

The Bite

News from MFish NOVEMBER 2007

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Managing a deepwater fishery

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New Zealand Government



Ministry of

Fisheries

Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa



Welcome

Our seafood industry cannot win the game of being the world's lowest-cost protein producer. However, we can and do compete very well in the game of producing top-end seafood products for top-end markets.

Increasingly, parts of that top-end game – markets in the EU, North America and in North Asia – are demanding safe and environmentally sustainable products. So to stay in the game, we must demonstrate that our seafood is safe and ecologically sustainable.

The Ministry is progressing a range of initiatives to help ensure we can demonstrate ecological sustainability.

In my view, independent environmental certification, such as has been achieved in our hoki fishery, and product traceability systems are the key to our future success.

Towards this, the government is working with industry to improve our environmental performance; building on the success of our world-best-practice Quota Management System.

Our deep-sea fish stocks are one of the economic pillars of New Zealand commercial fisheries. They make up around three quarters of our annual fish catch by volume and about half our fish exports by value. Quota in these fisheries is also an important part of Māori Fisheries Settlement assets.

This issue of **The Bite** profiles one of our biggest deep sea fisheries – hoki. And we also look at a new initiative to increase patrols of deep sea fisheries in the Southern Ocean.

Much deep-sea catch is taken by foreign vessels chartered to New Zealand companies. There are recent suggestions these

vessels do not meet the same standards of catch reporting and environmental performance as our domestic fleet. This is a disturbing thought and I have requested a formal review of the situation. A Ministry/industry joint working group will be convened to work through the issues relating to this matter.

Performance standards around environmental sustainability are an important part of the new management plans for New Zealand fisheries. The Ministry is developing new standards around fish stock catch limits and habitat protection. These are expected out for consultation over summer.

Seabed protection measures are already in place across over thirty percent of our EEZ. These new Benthic Protection Areas, agreed with industry earlier this year, will be regulated in November 2007. They represent a significant step for marine protection in New Zealand. Now the government is turning its attention towards developing a network of Marine Protected Areas in our inshore waters.

Meanwhile, the high seas area adjoining our EEZ is now starting to be managed through the developing South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. October 1, 2007 saw the introduction of new reporting and marine protection measures for this area.

Together, all this work will help ensure the ongoing sustainability of our fish stocks, their habitats and the wider marine ecosystem.

This work will not only ensure we have ecologically sustainable fisheries, but also help ensure we have a successful industry selling our seafood into top-end markets.

Stan Crothers
Acting Chief Executive



Hoki – managing a deepwater fishery

The Ministry of Fisheries and the Deep Water Group Ltd are confident that the hoki fishery will remain one of New Zealand’s top exports once new management controls take full effect.

There are two main hoki stocks, which are referred to as the western stock (west and south of the South Island) and the eastern stock (Cook Strait and Chatham Rise). While there is a current decline in the western stock, the eastern stock is staying at the target level.

Numbers within the western stock, historically seen as the country’s main hoki fishery, have been declining, despite cuts to the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC).

The decline is probably a result of extended periods of poor recruitment (not enough young fish joining the adult population). While the reasons for this are unknown, it is likely to be related to environmental factors, the effects of fishing, or a combination of the two.

MFish senior analyst Aoife Martin says collaboration with the Deep Water Group (DWG) has recently seen voluntary steps put in place that reflect the united efforts to improve the fishery as soon as possible. This is supported by large amounts of research and analysis undertaken every year by independent scientists, MFish staff and fishing industry scientists.



“The key is to get the fishery into a strong position so that when recruitment improves, both the fish stock and those fishing it, will benefit.”

From July 1 this year, the DWG put in place the following active management measures:

- Stricter adherence to the voluntary catch split arrangement, which restricts the amount of hoki taken from the western stock to allow it to recover
- Greater efforts to ensure fishing impacts on marine mammals and seabirds are kept to a minimum
- Real-time monitoring of the hoki fishery, with weekly reports that address:
 - Hoki catch against fishers' annual catch entitlements (ACE)
 - Sizes of individual fish in hoki catches – data is collected by MFish and industry observers
 - Impacts of fishing on seabirds.

The immediate priority is to rebuild the hoki western stock so that it reaches target levels.

MFish is positive about the collaboration with the DWG and is hopeful that recent initiatives will continue to improve the fishery.

Looking further ahead, MFish and the DWG are working together to develop a long-term management plan that focuses on rebuilding the hoki fishery and reviewing the research programme. The plan will build on current initiatives and will continue to focus on the necessary rebuild of the western stock.



