



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa

- MFish Update - "He pānui" Northern Region April 2006

Ministry-led Fisheries Plans

Three fisheries (southern blue whiting, Foveaux Strait oysters and Coromandel scallops) are being developed as proof of concept plans by 30 June 2006. Regional teams are working on the plans along with relevant stakeholders.

For Coromandel scallops, MFish has developed an information brief that provides detailed information on the fishery. Various stakeholders have been sent a copy for discussion and comments. There have been meetings with commercial, customary, recreational, and environmental stakeholders over the last few months. The first joint stakeholder meeting was in early April, with a second meeting planned after Easter. Research on benthic impacts specific to this fishery will be shortly underway.

For further info, visit <http://www.fish.govt.nz/sustainability/fishing-plans/>

Shared Fisheries Policy

Work is being done on a revised policy framework for management of shared fisheries. A revised policy framework is needed to:

- increase certainty in processes to set, adjust, and manage the allocation of the total allowable catch to each sector;
- ensure trade offs made between the values of different sectors are transparent and add overall value to the fishery; and
- give each sector opportunities and incentives to invest in enhancing the value of their share of the fishery.

The Ministry is meeting with key stakeholder groups to seek their comments and initial feedback on the issues to be addressed in the shared fisheries policy. Meetings have been held with all of the regional recreational forums, the Recreational Fishing Ministerial Advisory Committee, option4, the NZ Recreational Council, the SeaFIC Policy Forum, Te Ohu Kai Moana, inshore commercial stakeholders in Auckland, Nelson and Christchurch, Te Kupenga iwi forum, and Bay of Plenty iwi forum working group. The project team will be meeting with other iwi forums this month. The main focus of the project team is now on developing proposals for the public discussion document. Release of the public discussion document will be moved back from June.

October Review of Sustainability Measures & Other Management Controls 2006

The October Sustainability Annual Review is progressing as normal within MFish. With staff focusing on developing Fisheries Plans, the number of items for review will be reduced. Possible items for review include catch limits for various fish stocks, and some rules that apply to amateur fishers. The prioritisation of items for review will occur internally (within MFish) in April.

Benthic Impacts Strategy and Benthic Protection Areas

The Ministry is looking at ways to manage the impacts of fishing methods such as bottom trawling and dredging. This work is being done in conjunction with the Marine Protected Area Strategy.

The Ministry is also consulting with interested parties on the seafood industry's proposal to ban bottom trawling over a large area. MFish staff have been discussing trawling protocols and the inclusion of seamounts in these areas with commercial interests and the Department of Conservation.

A consultation document on these proposals will be released for public comment in April.

Maui's dolphin

Stakeholders, Department of Conservation, and MFish staff from the northern region are in the early stages of preparing a Threat Management Plan for Maui's and Hector's dolphin. The plan is intended to identify and propose actions to reduce threats to the dolphins that are associated with human activities (taking into account advances in technology and knowledge, and social implications).

In the northern region, the plan relates to the west coast, including harbours - there are no Maui's dolphin on the east coast.

An Advisory Group of stakeholders is assisting in preparing the plan. Shortly, an Expert Panel will assess all of the scientific information on the dolphins and activities that are potential threats. This exercise is to identify all threats that need to be managed if the very small Maui's (and slightly larger but still endangered Hector's) dolphin population is to recover.

Following this threat assessment exercise, regional stakeholder groups will be formed to help propose management responses in the regions where Maui's and Hector's dolphins are found and assessed as being at risk.

Marine Protected Areas

The MPA Policy was released on Sunday 29 January at Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium in Auckland. Information is available at www.biodiversity.govt.nz. The MFish office also has a handout available that outlines the process.

Officials are currently working on "stage one" implementation tasks. This involves developing a nationally consistent approach to classification and a protection standard to be used for MPA planning. MFish and DOC will be consulting with interested parties on the classification approach and protection standard in the next few months.

MFish staff and other interested parties attended a meeting of the group that will undertake a process of identifying proposed marine protected areas in the Hauraki Gulf.

Aotea (Great Barrier) Island

The Minister of Conservation has requested concurrence from the Minister of Fisheries on his decision to establish the Aotea (Great Barrier Island) proposed marine reserve. The Ministry anticipates completing concurrence advice by May/June 2006. All submissions and supporting information put forward during the Department of Conservation's consultation is being considered by the Ministry. On 24 March 2006, the Ministry held a hui with tangata whenua on the island to clarify some matters regarding customary take in the vicinity of the proposed reserve.

