

Hon Phil Heatley
Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture



Media Statement

26 September 2011

Changes to fishing catch limits announced

Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister Phil Heatley has today announced changes to fishing catch limits and other management controls in a range of fishstocks managed under the Quota Management System (QMS).

Mr Heatley says he considers the best available scientific and management information as well as submissions from customary, recreational and commercial fishers, environmental groups and the public before making these decisions.

"Good fisheries management requires a continuing process of review and adjustment using the best scientific research and information we have," he says.

"Catch limits move up and down to take account of changes in the abundance of a fishstock and make sure fishing is kept at sustainable levels. There is also a need to adjust other management controls from time to time to make sure the QMS is working effectively."

A range of fisheries were reviewed and changes have been made to both commercial catch limits and recreational allowances. The affected stocks are hoki, orange roughy, black cardinalfish, scampi, blue cod, bluenose, kingfish, ribaldo, rig and Pacific bluefin tuna.

Some of the key catch limit decisions are.

The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for hoki will be increased by 10,000 tonnes from 120,000 to 130,000 tonnes.

Mr Heatley said he was pleased to announce this increase to reflect the continued improvement in stock status.

"The Ministry's science programme has confirmed that the hoki fishery has now fully rebuilt following the declines seen in the late 1990s. This is another positive example of good fisheries management in practice, where we were prepared to make the tough calls in terms of reductions to catch limits but are now reaping the benefits.

"The science also indicates that the hoki fishery could support an even greater catch increase, but it is important that we act responsibly so I have agreed to a more modest increase."

Both the western and eastern hoki stocks will be surveyed later this year and the results of these scientific surveys will inform a further stock assessment in 2012.

A decrease has been announced in the catch limits for two orange roughy stocks. Mr Heatley said that although these fisheries were being managed for long-term sustainability, not all were at optimal levels.

"To address this I have decided to make reductions to the catch limits for two orange roughy fisheries - the Chatham Rise fishery and the fishery on the east Coast of the North Island.

These reductions will have a significant impact on fishing operators and I appreciate their continued commitment to work with the Ministry to rebuild these fisheries."

The TACC for bluenose has been reduced.

"These initial reductions represent the beginning of a three-year staged reduction to ensure rebuilding of bluenose fisheries," Mr Heatley says.

"Phasing the reductions will not jeopardise the future of the stock and will give commercial fishers time to adjust their fishing operations. The reductions are expected to rebuild the bluenose stocks to healthy levels within best practice timeframes."

In recent years a significant recreational fishery has developed off the west coast of the South island for Pacific bluefin tuna. The TAC for this stock has been increased to accommodate an increased allowance for recreational fishing in order to reflect this development.

Other management controls announced today include changes to recreational bag limits for all bluenose stocks and for some blue cod stocks, adjustments to the penalties for fishing above TACC limits (deemed values) for several species caught commercially, and administrative changes to the seabird mitigation rules that apply to commercial surface longline fishing.

Catch limit changes take effect on 1 October 2011. Other changes will come into effect on or before 1 May 2012 and the public will be alerted to these changes when they are made.

Further information on the changes will be made available at www.fish.govt.nz.

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