

Snapper 1 decision 2013

Frequently Asked Questions



NZSFC Fisheries Management Committee

30 October 2013

FAQs

What was the Snapper 1 decision?

On 17 September Nathan Guy, the Minister of Primary Industries, announced his decision for the future management of Snapper 1 (SNA1). The Minister set the Total Allowable Catch and allowances in tonnes (Table 1). He then took advice from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to reduce the recreational bag limit, from nine to seven, and increased the minimum legal size limit (MLS), from 27 to 30cm, to fit the increased recreational allowance of 3050 t. The commercial catch limit of 4500 tonnes and 25cm MLS remains intact. The new controls will apply to amateur fishers from 1 April 2014.

Table 1: Total Allowable Catch (TAC), Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), allowances and recreational controls, individual daily bag limit (DBL) and minimum legal size (MLS) limit.

Year	TAC	TACC	Recreational allowance	Customary allowance	Other mortality	DBL	MLS
1997 - 2013	7550	4500	2600 combined		450	9	27cm
2014 -	8050	4500	3050	50	450	7	30cm

What was the basis of the decision?

In July 2013 MPI released a discussion paper including proposals for the future management of SNA1. By 23 August MPI received 47,709 submissions, 46,059 via LegaSea. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) submitted on 23 August. Nathan Guy's decision letter and the Ministry's Final Advice Paper (FAP) were released on 24 September 2013. The NZSFC record of the review process is online at www.nzsportfishing.org.nz - Fisheries – Species Management – Snapper 1.

What is the NZSFC's view of the decision?

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council **rejects the new management controls for recreational fishers** on the basis that –

- They represent a significant reduction in people's access to snapper in some areas, while there is no change to the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC).
- MPI's predetermination to reduce recreational catch, to placate commercial interests. Of the many options presented to the Minister in September not one included the existing limits of 9 fish at 27cm.
- Our proposal for a 550 t increase to the recreational allowance, to enable 9 fish at 27cm to be retained, was not included as an option the Minister could choose.
- The new size limit will increase release mortality associated with recreational catch.
- There are no targeted measures to improve snapper abundance in the collapsed Bay of Plenty fishery.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council **welcomes effective implementation of the proposed initiatives to address waste** caused by bulk harvesting commercial fishing methods, and to rebuild the Snapper 1 fishery to 40% of its unfished state.

What are the positives?

Positive outcomes from the decision may be less obvious, but they are significant –

- No increase in the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC).
- A more realistic recreational allowance (of 3050 t) was set by adding 500 t to the 1997 allowance, not the TACC.

- This provision for recreational fishers is a critical development given the Ministry's acknowledgement that actions and approaches taken in SNA1 would have policy implications for the management of other fisheries around the country.
- Clarity that there is no basis to commercial claims to a proportional share of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), industry only has a shareholding in the TACC.
- Ministry and industry commitments to significantly reduce wastage and juvenile mortality. The Minister will need to ensure MPI and industry remain accountable to these commitments.
- Interim management target of 40% of unfished biomass, around double the existing stock levels.
- Public awareness of management issues, the waste associated with bulk commercial harvesting methods, dumping and discarding, and the importance of providing for community interests.
- Confirmation of the political nature of fisheries management decisions, and the potential influence this may have on political party policy prior to next year's election.

What about a legal challenge?

- The Courts have clarified fisheries management decisions are political and must be reasonable.
- The Minister has made a political decision in response to unprecedented public pressure, but that pressure was insufficient to convince MPI or Nathan Guy to retain existing recreational bag and size limits.
- While we reject the changes to recreational controls the advice received indicates there are few reviewable errors.

What next?

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council recognises the Minister remains responsible for managing our snapper and other fisheries. Our fisheries and management teams will work with LegaSea to achieve the following outcomes –

- Rebuilding all depleted fish stocks in New Zealand, including having snapper managed to a minimum of 40% of unfished biomass.
- Encourage political parties to have and support policies aimed at achieving meaningful rebuilds of inshore fisheries.
- Encourage public engagement in fisheries issues, to achieve widespread understanding of fisheries decisions and how to influence them.
- Finalise development of the best practice guide "Fish Smarter" for recreational fishers, to help minimise waste and rebuild stocks.
- Ensure effective implementation of the waste minimisation measures proposed for commercial fishers.
- Support an increase in the commercial snapper minimum legal size to 30cm, when waste issues have been addressed, to achieve parity between sectors and prevent fish conserved by recreational fishers being taken by commercial interests.
- Promote closures of sensitive inshore areas to destructive commercial harvesting methods, to protect and enhance the environment and save juvenile fish.
- Broaden the way we collect and use information to allow an ecosystems approach to managing the impacts of fishing on marine life, rather than single species management.
- Support targeted measures to improve abundance in the collapsed Bay of Plenty snapper fishery, to enable people to provide for their wellbeing from fishing.
- To ensure the Minister manages fisheries sustainably, to provide for the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and Legasea teams thank everyone who stood up for themselves and future interests during the Save Our Snapper campaign. The support for LegaSea was outstanding.

Sign up to receive Updates at www.LegaSea.co.nz. Stay informed and support the ongoing work to promote your interests in having abundant fisheries for now and the future.