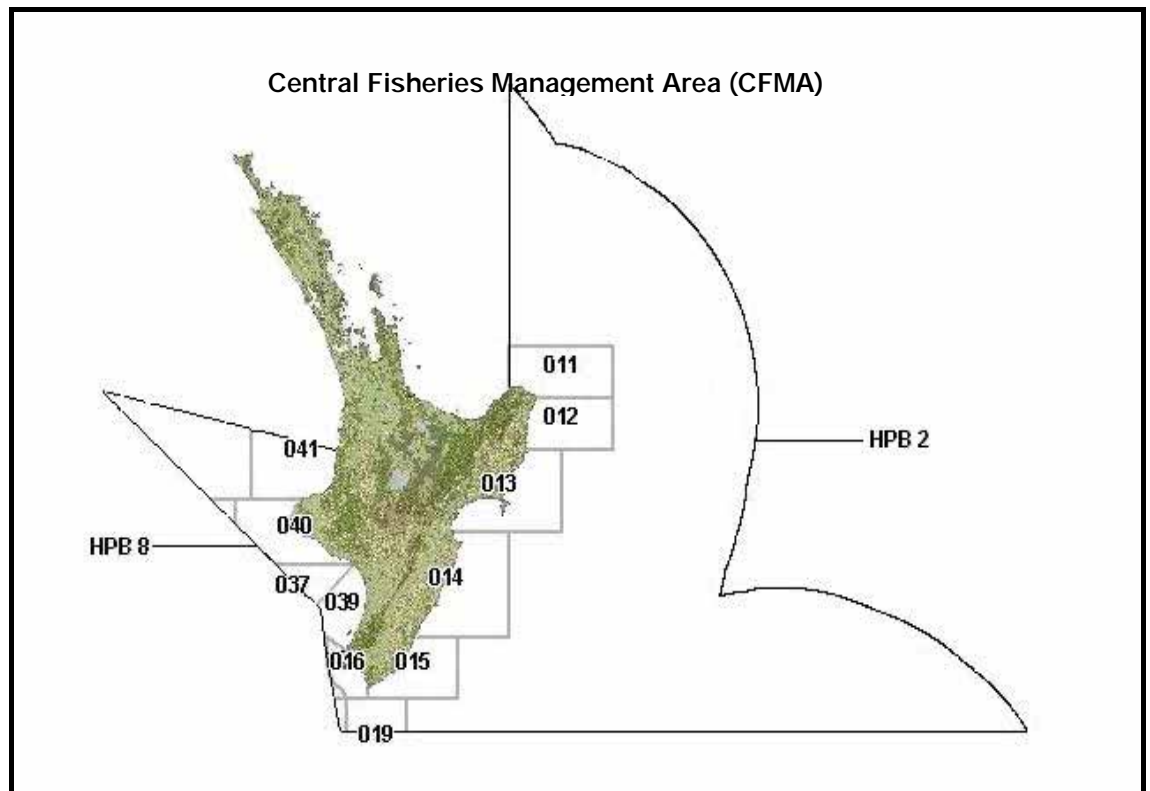


# LOCALISED DEPLETION OF HAPUKU/ BASS IN THE CENTRAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AREA – FINAL ADVICE



**Figure 1:** Map showing the Central Fisheries Management Area, (CFMA) which encompasses Hapuku/Bass Quota Management Areas HPB 2 and HPB 8, and the inshore statistical areas.

