



## NZ ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY COUNCIL

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### MEDIA RELEASE

02 MARCH 2009

### ROCK LOBSTER FISHERIES DECISIONS

**Rock lobster fisheries management decisions announced today by Minister of Fisheries, the Honourable Phil Heatley, have received a resounding endorsement from the NZ Rock Lobster industry Council (NZ RLIC). [[www.nzrocklobster.co.nz](http://www.nzrocklobster.co.nz)]**

Spokesman, *Daryl Sykes*, said today that so early in his first term as Minister Mr Heatley had been quick to grasp the economic and social importance of the New Zealand lobster fisheries and the need for credible data and good science to inform management decisions.

Mr Sykes said that the role of the National Rock Lobster Management Group in compiling final advice to the Minister ensured that none of the participating sector groups would be surprised by the decisions announced today or the reasons given for them.

*“Minister Heatley has successfully traversed the hard decisions as well as the easy ones in his first official function as Minister responsible for rock lobster fisheries. He has achieved a responsible balance between economic costs and benefits and the ongoing sustainability of rock lobster stocks. Industry is particularly pleased to see that the Minister has extended the application of Management Procedures to guide future decisions”,* said Mr Sykes.

*“Management procedures are well tested and proven in southern fisheries and to have the Minister formally adopt a CRA 4 Procedure initiated by the industry and also recommend the development of a procedure for CRA 3 is a significant advance in fisheries management generally”.*

*“The Ministers decisions have also consolidated an increasingly productive collaboration between industry and MFish and given proper acknowledgement to the roles and responsibilities of all legitimate extractive users of the resource”.*

The NZ RLIC estimates the overall economic benefit arising from today’s decisions could run as high as \$8.6 million in 2008/09, most of which will accrue to Otago and Southland regional economies.

The CRA 3 (Gisborne/East Coast) fishery is the only one in which commercial catches are effectively reduced and Mr Sykes conceded that industry had mixed feelings about the level of the reduction.

*“It’s fair to say that most of the CRA 3 industry personnel are more optimistic about the status of the stock than evidenced by the 2008 scientific assessment but to be fair to the Minister, CRA 3 was always going to be the hard decision. We will take it on the chin and put our energy into the development of a Management Procedure and make further attempts to assist MFish Compliance to constrain the unacceptable levels of fish thieving that are occurring in some parts of the fishery”,* said Mr Sykes.

### **Decision in Detail:**

#### **THE GISBORNE/EAST COAST – CRA 3 – ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY**

The TAC/TACC decision announced today again relies on cuts to commercial catches to further rebuild CRA 3 stock abundance. Commercial catch limits reduced from 327 tonnes to 190 tonnes in the period 2003 to 2008 and the further 26 tonnes reduction for the 2009/10 season represents a significant economic cost to the regional economy.

However, the CRA 3 management option chosen by the Minister is one that best balances the economic cost to the region of a commercial catch reduction against the uncertainty of a continuing stock rebuild highlighted by the most recent scientific assessment.

The confirmation of a CRA 3 Management Procedure to guide future management decisions from 2010 is a decision supported by the rock lobster industry and one which should bind all sector groups into a more productive and cooperative dialogue during 2009. The CRA 3 industry has confidence in the management procedure approach now well established in other rock lobster fishery management areas and remains committed to the process of credible data and good science informing management decisions.

The problem of fish thieving still continues to detract from the quality of the CRA 3 fishing experience and industry will look for better ways to assist MFish Compliance in constraining illegal fishing activity.

#### **THE WELLINGTON/WAIRARAPA/HAWKES BAY – CRA 4 – ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY**

The CRA 4 industry remains confident and optimistic that the fishery is moving out of a prolonged period of decline most likely caused by a range of environmental factors to which the industry responded by voluntarily reducing commercial catches.

The Ministers decision to adopt the CRA 4 Management Procedure used by the CRA 4 industry to set voluntary commercial catch limits since April 2007 is one which consolidates a constructive working relationship between industry and MFish and ensures a well-managed rebuild of the fishery.

CRA 4 has considerable potential in terms of increased stock abundance and the Management Procedure which has guided the Ministers decision is one which will adjust commercial catch limits in response to agreed performance indicators whilst enabling commercial and non-commercial interests to further enhance the rate of rebuild using various voluntary initiatives. To date these have included in-season commercial closures and voluntary reductions to recreational bag limits and customary removals.

#### **THE OTAGO – CRA 7 – ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY**

The Otago rock lobster fishery has experienced considerable growth in stock abundance over several years and the operation of the CRA 7 Management Procedure continues to ensure that the fishery is managed and maintained well above accept statutory targets.

#### **THE SOUTHLAND – CRA 8 – ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY**

The rock lobster industry welcomes the modest increase in commercial catches agreed by the Minister of Fisheries. The Minister has reconfirmed the utility of the CRA 8 Management Procedure and accepted advice from industry as to how catch increases for the 2009/10 season will be allocated. The CRA 8 fishery has responded very well to a sequence of management interventions that commenced over ten years ago. The 2009/10 TAC/TACC decisions for CRA 8 (and for CRA 7) are examples of effort gaining its own reward when commercial participants actively support and contribute to stock rebuild programmes.

Ends:

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