HISTORY

- ▶ The hoki fishery was developed by Japanese and Soviet vessels in the early 1970s
- ▶ The catch reached 100,000 tonnes in 1977, but dropped to less than 20,000 t in 1978 when the EEZ was declared and limits were introduced
- ▶ From 1979 to 1986, the hoki catch in the EEZ was capped at 60,000 t until the introduction of the Quota Management System (QMS) in 1986
- ▶ Following the introduction of the QMS, the hoki Total

Allowable Catch (TAC) were set for a single fish stock (HOK1)

- ▶ From 1986, the hoki fishery expanded to a catch of 255,000 t in 1987–88
- ▶ Since 1990, the one hoki management area has been assessed as two biological stocks, with a voluntary catch split between east and west stocks agreed to between industry and the Minister of Fisheries
- ▶ Annual catch peaked at 269,000 t in 1997–98
- ▶ Catches have since declined, and the TACC was reduced from 250,000 t to 200,000 t in the 2001–02

fishing year, then to 180,000 t in 2003–04, and further to 100,000 t in 2004–05.

- ▶ The Hoki Fishery Management Company introduced a Code of Practice for hoki target trawling in 2001 with the aim of protecting small fish (less than 60 cm). This allows more fish to get bigger and breed before they are caught.

2006-2007

- ▶ In 2006, 42,000 t (product weight) of hoki was exported, with a value of \$156 million. Many of these exports go to China where the product is processed for re-export into Europe and the USA.

Hoki



Reviewed hoki TACC and deemed value for 2007/08

- The hoki TACC has been reduced from 100,000 to 90,000 tonnes.
- The Minister of Fisheries has also requested that industry limit their harvest from the western stock to 25,000 t. This means an immediate reduction by nearly 50% from the western stock, which the Minister believes is needed to rebuild this stock to its target level.
- The harvest of the eastern stock will increase by 5,000 t. The Minister requested that this additional fishing occur in the Cook Strait portion of the eastern stock, to protect the juvenile grounds on the Chatham Rise.
- Equally important, the Minister raised the hoki deemed values (payment for fish caught above a fisher's entitlement) to significantly reduce the chance that catch limits will be exceeded.

- ▶ The TACC was 100,000 t in 2006-07 and has recently been set at 90,000 t for the 2007/08 fishing year.
- ▶ Re-building the hoki fishery is a top priority for MFish and industry.

SEASON

- ▶ The main hoki fishery has traditionally operated from mid-July to late August on the West Coast of the South Island where hoki aggregate to spawn. A second major spawning fishery occurs in Cook Strait, part of the eastern stock, where the season runs from late June to mid-September. Small catches of spawning hoki are taken from other spawning

grounds. Outside the spawning season there is a substantial fishery on the Chatham Rise and in the sub-Antarctic.

LOCATION

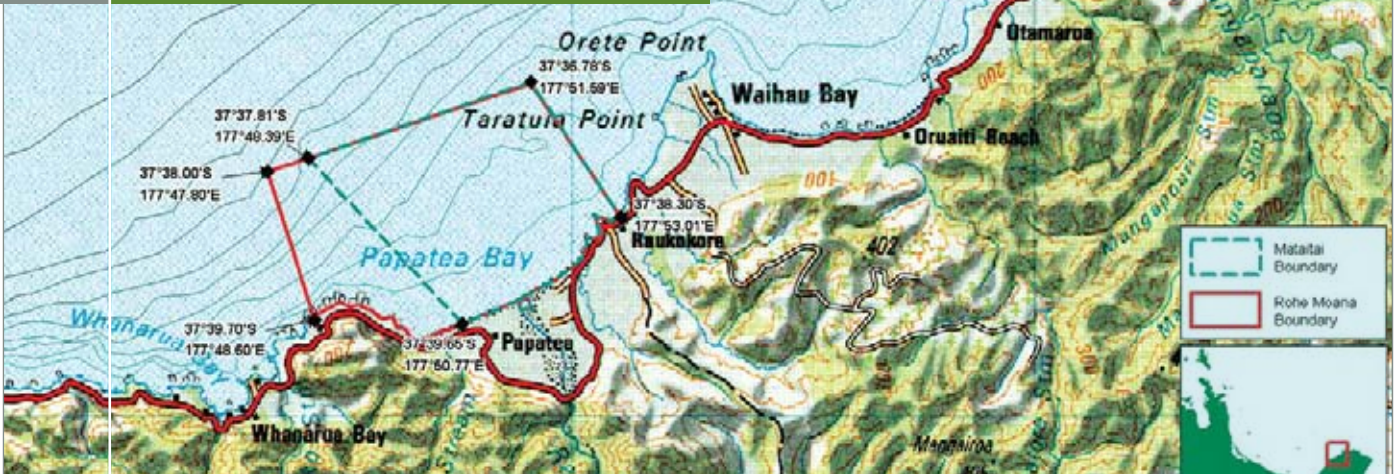
- ▶ Hoki are widely distributed throughout New Zealand waters, from depths of 10 metres to over 900 m. The greatest abundance is between 200 m and 800 m on the Chatham Rise and on the Campbell Plateau in the sub-Antarctic during most of the year.
- ▶ Large adult fish are generally found deeper than 400 m, while juveniles are more abundant in shallower water

