



Office of Hon Phil Heatley

MP for Whangarei

Minister of Fisheries

Minister of Housing

H0326

Dear Stakeholder

Decisions on the proposed in-season TAC increase for Flatfish (FLA3) for the 2008-09 fishing year

This letter outlines my decisions on the in-season TAC increase for FLA3 for the 2008-09 fishing year.

I have been advised by some industry participants that the abundance of some species in the FLA3 stock complex was higher than they are able to utilise with available annual catch entitlements (ACE). Based on this, I asked the Ministry of Fisheries (the Ministry) to review options for an in-season increase of the TAC.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all submissions.

In making my decisions I have carefully considered the legislative provisions in the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act).

A copy of the Ministry's final advice paper is available on the Ministry's website at www.fish.govt.nz.

I have decided to increase the TAC for the 2008/09 fishing year from 1,617 tonnes to 1,974 tonnes. This is a decision made under section 13(7) of the Fisheries Act 1996.

With a change to the allowances for other sources of fishing-related mortality, and after considering the matters identified in section 21(1), I have decided to create additional ACE equivalent to the amount by which I would have increased the TACC. This additional ACE (amounting to 350 tonnes) will be released by FishServe to quota owners as soon as possible.

I am satisfied that an in-season increase of this magnitude adequately balances the utilisation needs with the sustainability concerns for in this fishery. The increase is based largely on a 15 year average of commercial catches between 1991/92 and 2005/06. I have noted the advice from the Ministry that catches at this level are likely to be sustainable based on available information.

I am advised that increasing the TAC could negatively impact on some of the species in the FLA3 stock complex – notably the four flounder species. I understand that these flounder species are found in shallower water and around river mouths. I expect the commercial fishing industry to be responsible with the increased ACE created by

my decision and to use this additional ACE to avoid additional effort in these shallow waters beyond that currently employed.

In making this decision I was very aware that the Ministry is undertaking work that will establish an appropriate assessment model for FLA3. This work will determine the management strategy most appropriate for these stocks including:

- the appropriate base TAC;
- a monitoring programme; and
- a decision rule for in-season increases to the TAC

I am aware that many submitters wished me to, in addition to the in season increase, make a permanent increase in the TAC for the 2009/10 fishing year. I believe it is inappropriate to make such a decision until the above work is completed. I expect the Ministry to continue work on this assessment model in time for the 2010/11 fishing year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Heatley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end of the last name.

Hon Phil Heatley
Minister of Fisheries