

Review of Recreational Fishing Issues 2006

-NZRFC WORKSHOP-

Buckland's Beach Yacht Club

24 March 2006

2.00pm – 6.00pm

WORKSHOP REPORT

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PRESENT

Keith Ingram (Chair), Max Hetherington, Bill Cronin, Don Glass, Graeme Middlebrooke, Stephanie Railey, Arthur Hore, Sarah Omundsen.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Sheryl Hart, Geoff Rowling, Ross Gildon, Bob Burstal, Bill Cooke and Scott Macindoe. NZRFC noted that a hui about the Aotea Marine Reserve on Great Barrier Island (also convened by MFish) coincided with the workshop and the Council's attendance was required at both. MFish noted they were not aware that the Council would be attending the hui.

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BACKGROUND

In 2005, MFish reviewed a series of issues that the NZRFC identified as priorities for resolution. The issues identified by the NZRFC were:

- the primary taker rule;
- aspects of taking and possession of fish (i.e. measurement on the sea floor and possession of scuba);

- the Coromandel scallops amateur daily bag limit; and
- the use of various rock lobster catching methods such as bobs, pull pots and scoop nets.

MFish also reviewed the issue of shucking scallops and dredge oysters at sea at this time.

The regulation review was a part of a commitment given by the Minister of Fisheries to review recreational fishers' top ten concerns within a specified timeframe. This timeframe was subsequently specified as three years by MFish.

MFish anticipates that another three regulations, or issues, can be addressed in 2006 (the second year of the review) with the last three issues to be reviewed in 2007 (the final year of the review).

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- a) discuss issues that the NZRFC have scoped with members as being further priorities for review;
- b) prioritise these issues; and
- c) agree to the next three issues to be reviewed in 2006.

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PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The NZRFC executive team, on behalf of its members, identified a suite of issues that that they felt are causing problems in the recreational fishing community. The issues are identified below, together with how NZRFC would like to proceed in mitigating the problem.

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1. The Coromandel Scallop Amateur Bag Limit

ISSUE:

Recreational fishers have expressed their disappointment with the decision not to increase the Coromandel scallop bag limit. They noted, however, the Minister's statement in his decision letter:

"... there is not currently enough information available to support a bag limit increase. I have requested that the Ministry of Fisheries obtain further information on the nature and

extent of the recreational fishery, (including through survey) and the potential impacts of an increase in the bag limit, particularly if the fishery were to enter a period of decline"

The NZRFC requested that MFish provide the Minister with this additional information, as requested, so that the Minister can reconsider his decision.

It was noted that once this information is available, rather than running another independent review process it would be best to review the bag limit either:

- a) during the annual in-season allowance review for the fishery, or
- b) through the Coromandel scallop fisheries plan currently being developed by MFish.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MFish to provide NZRFC with an update on progress with gathering additional information on the nature and extent of the recreational fishery, and the impact a bag limit increase might have on the fishery
- ✓ Progress the bag limit change through the in-season review, or the fishplan

2. Rock lobsters and hand-held lassoes

ISSUE:

NZRFC advised MFish that the decision not to permit the use of lassoes to catch rock lobster has confused and frustrated many recreational fishers. The Minister's press release stated:

"...I am not yet convinced that hand-held lassoes should be permitted to be used in capturing a crayfish"

In response, the NZRFC have organised for a postgraduate student at the Bay of Plenty Polytech to undertake a comparative study on mortality induced by collecting crayfish by hand and with lassoes. Pro Dive have donated lassoes for the trial and a scientist at NIWA is providing peer review of the project.

NZRFC note that funding has not been provided for this work, and question where the additional research funding that was promised to recreational fishers is.

NZRFC advise that if results show mortality rates with lassoes are equal to or less than those inflicted by hand, they will request the Minister re-consider his decision in light of the new information.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MFish to update NZRFC on recreational research funding
- ✓ Minister will be provided with new information if relevant, in order to reconsider his decision.

3. Define Take

ISSUE:

Currently, "taking" is defined in legislation as "fishing" and fishing is defined simply as "... the catching, taking, or harvesting of fish, aquatic life, or seaweed".

The definition in its current form is not considered to provide enough guidance for recreational fishers. For example, if a fish is tagged and released, or released because it is undersize, does this count against the daily bag limit?

Recreational fishers have requested greater clarity around this definition, or a new definition be incorporated into legislation.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ To be prioritised for the regulation review this year

4. Review of Disabled Permits

ISSUE:

Prior to 1999 there was a special permit provision in legislation to allow a person to collect fish on behalf of a person who was disabled. In December 1999, the Minister revoked this special permit provision for a variety of reasons. Special permits can still be issued to disabled persons to use fishing methods not otherwise permitted by regulations.

Recreational fishers are concerned that the public was not consulted when this provision for disabled people was removed.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MFish to provide the NZRFC with information on the special permit issue, including the reasons why the provision was revoked.

5. Paua size limit

ISSUE:

The national minimum legal size for (ordinary) paua is 125mm. However, NZRFC note that there are stunted populations in areas throughout New Zealand (such as Taranaki) and question whether the size limit should be reduced in these areas.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MFish to provide the NZRFC with information on stunted populations of paua throughout the country before prioritisation occurs.