SPAWNING/BIOLOGY

- ▶ Hoki spawn from late June to mid-September and females release several batches of eggs within a season
- ▶ Not all hoki of mature size spawn each year
- ▶ Growth is fairly rapid initially, with juveniles reaching a length of about 30 cm at the end of their first year.
- ▶ Males grow to about 115 cm maximum total length, while females grow to a maximum of 130 cm total length and can weigh up to 7 kg.



Raukokore Mātaitai Reserve extended



The first extension of a Mātaitai Reserve has been approved by the Minister of Fisheries Jim Anderton for the Raukokore Mātaitai Reserve along the eastern Bay of Plenty, near Te Kaha.

The extension encompasses the western side of Raukokore Bay and will increase the size of the Mātaitai Reserve from 19km² to 27km².

Jim Anderton says the extension will allow Te Whānau a Maruhaeremuri Hapū Trust Board to manage customary fishing more effectively.

Mātaitai reserves recognise traditional fishing grounds of tangata whenua that are important for customary food gathering.

“The extension increases the size of the reserve to include the Trust Board’s entire rohe moana (marine area), which local Tangata Kaitiaki/Tiaki (guardians) currently manage,” said Jim Anderton. “The extension was possible after an appeal relating to the boundaries of their rohe moana had been resolved.”

The MFish Spatial Allocations Team in Wellington is responsible for undertaking the mātaitai reserve application process and advising the Minister on applications. The Team’s manager, Randall Bess, says the Minister carefully considered the effect the extension would have on commercial fishers.

“The Minister decided it will affect a few, but the effects are

limited. The extension satisfied all relevant criteria in the Kaimoana Customary Fishing Regulations. Jim Anderton could be confident in deciding the extension will better provide for the customary interests of iwi and hapū in the area.”

The extension will have no effect on the ability of the local community to fish for non-commercial purposes. However, in the future the Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki for the Mātaitai Reserve may recommend bylaws that could have an effect on this ability. Any such recommendations will be considered on their merits and must be approved by the Minister of Fisheries.

The Mātaitai Reserve was established in 2005, and in 2006 Te Whānau a Maruhaeremuri Hapū Trust Board applied to the Minister to extend it.

WHAT IS A MĀTAITAI RESERVE?

A mātaitai reserve effectively allows tāngata whenua to manage local non-commercial fisheries, within set boundaries, in partnership with MFish.

Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki, nominated by the tāngata whenua, can manage their areas by recommending by-laws to the Minister

of Fisheries. By-laws may restrict or stop the taking of fish from within the whole or any part of a mātaimai reserve for any purpose the Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki considers necessary for ongoing sustainable management.

The Minister is ultimately responsible for New Zealand's fisheries, and any management plans recommended by a Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki must be approved by him before it takes effect.

MFish provides the Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki with management support and recommendations, and also provides advice to the Minister of Fisheries on any management proposal.

For this reason, a partnership approach between tāngata whenua and MFish is important.

ARE MĀTAIMAI RESERVES JUST FOR TĀNGATA WHENUA?

Controls on non-commercial fishing within mātaimai reserves must apply equally to all people, with only one exception: if a reserve is closed for general harvesting, the Tāngata Kaitiaki/Tiaki may approve the taking of seafood to meet the needs of the marae belonging to the tāngata whenua of the reserve.

There are currently six mātaimai sites across New Zealand – a 10 km stretch of the Mataura River in Southland, Te Whaka a te Wera (Paterson Inlet) at Stewart Island, Koukourarata and Rapaki Mātaimai Reserves near Lyttleton, Raukokore near Te Kaha and the two-part Moremore Mātaimai Reserve near Napier.



