

1 February 2007

Dear Stakeholder

SBW 6B SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES FOR 1 APRIL 2008

The Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) is reviewing the management measures for SBW 6B. The Initial Position Paper (IPP) provides you with MFish's initial position on the sustainability measures under review. If approved, these would take effect on 1 April 2008.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a summary of the issues in the IPP, so that you can decide if you would like to examine the issue further, and provide comment to MFish.

MFish is proposing that the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for SBW 6B be increased to 10,000 tonnes for the 2008-09 fishing year, with a Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 9,800 tonnes and an allowance of 200 tonnes for other sources of fishing related mortality.

SBW 6B is managed under a constant fishing mortality strategy whereby the TAC is based on stock assessments informed by annual catch-at-age data and regular acoustic surveys.

The results of the 2007 acoustic survey show a large increase in biomass. Estimates derived directly from the survey data indicate a biomass 10 times higher than that seen in the most recent *Tangaroa* survey in 2001, and 6-7 times higher than the previous industry survey in 2006. Results were presented to the middle depths fishery assessment working group (FAWG) in late 2007 and it was accepted that the estimated biomass was representative of the stock size. It appears that the increase in stock size is due to a very strong, slow-growing 2002 year class. This is supported by catch-at-age data which showed that 80% of the catch was estimated to come from the 2002 year class, and by the slow growth of the 2002 year class, which is consistent with growth rates seen in the strong 1991 year class in SBW 6I.

Consequently the FAWG agreed that the stock could support an increase in the TAC. Conservative yield estimates in the order of 10,000 – 20,000 tonnes were determined based on applying the accepted fishing mortality rate in SBW (0.2) to conservative estimates of biomass derived directly from the acoustic survey.

Following a review of the available information, MFish discussed possible management responses with industry. While industry are encouraged by the state of the fishery and

support an increase in the TAC, they also propose a measured approach to harvesting the 2002 year class. They support a TACC in the order of 8,000 to 10,000 tonnes and have agreed to undertake a further acoustic survey in 2008 to inform a revised stock assessment.

A copy of the full IPP for the above issues can be found on the MFish website www.fish.govt.nz under the "Consultations" section. If you do not have access to the website, or have any queries on the content of the IPPs, you can contact Tracey Steel at (04) 819-4585 or tracey.steel@fish.govt.nz to request a paper copy to be posted to you.

MFish welcomes written submissions on the proposals contained within the IPP. **Written submissions are due by Friday, 7 March 2008** and should be posted to Tracey Steel, Ministry of Fisheries, PO Box 1020, Wellington. Alternatively, electronic submissions can be emailed to tracey.steel@fish.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefan Leslie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stefan Leslie
Manager Deepwater Fisheries