

Snapper 1 proposal summary

By the NZ Sport Fishing Council

23 July 2013



Overview

On 12 July 2013 the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) issued a discussion paper that includes three options for the future management of the Snapper 1 (SNA1) fishery. MPI is inviting feedback on suggested changes to the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), allowances and the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC). The current TAC is being exceeded so MPI propose to reduce the recreational allowance to fit total catch within the TAC. Submissions are due by 23 August.

Table 1: Existing and proposed TACs, TACCs and allowances (tonnes, t) for Snapper 1.

	TAC (t)	TACC (t)	Allowances (tonnes)			Proposed minimum legal size & bag limit				
			Customary	Recreational	Other mortality	27cm	30cm	33cm	35cm	36cm
Current	7550	4500	300	2300	450	9	-	-	-	-
MPI proposals										
Option 1	7550	4500	50	2550	450	3	3	4	9	9
Option 2	8050	4820	50	2730	450	4	4	6	9	9
Option 2A	8050	4500	50	3050	450	5	5	6	9	9
Option 2B	8050	4905*	50	2550	545	3	3	4	9	9
Option 3	7050	4180	50	2370	450	3	3	3	5	9

*Based on 500 tonnes being allocated to the commercial sector and allowing for increased mortality.

STOCK STATUS:

- The SNA1 stock has rebuilt and now exceeds the 1997 management target of 20% of original stock size.
- The stock is slowly rebuilding to the new management target of 40% of original size (B0).
- Sub-stock status – East Northland 24% B0; Hauraki Gulf 24% B0; Bay of Plenty below 10% B0.

MAIN ISSUES:

- Historic commercial overfishing caused serious depletion and denied public access to a reasonable number of snapper for many years. The Snapper 1 stock is now rebuilding.
- MPI proposals are biased towards protecting commercial catch while cutting the recreational allowance.
- MPI fails to acknowledge recreational conservation efforts over 16 years to rebuild the SNA1 fishery.
- MPI is trying to squeeze recreational catch into an allowance that was set in 1997 and based on questionable recreational catch estimates.
- Recreational fishers strongly object to proportional allocation of the TAC, as commercial quota and as a recreational allowance, in any of our fisheries.
- Allowances must be able to vary with population changes and/or to allow for improvement in recreational catch, if the allowance was set in a depleted fishery, as has occurred in Snapper 1.
- MPI fail to take account of the potential loss to small and large businesses in the boat building and recreational marine industry. Government policy is to double primary industry export value by 2025.
- No effort has been made to understand how recreational fishing contributes to the national economy, and how this fishing provides for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of our communities.
- The real issue is that too many snapper are being killed and wasted in this iconic fishery!

WHAT WE WANT

- Measures implemented to stop killing juvenile fish, dumping and other wasteful fishing practices.
- A recreational allowance that provides for current needs and an abundance of snapper for future generations' needs, as required by law.
- No increase in minimum size limits or bag limits unless these are accompanied by measures to improve all sector's fishing practices, to prevent juvenile fish being killed through bulk harvesting methods (trawling and seining), dumping of fish caught in excess of quota or to conserve quota, high grading (dumping poor quality or incorrect sized fish of low market value), and gut hooking of undersized fish.

IMPACTS OF MPI OPTIONS

- Recreational fishers will quickly be condemned to ever-reducing bag limits if we accept the Ministry's options and their proportional policy, making our allowance a permanently fixed share of the TAC.
- Participation rates will collapse as recreational fishing becomes uneconomic and people are squeezed out of the fishery in favour of commercial interests.
- Landbased, inshore and traditional fishers will be most affected by any proportional changes.
- Major impacts on the bait and tackle industry, boat builders, service providers and fishing media.

ALLOCATION

- MPI and the fishing industry propose a fixed allocation for recreational interests.
- There is no legal requirement to support fixed allocation or a recreational quota. The Minister sets aside a tonnage to 'allow for' recreational interests, not just catch.
- Recreational interests include social, cultural, environmental and conservation aspects.
- There must be a mechanism to acknowledge and reward conservation.
- Fish conserved by recreational fishers since 1997 have been used to prop up commercial fishing.
- Any further cuts to recreational catches will also be used to prop up commercial fishing quotas.

ON WHAT BASIS WAS THE 1997 RECREATIONAL ALLOWANCE SET?

- From 1 October 1994 recreational fishers' longline hook numbers was halved, from 50 to 25.
- In 1994 the minimum legal size for snapper was increased from 25 to 27cm, reducing recreational catch by an estimated 10%.
- In 1995 the Minister decreased the Snapper 1 TACC by 39%, from 4938 to 3000 tonnes. This TACC applied in 1995 and 1996.
- Commercial fishers appealed against the decision in the High Court and Court of Appeal, and won.
- From 1st October 1997 a fresh Ministerial decision and rebuild plan was implemented, this included:
 - A Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 7550 tonnes (t).
 - A 9% reduction to the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), from 4938 to 4500 t.
 - Minimum legal size for commercial caught snapper retained at 25cm.
 - An allowance for illegal catch of 450 t.
 - A combined recreational and customary allowance of 2600 t.
 - A reduced recreational bag limit from 15 to 9, at 27cm.
- The 1994 controls and 1997 daily bag reductions for recreational fishers remain in 2013.

CONSERVATION OF SNA1 FISHERY

Recreational fishers have a demonstrable record in rebuilding the Snapper 1 fishery. This conservation ought to be the basis of a new management plan to rebuild Snapper 1 to 40% of original biomass.

With an agreed plan in place we can implement the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council's [Snapper 1 policy](#), to achieve 40% B0, by promoting achievable and affordable actions to restore the fishery. Reducing juvenile mortality and wastage is critical to success; as is research and consultation on further voluntary measures the public could embrace to better look after the environment and to accelerate the rebuild.

Changing people's attitude and behaviour is fundamental to having fish for now and conserving for future generations. LegaSea has initiated a public awareness campaign, '[Snapper on the Line](#)', to alert the public to the Ministry for Primary Industries' Snapper 1 proposals.

LegaSea is seeking public support for the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council's stance on Snapper 1 and will be instrumental in promoting any new, agreed management plan.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Visit your local MP and tell them how much you value recreational fishing, and how a healthy fishery provides for the wellbeing of your family. Political pressure seems the best way to achieve a better outcome.
2. From early August go online to www.legasea.co.nz and make a submission to MPI. Get stuck in!