

NEW ZEALAND MARINE SCIENCES SOCIETY

TE HUNGA MĀTAI MOANA O AOTEAROA



22 July 2019

Sustainability Review 2019
Fisheries New Zealand
Ministry for Primary Industries
PO Box 2526
Wellington 6140
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Submission to Fisheries New Zealand ***Review of sustainability measures for 1 October 2019 -*** ***Reporting requirements for amateur-fishing charter vessels***

This submission is made on behalf of the membership of the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS). It is made in good faith in my role as President of the NZMSS and in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Rules of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

NZMSS welcomes this initiative to bring catch reporting of amateur-fishing charter vessels in line with that of commercial fishing vessels. NZMSS generally supports the proposed reporting requirements for amateur-fishing charter vessel operators, but we suggest that this reporting should be extended to include all landed species (excluding small bait fish). Our detailed submission is attached.

Please contact me at the email address provided below for any further information regarding this submission.

Dr Nick Shears

Handwritten signature of Dr Nick Shears.

President
New Zealand Marine Sciences Society

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Review of sustainability measures October 2019 - Reporting requirements for amateur-fishing charter vessel operators

The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society

The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, known as “NZMSS”, was formed in 1960 as a constituent of the Royal Society of New Zealand, to encourage and assist marine science and related research across a wide range of disciplines in New Zealand and to foster communication among those with an interest in marine science.

NZMSS is a professional science body and a non-profit organization that provides access to and within the marine science community. We identify emerging issues through annual conferences, annual reviews, a listserv and our website <http://nzmsp.org/>. NZMSS membership covers all aspects of scientific interest in the marine environment and extends to the uptake of science in marine policy, resource management, conservation and the marine business sector. We speak for members of the Society on matters of interest on marine research in New Zealand and we engage with other scientific societies as appropriate. Our current membership comprises almost 300 members.

Our submission is consistent with the Royal Society of New Zealand Code of Ethics and Rules, in particular principles 2.1 Integrity and professionalism, 4.1 Compliance with the law and relevant standards, and 10.1 Protection of the environment (www.royalsociety.org.nz/organisation/about/code).

Submission

Over the last 10 years there has been an increase in charter vessels whereby recreational fishermen hire a commercial boat and operator to catch fish. These activities have been regulated under the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013, and since 2010, charter vessel operators have been required to submit information on the catch (number of fish caught and number retained) of eight species including bass, bluenose, hapuku, kingfish, rock lobster, southern bluefin and Pacific bluefin tuna in Fisheries Management Area (FMAs) 1-9, and blue cod in FMAs 2-8. For most species, with the exception of tuna, only the number of fishes retained is recorded. However, information on the size or weight of fish species caught is a necessary component of stock assessment and effective management of fish stocks.

NZMSS strongly supports the collection of additional information on amateur-fishing charter vessel catch for (1) the purpose of better quantifying the catch of the charter vessel component of the recreational fishery and (2) evaluating the relative impacts of this sector on fish stocks. This information is increasingly important to improving management of fish stocks in New Zealand at a time when fish stocks are under increasing pressure due to growing human populations and a changing climate.

Questions for submitters:

Do you agree with proposals to report the catch of additional species?

Yes. We strongly support the current MPI proposal to report the catch of:

Blue cod	All FMAs
Scallops	All FMAs
Snapper	All FMAs
Tarakihi	All FMAs

We agree with the concerns regarding the tarakihi and snapper catch, recognising that charter vessels may be contributing to a large proportion of the recreational catch. There is additional concern regarding the scallop fishery, which is currently closed in FMA 7 because of low biomass. By recording any scallops caught, the charter vessels can help assess the recovery of these stocks. Scallops are short lived species and there are size (length) limits. The estimated weight may be difficult to assess and perhaps fishers might be encouraged to provide additional information on size elsewhere on the form.

Do you think there are additional species for which catch should be reported?

Yes. To provide better information on this ultimately commercial component of the recreational fishing sector, NZMSS believe that charter vessels should report all landed species (excluding small bait fish such as jack mackerel). The new regulations will require the main target species (ie snapper, blue cod etc.) to be reported, so relatively little additional effort would be required from the charter boat operator to report any additional landed species. This would then provide a complete picture of charter vessel catch. Given the increased pressure on coastal fish stocks, with growing human populations as well as changing environmental conditions, it is difficult to forecast the future catch and impacts of the charter vessel fishery. Recording all catch would provide a proactive approach to inform better management of fish stocks in the future.

While NZMSS recommends all landed species to be reported, we also suggest some priority species for which catch should be reported. Various species of marlin and sharks are caught by the amateur big game fishery. These are not all tagged and released, especially during competitions where they are landed to enable official recording of their weight. These species are apex predators and have an important role to play in the pelagic marine ecosystem.

We also believe that catch of kahawai and paua should be reported. Kahawai are an important component of pelagic fish communities in Northland waters and supports a range of sea bird species. They are caught for bait and as a target species in amateur fishing charter trips, and are important kaimoana for Māori, recreational and subsistence fishers. Pāua are also important kaimoana and considered a taonga species. Pāua are targeted on charter fishing trips in parts of the country.

Do you agree with proposal to report the landed weight for species whose catch must be reported? If not why not?

Yes, NZMSS agree with the proposal to report aggregate weight of landed species. However, we recognise that this will only provide a crude estimate of average fish weight and size. Collecting information on individual fish size would be of greater value for fisheries management, so it would be useful to give skippers the opportunity to provide additional information on fish size, e.g. individual size measurements or size range of fish caught. This will provide extra information that will be useful in assessing the state of the fishery.

Other comments

NZMSS believes that the requirement for charter vessels to report landed catch should be extended to include fishing competitions, which can involve large volumes of fish that is currently unreported. Fishing competitions range in scale from local clubs to large commercial operations, so work would be needed to develop reporting requirements for fishing competitions. NZMSS urges Fisheries NZ to pursue this as a means of better quantifying and characterising recreational catch composition and volume.