

2013

(Eichelsheim, J., 2013)

# Snapper bag limits announce

17 September 2013

The Minister for Primary Industries Nathan Guy today announced new bag and size limits for recreational fishers in SNA 1, the snapper fishery management area stretching from North Cape to East Cape.

A massive public outcry over proposed changes to recreational bag and size limits in SNA 1 resulted in an unprecedented number of public submissions, most of them via recreational fishing advocacy group LegaSea's website [www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz)

LegaSea has been steadfast in its opposition to cuts in recreational bag limits without proportional adjustments to the commercial harvest.

Heeding the public's message, the Ministry has announced changes to the management of SNA 1 that should satisfy most, if not all, of the region's recreational fishers. The decision appears to tread a middle road that, while still going some way to meeting the Ministry's goal of rebuilding snapper stocks in SNA 1 towards a nominal 40% of virgin biomass, more fairly shares the required reduction in the total allowable catch (TACC) between recreational and commercial sectors.

The commercial quota for SNA 1 remains unchanged, however the Minister has made the following commitments to improving the management of the commercial fishery as follows:

- Camera or observer coverage on 25% of all trawl vessels by 1 December 2013, with 100% coverage by 1 October 2015.
- Trialling the use of cameras to record and measure fish returned to the sea.
- Mandatory Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) on all commercial vessels by 1 October 2014.
- Introducing a "move on rule", where commercial fishers will move from fishing spots where a significant portion of catch is small juvenile fish.
- Implement a scientific tagging survey by 1 October 2014 to provide up to date and reliable information on the Snapper 1 stock. This will come with a cost of \$7 million and will be split 50/50 between the government and the commercial sector.
- Require commercial fishers to report all catch under the commercial legal size by 1 April 2014.
- Introducing a maximum size limit for commercial longline fishers. This will reduce commercial catch of large snapper. In general large snapper are too big for market, but are important to the recreational sector.
- Establishing a Management Strategy Group by the end of 2013 to develop long term plans for this fishery, involving both recreational and commercial representatives.

These measures highlight some commitment from the Ministry to begin to address commercial wastage and to ensure the snapper fishery continues its rebuilding phase.

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However, recreational fishers will also play their part in the rebuilding process with new a new reduced bag limit of 7 snapper (previously 9) and a new minimum size limit of 30cm (previously 27cm).

The 'allowance' set aside for recreational fishers has been lifted by 500 tonnes to 3050 tonnes recognising the growth in population and fishing effort while offering some headroom for future demographic changes in the SNA 1 region. Set at 2600 tonnes in 1996 but currently thought to be significantly more than that. This allowance is the portion of the TACC set aside for recreational fishers but the new allowance is less than the 3700 tonnes it is thought recreational fishers are currently taking.

These changes to recreational bag limits and minimum size will take effect on 1 April 2014.

– John Eichelsheim, September 17, 2013

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