6. Auckland Shellfish Regulations

ISSUE:

NZRFC question whether the current amateur bag limits for shellfish in the Auckland region are actually reasonable. They note that there are significant levels of non-compliance associated with shellfish harvesting in the area and query

whether this is because bag limits are too small.

NZRFC question whether there may be alternative management measures that would be more effective in managing the shellfish resource –such as closing beaches if there are depletion issues.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Background information to be provided to the NZRFC on why the Auckland shellfish regulations were changed.
- ✓ Report to be requested from the Auckland District Compliance Manager on whether the Auckland shellfish regulations are working and manageable from a compliance perspective.
- ✓ A priority for review, but could be done next year if necessary.

7. Set Net Attendance

ISSUE:

Many recreational fishers are concerned that the current regulations allow people to leave set nets unattended in the water. They feel this causes significant wastage, and often nets are lost in bad weather resulting in ghost fishing.

It was noted that this problem relates to both recreational and commercial set net fishing and requires a national review of the method. As such, it is more appropriate that MFish leads such a review as a part of its annual sustainability review process.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MFish to flag the need for a national set net review to be undertaken in the annual review of sustainability measures. This may include the attendance of set nets, or the restrictions for set nets to be used for bait and estuarine species only.

8. Minimum legal size

ISSUE:

a) NZRFC requested that the minimum legal size be reviewed for the following species:

- i) Gurnard –no MLS exists
- ii) Blue cod –the national MLS is currently 33cm. This was increased from 30cm in 1993 due to concerns about blue cod sustainability in the South Island. However, 33cm is considered too high in most other places, and recreational fishers would like to see the 33cm MLS apply only to the area it was intended, with the national MLS reverted back to 30cm.
- iii) Trumpeter –no MLS exists

b) NZRFC also requested that the commercial minimum legal size be removed for

fish taken by the bulk fishing methods of trawling, Danish seining, purse seining and set netting. Concerns were raised that the current MLS regime applied when bulk fishing results in a significant amount of waste and legitimises high grading. Further, the NZRFC consider that all fish caught should be counted against a fisher's quota.

It was noted that this issue relates to commercial fishing and is beyond the scope of a review of recreational regulations. It is appropriate that MFish flag the issue of MLS and bulk fishing methods as a part of the annual sustainability review process.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ MLS for gurnard, blue cod and trumpeter to be prioritised for the regulation review this year.
- ✓ MFish to flag the issue of MLS and bulk fishing methods as a part of the annual review of sustainability measures.

9. Scallop fishing season

ISSUE:

NZRFC request that the scallop season be changed from 15 July – 14 February to 1 September – 31 March, a two month shift in the season. They consider that benefits to recreational fishers from this action would include: leaving early season scallops to improve in condition, and making late season scallops available for harvest.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ To be prioritised for the regulation review this year

10. Regional differences in size and bag limits

ISSUE:

NZRFC raised concerns about the significant differences in regional size and bag limits which occur throughout the country. While it was identified that there is a need to review the regional management size and bag limits with a view of getting some continuity, it was agreed that this issue would be deferred until the "Shared Fisheries" project had been finalised.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Issue to be deferred.

