

Ministry for Primary Industries

*Hauraki Gulf Forum
Strategic Issue*

Enhanced Fisheries

Future of our Fisheries Work Programme

In 2016 MPI carried out an operational review of New Zealand's current fisheries management system. The result is a major work programme to strengthen the fisheries management system to ensure sustainability of our fisheries.

The first major step in the programme is the development of a new digital system for tracking, reporting and monitoring commercial fishing activity. It is made up of geospatial position reporting (so we know where fishing is happening), electronic reporting through e-logbooks (so we have more accurate and up-to-date information about fishing activity), and electronic monitoring (cameras), so we can verify what's being reported.

This new system will give confidence to New Zealanders, and consumers from around the world, that fish from our waters are being managed and caught sustainably. And where evidence of illegal activity is captured, that information can be used to prosecute.

Commercial fishing boats will be required to have Geospatial position reporting (GPR) and electronic reporting:

- Trawl vessels 28m and over will have the systems in place and operating for all trips starting on or after 1 October 2017.
- All other vessels, and land-based fishers, will have 6 months to have an electronic reporting system (an e-logbook), and a GPR system, and these systems must be used for all trips starting on or after 1 April 2018.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is currently seeking feedback on the first set of draft circulars that set the standards and specifications for the systems and processes used in digital monitoring.

MPI is also making changes to regulations to allow the use of innovative new trawl technologies on commercial fishing boats. These new nets have less impact on the environment, and can reduce by-catch of undersized fish, seabirds, and mammals.

These regulations will be passed alongside the tracking, monitoring and reporting regulations, to come into effect on 1 October 2017.

Technical Advisory Group

A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has been appointed to give expert, independent advice on the work programme. The group has wide experience in many fishery sectors and a deep understanding of the importance of a sustainable future for New Zealand's oceans.

Members include:

- Sir Rob Fenwick (Chair)
- Harry Burkhardt
- Graeme Sinclair
- Lesley Campbell
- Graham Stuart

Other Fisheries Management

Alongside the Future of our Fisheries initiatives MPI is continuing to deliver its operational work programme for fisheries.

Snapper 1 Strategic Plan

A long-term report for the future management of New Zealand's most valuable snapper fishery is in place. The report has a strong focus on improving fishing practices, minimising waste and gathering accurate information. The recommendations include:

- Aiming to achieve a biomass target of 40% of the unfished state by 2040, with an aim of 30 per cent by 2025
- A review conducted by 2021 with updated stock information
- Educate all fishers on ways to avoid juvenile fish and increase survival rates of snapper released
- Close monitoring including analysis of catch levels by all sectors.

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Assessment of the stock status

Each year, MPI convenes a large number of Fisheries Assessment Working Group meetings that are open to everyone who wishes to attend. The results of scientific research are combined with catch and effort reports from commercial fisheries, data from our on-board observer programme, and other information to produce assessments of the status of NZ fish stocks. This information is summarised in two annual Fisheries Assessment Plenary Reports. The most recent is Fisheries Assessment Plenary Report for May 2017 and is available here [Plenary docs](#).

The stock status of all NZ fish stocks has recently been summarised and is available at [Summary of stock status](#). This report summarises the status of New Zealand's fish stocks relative to the requirements of the "Harvest Strategy Standard".

Management reviews

Each year, MPI reviews catch limits and other management controls for selected stocks. This occurs twice a year to inform decisions for the 1 April and 1 October fishing years. This is consistent with the requirement that MPI ensures fisheries resources are used sustainably.

New science information from the Fisheries Assessment Working Groups contributes to determining which stocks are put forward for review.

MPI is aware of ongoing concerns over the availability of rock lobster in the Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty (CRA2). In response MPI has brought the full scientific review of the fishery forward from 2018 to later this year. Prior to the confirmation of the new science MPI will be establishing an engagement process to gather local input into characterising problems and potential solutions for management of this fishery. This information will be used to inform catch limit settings from April 2018 and the implementation of any other management controls later in 2018. As an interim measure the CRA2 Industry have voluntarily cut their commercial catch limit. For the 2017 April fishing years, the voluntary commercial catch limit will be 150 tonnes (down from 200 tonnes).

New information on longfin and shortfin eels in the North Island has recently been presented for scientific review. MPI will be setting up an engagement process to discuss this new science alongside other information to inform a management review next year.

Over the medium term MPI is planning to revisit its fisheries planning process to look for opportunities to better coordinate the research programmes and management reviews of associated fishstocks to improve consideration of the interactions between species and respond to aspirations for ecosystem based management which have been further highlighted through the Future of Our Fisheries review.

Shellfish Bed Closures

Monitoring will continue at sites within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park as part of the MPI intertidal monitoring programme. A petition has recently been received to extend the seasonal closure at Cockle Bay (October to April) to a full closure to recreational cockle harvest. MPI has been monitoring this and other beaches in the area closely and an updated survey will be undertaken while the bay is closed this summer.

MPI is also planning to continue work on a broader management strategy for intertidal shellfish.

Aquatic and Biodiversity Annual review

The focus of the Fisheries Assessment Working Groups is fishstock status and environmental considerations at a fishstock or species scale. A broader analysis of environmental considerations is compiled each year in the Aquatic and Biodiversity Annual Review, the most recent edition, published in 2016, is the sixth of the series of "Environmental State of NZ Fisheries Waters" and expands and updates previous editions.

The report summarises available information and research on themes such as the environmental effects of fishing and aspects of marine biodiversity and productivity relevant to fish and fisheries. The impacts of fishing on protected species and incidental bycatch are other themes.

MPI is currently developing an overarching plan to describe and guide the management associated with these environmental themes.

With regards to bycatch, camera technology has been installed on the entire snapper 1 (SNA1) trawl fleet as part of a monitoring programme prior to the roll out of digital monitoring. This programme was a solution to monitoring targets within the SNA1 trawl fishery set by the Minister. The decision to use electronic monitoring in SNA1 followed a review of management of this fishery in 2013 which raised a number of concerns about commercial fishing activity including juvenile mortality, discarding and waste.

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A proof of concept project has also been initiated in the bottom longline fishery, to coincide with the 2016-17 black petrel breeding season (October – May). The results will be used to inform standards and specifications for electronic reporting.

Other seabird work

A review of the NPOA-seabirds commenced in May to review progress against each 5 year objective and to review the extent to which the objectives require review, modification or substitution. It will also review the progress of implementation processes outlined in the NPOA. MPI is working collaboratively through the Seabird Advisory Group to progress this review. It is intended that a revised NPOA will be in place by June next however the current NPOA will remain in effect until the review is complete and a revised NPOA-seabirds is in effect.

As part of the review, management actions to reduce the risk to species identified in the Seabird Risk Assessment, including black petrel, will be assessed against the NPOA objectives. Any shortfalls/outstanding actions will be identified and prioritised in 2017/18 or for the next NPOA.

MPI recently published a responsible fishing brochure for recreational fishers, which includes information on safe handling and release of captured seabirds. This was distributed in the *New Zealand Fishing News* magazine and is available at all MPI offices.