



Office of Hon Nathan Guy

MP for Otaki

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Racing

B15-328

Dear Stakeholder

Decisions on Fisheries Regulations

I write to inform you of the Government's decisions that have been made following a review of various fisheries regulations earlier this year. The regulations resulting from these decisions will come into effect on 20 December 2015, and relate to:

- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission shark protection measures;
- Recreational blue cod fishery in Doubtful, Thompson, and Bradshaw Sounds;
- Removal of fee charged to fishing vessel operators for observers to supervise return of fish to the sea, and;
- The Akaroa Harbour Taiāpure.

The changes follow a period of public consultation, and release of discussion documents by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). More detail on each decision is set out below.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission shark protection measures

The Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001, will be amended to ban the use of wire traces and shark lines by commercial longline fishers, targeting tuna and billfish, to reflect the outcomes of the most recent meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. New Zealand is a member of the Commission and has an obligation to implement its agreed outcomes.

Recreational blue cod fishery in Doubtful, Thompson, and Bradshaw Sounds

The regulations relating to blue cod fishery in Fiordland will be amended to reopen the recreational blue cod fishery in Doubtful Sound, and set a bag limit of 1 for Doubtful, Thompson, and Bradshaw Sounds. Doubtful Sound has been closed to recreational blue cod fishing since 2005. There is some evidence that continuing this closure is an unnecessary barrier to recreational utilisation. There are concerns about the viability of the blue cod population in Doubtful Sound if it is reopened to fishing. However, any risks to sustainability are likely to be managed by setting a low bag limit and continuing to monitor the fishery. Reopening Doubtful Sound with a low bag limit allows blue cod caught incidentally within Doubtful Sound to be kept, while still providing strong incentive for fishers to utilise the more productive fishery on the outer coast where the bag limit is higher.

Anecdotal information suggests that fishing effort displaced from Doubtful Sound since the closure was implemented is leading to overfishing in Thompson and Bradshaw Sounds. Taking a proactive approach to managing this effort by accepting a reduction in the bag limit now may help avoid stricter measures in the future, such as a full fishery closure.

Overall, reopening Doubtful Sound and setting a daily bag limit of 1 blue cod across Doubtful, Thompson, and Bradshaw Sounds achieves the best balance in providing for utilisation while ensuring sustainability, and is likely to confer the highest long term benefits.

Removal of fee charged to fishing vessel operators for observers to supervise return of fish to the sea

The \$28 fee charged to fishing vessel operators for each occasion on which fish are returned to the sea under observer supervision, will be removed. The provision in the Fisheries Act 1996 that provides for observers to supervise fish returned to the sea will remain unchanged.

The fishing industry pays for all observer coverage either through cost recovery levies imposed on quota holders or via a daily charge imposed directly on vessel operators. Retaining an additional charge for what is a routine component of an observer's duties is anomalous and there are no benefits to retaining the charge. The costs to MPI associated with administering the process of collecting the fee are approximately double the amount recovered. Removing the fee will result in cost savings for both MPI and the fishing industry.

The presence of a fee may act as a disincentive for fishers to make use of the provision enabling observers to supervise the return of fish to the sea. Revoking the fee will remove these disincentives and should result in more accurate reporting of fish taken in New Zealand's waters. This, in turn, will be of benefit to fisheries managers by enabling more accurate monitoring of the quantities involved.

Akaroa Harbour Taiāpure

The Fisheries (Akaroa Harbour Taiāpure) Order 2006 will be amended to incorporate the area between Elephant Head and Manukatahi Stream (the Additional Area), approximately 55 ha, into the Akaroa Harbour Taiāpure. This amendment will implement:

- An outstanding recommendation of a Tribunal of the Māori Land Court (the Tribunal); and
- Ministerial recommendations and decisions made by the then Minister of Conservation, Hon Dr Nick Smith.

The Additional Area is part of an area known as the Dan Rogers area, which had been the subject of a marine reserve application at the time the Taiāpure was established. In his 2013 decision regarding the marine reserve application, the then Minister of Conservation, Hon Dr Nick Smith, decided to exclude the Additional Area. He recommended it instead be included in the Taiāpure. This is consistent with the 2005 recommendation of the Tribunal that the Dan Rogers area should be included in the Taiāpure should it not be established as a marine reserve.

The regulations that currently apply to the Taiāpure will also apply to the additional area.

Copies of the discussion documents relating to all these decisions are available on the MPI website (www.mpi.govt.nz). I would like to thank everyone who took the time to make submissions or were involved in the discussions that occurred during consultation.

Yours sincerely



Hon Nathan Guy
Minister for Primary Industries