CONSERVING FISHERIES ON THE HIGH SEAS

Interim measures have just been introduced to conserve and manage fisheries in the South Pacific high seas following the fourth meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) in New Caledonia.

SPRFMO is made up of countries that have an interest in high seas fishing in the South Pacific, including New Zealand (the high seas are defined as areas that are not controlled by nations' Exclusive Economic Zones).

Twentyseven nations supported the interim measures that came into play on October 1. They include:

- 100% observer coverage for bottom trawling fisheries.
- Minimum standards for implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems.
- Minimum 10% observer coverage for pelagic fisheries and bottom fisheries other than bottom trawling.
- Standards for the collection, reporting, verification and exchange of catch and effort data.
- Freeze on fishing effort within pelagic fisheries at average 2002 - 2006 levels.
- Freeze on trawl fishing footprint, and a requirement for impact assessments for bottom fisheries.
- Minimum standards for implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems.

- Minimum 10% observer coverage for pelagic fisheries and bottom fisheries other than bottom trawling.

MFish International Manager Jane Willing says the interim measures were developed to reduce impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems in the South Pacific, and to gather information which will improve the understanding of these ecosystems.

Jane says SPRFMO also adopted guidelines (Benthic Assessment Framework) for nations to prepare management plans and assessments for proposed bottom fishing activities in the area.

The guidelines were drawn up by the MFish Science Group and NIWA. Both groups are continuing to expand these guidelines into a detailed Benthic Assessment Standard, which will be tabled for consideration and adoption at the next SPRFMO international meeting in Ecuador next March.

Jane says New Zealand has made an enormous investment to develop an effective Regional Fisheries management Organisation (RFMO) in the South Pacific.

SPRFMO office sited in Wellington

The SPRFMO Interim Secretariat is being set up in Wellington and Dr Robin Allen from the American Tropical Tuna Commission has been appointed as Executive Secretary, starting in late October.

The Secretariat is independent from the NZ Government and will report to the states participating in the negotiations. It will make sure the measures are carried out smoothly and efficiently.

Dr Allen's priorities will be to provide the administrative support for the implementation of SPRFMO's interim measures, including managing data, documents and a website, and organising meetings.

In time SPRFMO will manage non-highly migratory fisheries in the South Pacific high seas, including deep sea fish stocks such as orange roughy and pelagic species such as jack mackerel.

For more information on the wider role of SPRFMO, please refer to <http://www.southpacificrfmo.org/>

Fishery officers in the Southern Ocean



Boarding trawlers in sleet and snow was all part of the job for five MFish staff working on board the *HMNZS Te Mana* in the Southern Ocean in September.

The operation was focused on the southern blue whiting fishery, deep in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone, near the Campbell Islands, 500 kilometres south of Bluff. Napier-based fisheries investigator Gary Wright was on board and recorded the highlights of this operation in sub-Antarctic waters.

We join Gary and the MFish staff two days out of port with all the gear tested and adjusted for Southern Ocean conditions, looking forward to getting to work.

"On the third day we came upon the fleet of seven foreign charter vessels which ranged in size from 70 m to 104 m and all of which were fishing within an eight square nautical mile area."

"The southern blue whiting fishery is an intensive spawn fishery. Large aggregations allow 25,000 to 30,000 tonnes

of fish to be caught in very localised areas over a couple of months."

"Inspecting such large vessels is not an easy task given their sheer scale, and inspections take on average three to four hours to complete."

"During the first few days we managed to board five of the eight foreign charter vessels that were fishing southern blue whiting and found some minor breaches of fisheries regulations."

"Due to an advancing depression and 60 knot winds we decided to seek calmer waters in the relative shelter of the Auckland Islands, where three scampi trawlers were fishing."

"The Auckland Islands are renowned as a cold and desolate place and they didn't disappoint. Short, sharp swells at four metres and 40 knots of wind prevented boardings while the scampi vessels were fishing. Conveniently, all three were found later in the day in Carnley Harbour on the south-eastern side of Auckland Island. While being a little shocked to see us, all were impressed that we had made it to the Auckland Islands to see them."

"We again steamed overnight towards the Pukaki Rise, to the east, where we had identified two trawlers fishing for ling and hake."

PROJECT PROTECTOR

Patrolling remote fishing grounds will increasingly become a standard part of MFish Compliance business with the introduction to service of the Project Protector fleet says manager maritime operations Gary Orr.