## Executive Summary

- 1 You are asked to make decisions on whether to amend the Fisheries (Central Area Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986 (the amateur fishing regulations) as they relate to the take of hāpuku/bass. Currently under Regulation 3A(4), a recreational fisher is able to take a combined maximum daily bag limit of five hāpuka/bass and kingfish in the Central Fisheries Management Area (CFMA).
- 2 An Initial Position Paper (IPP), released 12 March 2008, proposed four options in respect of reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass from popular non-commercial fishing areas in the Central Fisheries Management Area. (CFMA):
  - Option 1, the status quo, would not change the management of hāpuku/bass but would continue to monitor available information on the fishery;
  - Option 2 would introduce a maximum daily bag limit of three hāpuku/bass per person in the CFMA for recreational fishers;

- Option 3 would introduce a maximum boat limit of 15 hāpuku/bass per vessel in the CFMA for recreational fishers;
  - Option 4 would introduce an accumulation limit of one daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass per person in the CFMA for recreational fishers.
- 3 MFish recommends Option 1 (the status quo).
- 4 Between 2005 and 2007, MFish received multiple reports from non-commercial (ie, customary and recreational) fishing stakeholders of localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. The reports indicated localised depletion was caused by an increase in recreational fishing effort and was reducing non-commercial fishing values of the hāpuku/bass fishery. The reports requested management intervention to reduce or resolve localised depletion in the CFMA.
- 5 No independent information is available to verify whether reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass is occurring in the CFMA. In the IPP, MFish considered management intervention would only be appropriate if submissions revealed:
- widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is occurring in popular non-commercial fishing areas;
  - widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is caused by increased recreational fishing effort in these areas;
  - management intervention would increase the overall value of the non-commercial hapuku/bass fishery in the CFMA; and
  - other fishery stakeholders would not be negatively impacted by the chosen management intervention.
- 6 MFish considers submissions on the IPP **do not** provide widespread agreement on any of the matters listed above.
- 7 MFish notes prior to consultation on the IPP, non-commercial stakeholders reporting concerns were of the view that immediate action was required to reduce or resolve reported localised depletion. As summarised above however, wider consultation with fishery stakeholders has revealed a lack of agreement about the problem, its cause, and the appropriate solution. MFish therefore considers a cautious approach to amending recreational fishing regulations as they relate to hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.
- 8 Under the recommended option, Option 1, the hāpuku/bass fishery in the CFMA would be monitored and new information including stock status, catch distribution and recreational harvest, would be considered as it became available. Future reviews of management tools would likely be undertaken as part of a fisheries plan process.

## The Issue

- 9 MFish received multiple reports from non-commercial fishing stakeholders of localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. The reports suggested localised depletion was negatively affecting recreational fishing values.
- 10 The key fisheries management objectives for hāpuku/bass fisheries in the CFMA are: (i) to ensure sustainable utilisation; (ii) to achieve the maximum value and (iii) the credible management of the fishery. MFish believes reviewing hāpuku/bass management in the CFMA is appropriate to ensure these management objectives are met.

## Summary of Options

### *Initial Proposals*

- 11 The IPP proposed the following options:

**a) *Option one - status quo (no action):***

Option 1 would not change the management of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. MFish would monitor, and consider new, fishery information as it became available.

The amateur fishing regulations allow recreational fishers in the CFMA to take a combined daily bag limit of five hāpuku/bass and kingfish per person, with no more than three kingfish.

**b) *Option two - Introduce a recreational daily bag limit of three hāpuku/bass***

Under Option 2, an amendment would be made to the amateur fishing regulations limiting recreational fishers to a daily bag limit of three hāpuku/bass per person.

The amendment would reduce the maximum number of hāpuku/bass able to be taken per day by a recreational fisher in the CFMA from five to three. The amendment would not change the existing combined daily bag limit of five hāpuku/bass and kingfish per person, or the daily bag limit of three kingfish per person.

**c) *Option three - Introduce a recreational boat limit of 15 hāpuku/bass per vessel.***

Under Option 3, an amendment would be made to the amateur fishing regulations limiting the number of hāpuku/bass able to be possessed to 15 per vessel for recreational fishers.

On its own, Option 3 would reduce the number of hāpuku/bass able to be taken by recreational fishers on vessels carrying four or more fishers. It would not change the number of hāpuku/bass able to be taken by recreational fishers on vessels carrying three or less fishers.

