7 West coast South Island	361 t	518 t	450 t	115%

Recreational harvest estimates⁵ (tonnes)

Species and fish stock	2022-23	2017-18
Red gurnard GUR 1 - West & east coast upper North Island	30 t	86 t
Red gurnard GUR 8 – Lower west coast North Island	14 t	31 t
Jack mackerel – JMA 7 West coast New Zealand	2.6 t	6.2 t
John dory – JDO 1 Taranaki north to North Cape, then south to East Cape	6.1 t	24.8 t
John dory – JDO 2 East Cape south to Wellington; Taranaki	1.4 t	3.1 t
Kingfish – KIN 8 West coast North Island	46 t	43 t
Pilchard – PIL 8 West coast North Island (number of fish)	11 293	27 864
Snapper – SNA 8 West coast North Island	702 t	853 t
Snapper – SNA 7 West coast & top of South Island	139 t	158.5 t

⁵ 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.