Under Project Protector the Navy has seven new ships coming into service over the next 12 months – the first one *HMNZS Canterbury* was commissioned in June this year. Two 85 metre offshore patrol vessels and four 55m inshore patrol vessels will make up the rest of the fleet.

Gary says until recently most of MFish's patrolling has had to be land based.

"Previously we have not had the opportunity to regularly go to sea for extended periods. The new patrol vessels will mean that some types of offending will more readily be detected using information generated by at-sea patrolling."


"With the upgraded RNZAF P3 Orion aircraft providing information on vessel whereabouts and activity, the monitoring and surveillance work will be increasingly effective. This is going to make a big difference to the way we operate."

"The type of operation we just completed in the Southern Ocean will be much more common."


"In the past there has been the opportunity to offend in isolated places. We will shortly have the capability to regularly reach all parts of the coastline and remote parts of our Exclusive Economic Zone, and we'll be watching."

"The public can take a great deal of confidence there will be this extra protection for New Zealand's valuable fisheries."


"Those playing by the rules should be greatly comforted. Those playing against the rules should watch out."



"Conditions on this day were the worst which we had encountered with five to seven metre swells and 30 knots of wind. Because of the conditions, only one of the vessels was inspected."



"I found the trip a worthwhile and rewarding experience, largely due to the expertise and commitment of the Captain and crew of *HMNZS Te Mana* and the professional and tenacious attitude of the MFish staff."



Draft plan to further protect sharks from over-fishing



New Zealand has taken significant steps to ensure the sustainability of our fishstocks, including sharks, and continues to work on new ways to protect sharks from over-fishing.

A National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks went out for consultation with stakeholders in October, with submissions due back in February 2008.

MFish policy analyst Andy Hill says the draft plan is part of New Zealand's response to global concerns about threats to sharks from fishing that have been highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Andy says the draft plan will look at all fishing threats to sharks.

"New Zealand is in the fortunate position that we have a comprehensive fisheries management system."

"Sharks that are targeted by fishers have an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) set under the Quota Management

System (QMS). This allows for fishing now and ensures there are enough fish left to keep a sustainable population to fish in the future. The majority of New Zealand's shark catch falls into that category."

"There are other measures for protecting sharks that are rare or threatened. White-pointer sharks were protected from fishing this year under the Wildlife Act."

"One of the actions under the draft plan is to protect basking sharks, the second largest of all sharks, as they are very vulnerable to overfishing."

The plan proposes a number of actions to improve the reporting of shark catch, and to identify areas of habitat that are important to sharks for spawning, pupping or as nursery grounds. Andy says better information will enable us to better manage our shark species. "Where a shark species is identified as being vulnerable to targeted fishing, catch limits can be carefully managed to reduce the risk of overfishing".

"As some sharks swim across oceans, New Zealand will work with other countries to collect information on the distribution and abundance of shark species and undertake wider research and management."

“The plan proposes further monitoring of wasteful fishing practices and processes to detect this. MFish will also assess measures to promote a more efficient use of each shark.”

A copy of the draft plan can be found on the MFish website www.fish.govt.nz under 'Consultations' on the left hand side of the home page. Submissions close on 1 February, 2008.

SHARK FISHING IN NEW ZEALAND

There are 112 species of sharks that are recorded in New Zealand and about 70 of these are caught by fishers.

Sharks are predators and many are the top of their food-chain. As a result, sharks are often less abundant than smaller fish lower down the food-chain. Many sharks are slow growing, mature later than other species and lay a small number of eggs or give birth to live young. These characteristics make them susceptible to over-fishing.

Elephant shark, ghost shark, pale ghost shark, rough skate, smooth skate, school shark, spiny dogfish and rig make up 85 percent of the annual shark catch by weight. These species are all managed under the QMS.

SHARK-FINNING – NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSE TO A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

In some nations sharks are caught specifically for their fins and are finned live at sea. It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act to remove the fins from a live shark at sea in New Zealand waters.

typically require fishers to take the whole shark back to land, including the fin and the body, rather than landing only the fin and discarding the body at sea. Storing the bodies of sharks onboard limits the storage space available for other more valuable fish species. These measures are intended to encourage fishers to develop markets for the bodies or to avoid taking the sharks in the first place.

New Zealand has taken a different approach, by setting sustainable catch limits, as with all other fish stocks, to ensure sharks are not over-fished. This means that each major shark fishery has a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) set in tonnes to allow for fishing, while leaving enough of each species in the water to breed and replace themselves. Fishers are required to report all fish caught to MFish and in this way each TAC is monitored.