If the maximum daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass is reduced to three (that is, if Options 2 and 3 are used together), the amendment would reduce the number of hāpuku/bass able to be taken by recreational fishers on vessels carrying six or more fishers. It would not change the number of hāpuku/bass able to be taken by recreational fishers on vessels carrying five or less fishers.

*d) Option four - Introduce an accumulation limit of one daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass*

Under Option 4, an amendment would be made to the amateur fishing regulations limiting the amount of hāpuku/bass recreational fishers can accumulate to one daily bag per person in the CFMA.

The amendment would limit the number of hāpuku/bass able to be possessed by any recreational fisher in the CFMA at any time to one daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass (that is, five hāpuku/bass if the bag limit is unchanged and three hāpuku/bass if Option 2 is adopted).

The amendment would not change the existing combined daily bag limit of five hāpuku/bass and kingfish per person, or the daily bag limit of three kingfish per person.

### *Final Proposal*

12 MFish recommends that you agree to:

- b) **retain** Regulation 3A(4) of the Fisheries (Central Area Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986 without amendment; and
- c) **note** MFish will monitor, and consider new fishery information as it becomes available for hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.

## **The Management Problem and Rationale**

### *Management Problem*

13 As noted above, between 2005 and 2007, MFish received multiple reports from non-commercial fishing stakeholders of localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. The reports suggested localised depletion was negatively affecting recreational fishing values.

14 The first reports in 2005 related solely to the Ranfurly Banks (in statistical area 11 – refer figure 1). Subsequent reports in 2006 and 2007 related to Ranfurly Banks and popular non-commercial areas off Gisborne (statistical areas 12 and 13), in Hawke Bay (statistical area 13), off the Wairarapa coast (statistical areas 14 and 15) and in non-specific areas in HPB 8.

### *Risk to the sustainability of the HPB 2 and HPB 8 fishstocks*

15 MFish has no independent information to verify the reports of localised depletion. Information on the status of hāpuku/bass fishstocks is also limited. A maximum constant yield (MCY) of 1330 tonnes has been estimated for hāpuku/bass fishstocks HPB 1-3 and 6-10 combined. Recent combined

catches across these fisheries are less than 1330 tonnes and are considered sustainable. Monitored fishery information in HPB 2 and HPB 8 (commercial catches against total allowable commercial catch (TACC)) does not suggest notable changes in hāpuku/bass abundance in either quota management area as a whole.

- 16 Spreading or “serial” localised depletion can increase risks to fishstock sustainability. The biological characteristics of hāpuku/bass make the species vulnerable to localised depletion. Hāpuku/bass are slow-growing and long-lived (approximately 60 years), have a late age-at-maturity and demonstrate strong site fidelity (in tagging studies, large numbers of tagged hapuku/bass are re-captured at, or near, the initial tagging site). Studies also show hāpuku/bass have an annual spawning season but little is currently known about the location of spawning grounds or nursery areas.

*Risk to the value achieved by HPB 2 and HPB 8 fishery stakeholders*

- 17 Reports received prior to consultation on the IPP indicated localised depletion was reducing the value of customary and recreational fishing experiences. Specifically, recreational and customary stakeholders noted a decline in their hapuku/bass catch rates and in the size ranges of hāpuku/bass being caught.
- 18 MFish had no independent or quantitative information to verify if recreational or customary fishing values have declined in recent years. However, anecdotal information suggesting declining values had been consistent, had derived from multiple sources (including individuals, recreational charter fishers, recreational fishing club representatives, MFish recreational forums, and hapu representatives) and had been provided over a number of years (2005 to present).
- 19 MFish has not received any reports from commercial fishers expressing concern about declining commercial values in HPB 2 or HPB 8. Indicators of the commercial value of hāpuku/bass include (but are not limited to) commercial landings against TACC, and the value of Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) or quota. The TACC for HPB 2 is set at 266 tonnes. The average ACE trading price per tonne of HPB 2 has increased from \$1,585 for the 2001/02 fishing year to \$1,709 for the 2006/07 fishing year. The average ACE trading price per tonne of HPB 8 has increased from \$748 to \$1,374 over the same period.