The Department of Conservation received many submissions from recreational and commercial fishing interests when providing advice to their minister. The Ministry of Fisheries will be relying on that information when providing concurrence advice to the Minister of Fisheries.

Ohiwa Harbour temporary closure

The Ministry has received a request from Te Runanga o Ngati Awa to extend the temporary closure to the take of green-lipped mussels within Ohiwa Harbour. The Harbour had been closed for two years up until 5 December 2005. Consultation with the public ended on 28 February 2006. The Ministry is now collating and analysing submissions in preparation for a final advice paper.

Freshwater Forum

Te Arawa hosted a hui on 23-24 March to determine whether there was interest amongst North Island iwi representatives to pull together a forum to discuss freshwater fisheries issues with MFish. The hui resolved to support the creation of such a forum, and a working party was established to determine how this might best be put in place. MFish staff attended the hui and the working party meeting to support this initiative.

Te Uri O Hau Oyster Reserve Regulations

A hui was held at the end of February 2006 with local Regional Councils, Ministry for Environment, and Department of Conservation to discuss the Initial Position Paper and Aquaculture management. The paper describes how the Ministry of Fisheries proposes to meet the Crown obligations to Te Uri O Hau to develop oyster reserve regulations for six areas of the northern Kaipara Harbour.

Te Uri O Hau requested more time to consider the proposals outlined in the paper. MFish agreed in consultation with the Te Uri O Hau Governance Entity, to extend the timeline for submissions until Monday 1 May 2006.

Snapper Stock Assessment Working Group meeting in March

NIWA presented the preliminary results from a snapper longline Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) analysis using commercial fishing data from the last 15 years. This showed that the amount of longline fishing effort (for example number of hooks set) is nearly halved compared to the early 1990s. This is mainly due to the downturn in the "iki jime" snapper market in Japan. The preliminary analysis also showed that CPUE had improved by nearly 40% compared to the mid 1990s. Some members of the Working Group considered it likely that most of this increase was due to changes in commercial longlining fishing practices, rather than an actual increase in stock abundance.

Results from the annual otolith (the ear bones inside a fish's head) aging programme from snapper sampled from the commercial fish processing sheds were also presented. This showed that it is important to now collect samples year-round because longline fishing effort is now more evenly spread throughout the year.

A meeting will be held with the snapper modelling scientists in May to begin planning for the next SNA1 tagging programme. A key issue will be to ensure that most snapper longline and Danish seine fishing vessels report catch by latitude and longitude so that more detailed information can be obtained for the tagging programme on the degree of mixing and movement of snapper.

Pelagic news

Proposal for introducing albacore tuna into the QMS

MFish is preparing final advice to the Minister on its proposal for introducing albacore tuna into the QMS on 1 October 2007. Submissions on the proposal closed on 10 March and these are currently being evaluated with the Minister's decision expected sometime in May.

Pelagic Fisheries Working Group meetings

The Pelagic fisheries working group met in March to discuss research reports. New stock assessments are proposed for kahawai and northern trevally (TRE 1). Techniques were assessed to best describe trends in abundance of these species over time, information that is crucial for any new stock assessment. Trends of relative abundances were assessed for trevally and kahawai using aerial sightings data, and for kahawai by using trawl and set net catch rates (however these projects require further work before any useful index of abundance will be available for new stock assessments).

Another item concerned using genetic identification to differentiate between two species of bluefin tuna (samples of specimens thought to be either Pacific or Northern bluefin were found to be Pacific bluefin, confirming the species to be the predominant if not the only one of the two species to be found in New Zealand fisheries waters). Another report discussed factors affecting swordfish catch rates (a good understanding of environmental influences on catch rates is being achieved and these data will be useful for assessing the western and central Pacific stock {see below}). The working group continues its work with meetings on 12 and 13 April.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) stock assessment meetings

The stock assessment sub committee of the WCPFC is to hold meetings during August for developing a regional stock assessment for swordfish. The assessment is timely as catch during the past ten years has doubled in comparison to the previous twenty five years. It is hoped to develop a regional model of population dynamics for swordfish. Crucial to developing a suitable model will be plausible explanations of the movement patterns of swordfish in the south Pacific as well as developing a robust index of abundance for swordfish throughout its considerable range. The New Zealand catch rate information will be an important component in developing this index.

If you would like more information on any of the matters discussed in this update, please contact Sharon Dawbin at MFish's Auckland office on (09) 820 1990.