



Office of Hon Phil Heatley

MP for Whangarei
Minister of Fisheries
Minister of Housing

2 March 2009

Dear Stakeholder

NEW CATCH LIMITS FOR CRA 3, CRA 4, CRA 7 AND CRA 8 RED ROCK LOBSTER FISHERIES FOR 1 APRIL 2009

This letter outlines final decisions on sustainability measures for four rock lobster fisheries: CRA 3 (Gisborne), CRA 4 (Wellington/Hawke Bay), CRA 7 (Otago), and CRA 8 (Southland).

Background

On 15 December 2008, the National Rock Lobster Management Group (NRLMG) provided initial advice on sustainability measures for the CRA 3, CRA 4, CRA 7 and CRA 8 rock lobster fisheries for the 2009-10 fishing year, beginning 1 April 2009. The NRLMG recommended that I:

CRA 3	Choose between <u>three</u> management options to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ decrease the Total Allowable Catch (TAC);▪ decrease the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC); and▪ decrease the recreational allowance (depending on the option chosen).
CRA 4	Adopt a management procedure to guide TAC setting; and Decrease the TAC and TACC.
CRA 7	Increase the TAC and TACC.
CRA 8	Increase the TAC, TACC and recreational allowance.

Copies of the NRLMG's Initial Advice and Final Advice are available on the MFish website at www.fish.govt.nz

Final Decisions

In reaching my final decisions on the proposals, I have taken into account submissions received on the NRLMG's initial advice, final advice provided by the NRLMG, and stock assessment information. I also had careful regard to the legislative provisions and my obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act).

CRA 3 (GISBORNE)

I have decided to reduce the CRA 3 TAC from 319 tonnes to 293 tonnes, and set a TACC of 164 tonnes from 1 April 2009. As part of this decision, I am also expecting to be provided a management procedure to guide TAC setting in CRA 3 for consideration in February 2010.

Best available information indicates the CRA 3 stock size is below target size. In addition:

- an index of abundance used in the fishery - standardised autumn-winter CPUE - suggests a stock that reached a recent minimum in 2002-03 and which has since gradually increased;
- the 2008 stock assessment results suggest a stock that has been static in recent years and is likely to decrease in stock size over the next four years under current catch levels.

It is clear to me, therefore, that further management action is needed to secure a rebuild of the CRA 3 stock. I consider the TAC cut, when combined with a management procedure to guide future TAC setting, should secure the necessary rebuild in the CRA 3 stock to the benefit of all fishery participants.

In making my decisions I was mindful of the cultural, social, and economic impact of the various management options on fishery participants and the community. I also took into consideration the management procedure being developed during 2009, which, if adopted, will guide TAC setting in the CRA 3 fishery from 1 April 2010 and will provide a management regime which is more responsive to changes in abundance in the fishery.

The TAC and TACC options I have chosen minimise the intensity of the short-term economic impact on the commercial sector and potentially the community. I recognise that further cuts may result from application of a management procedure. I have not reduced customary or recreational allowances at this time as there is no information to determine whether current catches are below, at or exceeding the current allowances. Consequently, there is no information to inform alternate allowance options and, in the case of recreational, inform whether alternate bag limits would also be required.

CRA 4 (WELLINGTON / HAWKE BAY)

I have decided to adopt a management procedure for three years to guide the setting of the TAC and TACC in CRA 4. Based on the operation of this management procedure, I have decided to reduce the CRA 4 TAC from 771 tonnes to 460 tonnes, and set a TACC of 266 tonnes from 1 April 2009.

Best available information indicates the CRA 4 stock has declined in recent years and the current CRA 4 stock size may be below target size. Management action is therefore desirable to secure the sustainability of the stock.

I am confident the CRA 4 Management Procedure will maintain the stock at or above, or move the stock towards, a level that can produce the maximum sustainable yield. The CRA 4 Rock Lobster Industry Association operated this procedure in 2007 and 2008 to guide voluntary commercial catch reductions with the purpose of halting declining abundance to ensure the ongoing economic variability of the fishery. Available information suggests the abundance indicator was higher in 2008-09 than in 2007-08.

I believe cutting only the TACC provides the greatest certainty that stock size will increase. I also understand this allocation approach is supported by the CRA 4 Rock Lobster Industry Association.

The allowances for customary and recreational will remain unchanged at this time as there is no information available to determine whether current catches are below, at or exceeding the current allowances and therefore no information to inform alternate allowance options. I note the voluntary amateur bag limit implemented by some fishing clubs in CRA 4 and the support by some hapu in the region for similar restraint in customary permit issuing. I consider these to be responsible measures implemented in an effort to help secure the sustainability of the fishery.

CRA 7 (OTAGO)

I have decided to increase the CRA 7 TAC from 143.88 tonnes to 209 tonnes, and set a TACC of 189 tonnes from 1 April 2009.

The setting of the TAC for CRA 7 is guided by a management procedure adopted by the previous Minister of Fisheries in March 2008. Best available information indicates the current CRA 7 stock is well above the target stock size. There is no information to suggest I should not be guided by the CRA 7 Management Procedure for the 2009-10 fishing year and I am confident the CRA 7 Management Procedure will maintain an average stock size well above the target level.

The allowances for customary and recreational remain unchanged at this time as best available information suggests the existing allowances are not being caught.

CRA 8 (SOUTHLAND)

I have decided to increase the CRA 8 TAC from 1053 tonnes to 1110 tonnes, and set a TACC of 1019 tonnes and a recreational allowance of 33 tonnes from 1 April 2009.

The setting of the TAC for CRA 8 is guided by a management procedure adopted by the previous Minister of Fisheries in March 2008. Best available information indicates the current CRA 8 stock is well above the target stock size. There is no information to suggest I should not be guided by the CRA 8 Management Procedure for the 2009-10 fishing year and I am confident the CRA 8 Management Procedure will maintain an average stock size well above the target level.

The allowance for customary catch is to remain unchanged at this time as best available information suggests the existing customary allowance is not being caught. Available information on recreational catch in CRA 8 is limited. Submitters considered recreational catch has increased and is now likely to be exceeding the allowance. One submitter recommended an allocation approach which NRLMG sector representatives subsequently agreed was a good way to approach setting the recreational allowance in the fishery at this time. On the basis of this, I have decided to increase the recreational allowance from 29 tonnes to 33 tonnes.

Yours sincerely



Hon Phil Heatley
Minister of Fisheries