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PRIORITISATION OF ISSUES

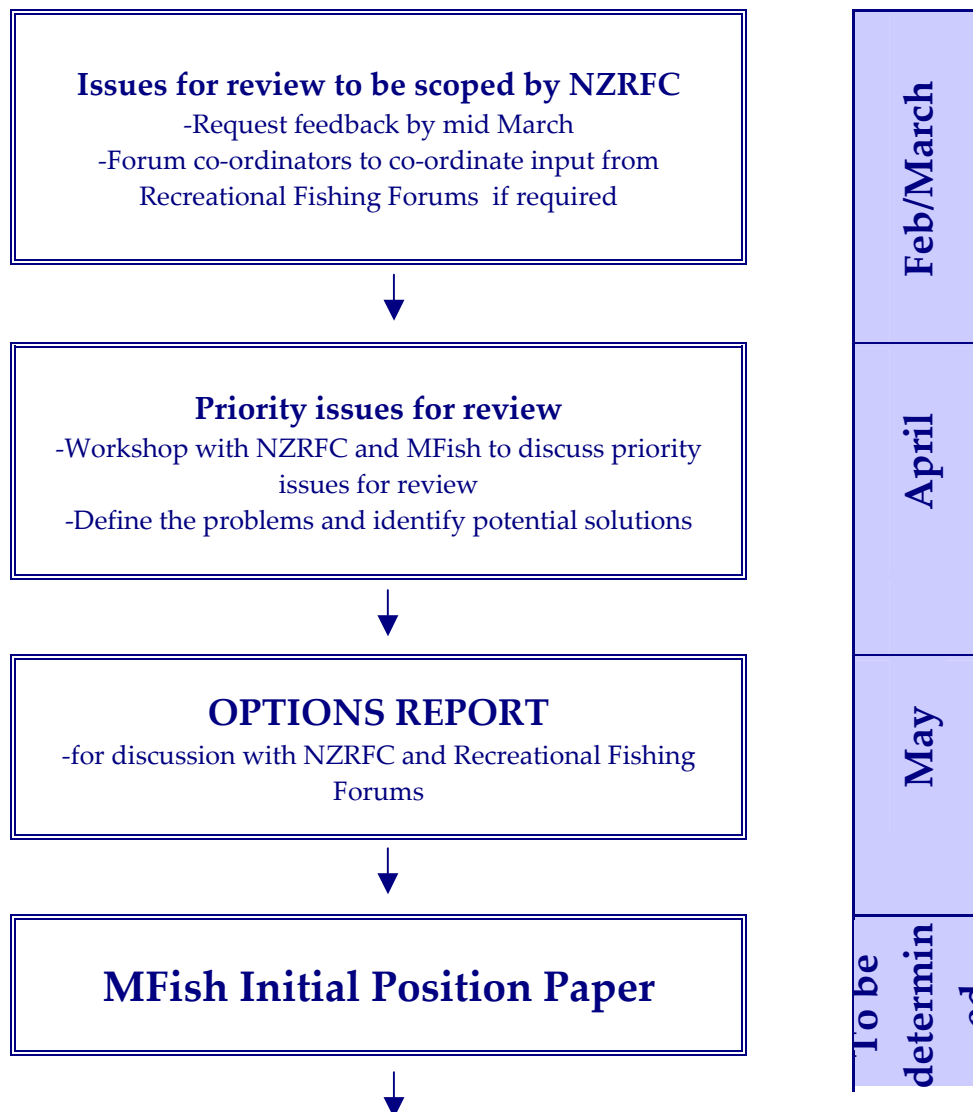
PRIORITY	ISSUE	COMMENTS
1	Define Take	2006 Regulation Review
2	Review minimum legal size for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gurnard ▪ Blue cod ▪ Trumpeter 	2006 Regulation Review
3	Change the scallop season from July – February to September – April	2006 Regulation Review
4	Review of the Auckland shellfish regulations	-Background information to be provided to the NZRFC on why the Auckland shellfish regulations were changed. - Report from the Auckland District Compliance Manager on whether the Auckland shellfish regulations are working and manageable from a compliance perspective. -A priority for review, but could be done next year if necessary.
Currently in Action	Permit the use of hand-held lassoes to catch rock lobster	-MFish to update NZRFC on recreational research funding -Minister will be provided with new information if relevant, in order to reconsider his decision.
Currently in Action	Increase the Coromandel scallop bag limit	-MFish to provide NZRFC with an update on progress with gathering additional information -Progress the bag limit change through the in-season review, or the fishplan
	Review size limit for paua in areas where the stock is stunted	MFish to provide the NZRFC with information on stunted populations of paua throughout the country, before prioritisation occurs
	Review commercial and recreational set net rules (in particular soak time and net attendance)	MFish to flag the need for a national set net review to be undertaken in the annual review of sustainability measures.

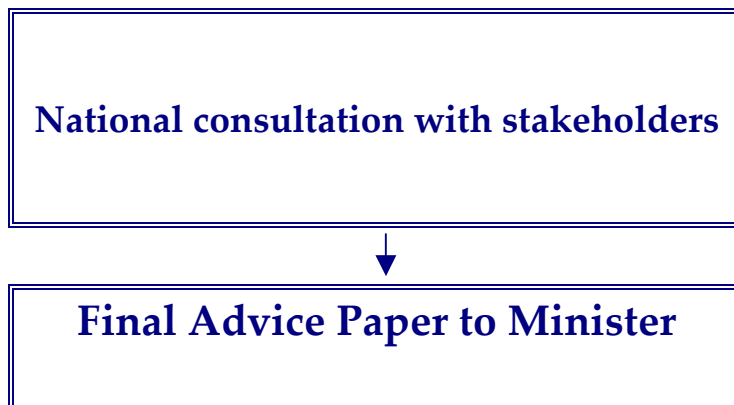
	Remove minimum legal size limits for bulk fishing methods	MFish to flag the issue of MLS and bulk fishing methods as a part of the annual review of sustainability measures.
	Review of Special Permits	MFish to provide the NZRFC with information on the special permit issue, including the reasons why the provision was revoked.
	Regional differences in size and bag limits	Defer

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REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMEFRAMES

The anticipated review process and timeframes have been summarised in the flowchart below. Dates for national consultation and advice to the Minister have not yet been finalised.





As clarified in the 2005 review, NZRFC workshop participants have been tasked with the responsibility of identifying specific problems associated with each of the issues raised. Participants have also been tasked with the responsibility of advising MFish of preferred options once the Options Report is distributed. Participants can, and indeed are expected, to disseminate information throughout their recreational community and be responsible for providing MFish with this information. Although MFish can assist where required, they will not be involved in this as they will be responsible for administering national consultation.

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NEXT STEPS

MFish will discuss the issues for review with relevant business groups and will prepare an Options Report for consultation. All NZRFC workshop participants will be asked to comment on this report, which will be available in May.

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