How fishers process the fish they have caught is their decision, but if they choose to land only shark fins, they must report the entire weight of the shark caught for monitoring against their annual catch entitlement and the relevant TAC.

To make this process more practical 'conversion factors' are used to work out the weight of sharks caught from the weight of fins landed. For most sharks the conversion factor is 30. This means 10 kg of fins landed, multiplied by a conversion factor of 30, equals 300kg of shark reported against that fisher's annual catch entitlement. Some sharks have a different conversion factor – porbeagle shark (45), blue shark (48) and mako shark (59). Conversion factors do



WHITE-POINTER SHARKS ARE PROTECTED UNDER THE WILDLIFE ACT, PHOTO BOYD MCGREGOR.

Finning of dead sharks happens in some New Zealand fisheries, including in the tuna long-line fishery. Tuna are targeted with baited hooks and sharks are sometimes caught by mistake. Storing shark with the tuna in the hold has the potential to spoil the tuna flesh, so the sharks may be brought on board, killed and finned, and their bodies dumped back into the sea. The fins can then be sold.

Some countries, such as Australia, have chosen to put in place measures to limit shark finning. These measures

not apply just to sharks, but to all fish species that are landed in a filleted or processed state.

Analysis shows that between 21–27 percent of total shark catch in New Zealand is reported as discarded dead at sea. Between 68–73 percent of total shark catch is landed as processed meat. Approximately seven percent of the total shark catch is reported as being landed as fins only (based on data from the 2003/4 and 2004/5 fishing years).



Fisheries information available to everyone

Information about your fisheries has never been more available with the launch of the Fisheries Planning Pages on the MFish website www.fish.govt.nz in October.



"Before now, key facts about our fisheries could be difficult to find, but with these new pages, it's getting easier to see how each fishery is managed," says Nelson inshore fisheries manager Scott Williamson.

"Fisheries plans are about working with stakeholders to get the best value from our fisheries for all New Zealanders, and to do this everyone needs easy access to the same information," says Scott.

"Fisheries plans will see more focus on MFish working with stakeholders to set objectives to get the best value from each fishery. From there we can work together on ways to achieve these objectives for the least cost."

Scott says working with people involved in our fisheries is the key to managing fisheries better and increasing their value.

"The more we work with people who have an interest in each fishery, and the more feedback we get, the better the information and the management will be. It's definitely a work in progress."

Scott says to make fisheries plans practical, all 619 fish stocks have been placed in groups based on their similarities, how they are caught and in which region (for example West Coast North Island finfish, East Coast North Island shellfish, etc).

"This way we can develop fisheries plans, taking into account how people actually think about and use fisheries, without the need to prepare separate plans for similar species. It's about being sensible and keeping down costs."

MFish staff have collected information and prepared draft fisheries plans describing each fishery and how it is currently managed. These drafts are the starting point for working with stakeholders.

Scott says the Government, through standards, is setting some boundaries for fisheries plans.

MFish is currently completing the most important of these standards. "Standards will make how we manage our fisheries more transparent to everyone."

Scott says this year MFish intends working with stakeholders to develop new fisheries plans for five inshore fisheries, highly migratory species, and the deepwater and middle-depth areas.

"Over the next five years we'll be developing new fisheries plans covering all fisheries. Development of most fisheries plans will take about one year, with plans for some of the more complex fisheries taking up to two years."

"Everyone with an interest how our fisheries are managed should check out the new fisheries planning web pages on our website www.fish.govt.nz (click on 'Fisheries Plans' on the left of the homepage). Check back regularly, as these pages will develop over time and please let us know what you'd like to see."

"If you have any questions about fisheries plans, call the inshore team in Auckland, Napier, Nelson or Dunedin, the highly migratory species team in Auckland or the deepwater team in Wellington."



Aquatic photography competition

The Ministry of Fisheries nationwide photography competition is now open and we're calling for your best shots!

The inaugural competition aims to capture New Zealand's connection with sea and its environs and we're looking for images that celebrate this.

Participants are invited to take photos of events, scenes and experiences, which will help to create a visual record of our distinctive fishing culture.

"It will be a competition which speaks to the heart of a fishing nation" says competition organiser Shae Skellern.

Category winners, as well as the overall winner, will each receive vouchers for \$1000 worth of photography gear.

The competition intends to raise awareness of aquatic biodiversity and sustainable fishing practices within New Zealand and will culminate in an exhibition at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in March 2008.

Entrants can learn more about the competition and enter the competition on the MFish website www.fish.govt.nz (look under 'Hot Topics' on the right of the front page).



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