*Risk to the credible management of hāpuku/bass fisheries in the CFMA*

- 20 Credible fisheries management is management that is clearly understood by the fishery stakeholders and achieves the desired result of ensuring maximum value is obtained through the sustainable use of the HPB 2 and HPB 8 fishstocks in the long term.
- 21 Reports from non-commercial stakeholders indicated there may be growing dissatisfaction with the current management of recreational hāpuku/bass fisheries in the CFMA, and the value of the non-commercial hāpuku/bass fishing experience had declined.

## ***Rationale for Management Review***

- 22 MFish believes consideration of management intervention is appropriate despite the absence of independent information to verify reported localised depletion. This is because the problem is principally internal to the recreational sector; that is, nearly all the anecdotal information on the problem and its cause has been provided by recreational sector participants.
- 23 MFish considers management intervention would be justified if consultation feedback from CFMA stakeholders revealed:
- widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is occurring in popular non-commercial fishing areas;
  - widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is caused by increased recreational fishing effort in these areas;
  - management intervention would increase the overall value of the non-commercial hapuku/bass fishery in the CFMA; and
  - other fishery stakeholders would not be negatively impacted by the chosen management intervention.

## **Consultation**

- 24 MFish consulted on the options in the IPP on your behalf with fishery stakeholders, including national and regional stakeholder groups. The IPP was also published on the MFish website, and sent to the owners of recreational charter vessels known to be operating in the CFMA. You are asked to make a decision on the options in the IPP under in Section 297 of the Fisheries Act 1996.

## **Submissions Received**

- 25 MFish received 23 submissions from different fishery stakeholders throughout the CFMA. The submissions are listed below:
- Area 2 Inshore Finfish Management Company (A2IFMC);
  - Bay Fishing Charters (BFC);
  - Joe McClutchie (McClutchie);
  - John Fargher (Fargher);
  - Mahia Boating Club (MBC);
  - Mana Cruising Club (MCC);
  - Neville Nitschke (Nitschke);
  - New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council (NZBGFC);

- New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council Zone Six (Zone 6);
- Ngati Toa and Ngati Koata Iwi (NTNK);
- Nine S Schotanus (Schotanus);
- North Island South East Recreational Forum (NISE);
- Pete Lamb Fishing (PLF);
- Pukemanu Boating and Fishing Club (PBFC);
- Russ Hawkins (Hawkins);
- Sanford Limited (Sanford);
- Scott McIntosh (McIntosh);
- Seafood Industry Council (SeaFIC);
- Skippers and crews of Tillerman, Leakhead, G and T, and Leagasea (TLGTL);
- Wellington Recreational Marine Fishers Association (WRFA);
- West Coast Charters (WCC);
- Whakatane Charter Fishing Fleet (WCFF);
- Te Kupenga Whiturauroa a Maui Forum (Te Kupenga).

## **MFish Discussion of Submissions**

26 In developing the IPP for consultation with fishery stakeholders, MFish was explicit in stating there was no independent information to verify if reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass was occurring in the CFMA, or to determine the main cause of reported localised depletion. MFish also noted the absence of information indicating a concern about the sustainability of the HPB 2 and HPB 8 fisheries. Therefore in developing a range of feasible management options for consideration in the IPP, MFish considered management intervention would only be justified if consultation feedback:

- revealed widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is occurring in popular non-commercial fishing areas;
- revealed widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is caused by increased recreational fishing effort in these areas;
- indicated management intervention would increase the overall value of the non-commercial hapuku/bass fishery in the CFMA; and

- confirmed other fishery stakeholders would not be negatively impacted by the chosen management intervention.

*Widespread agreement that localised depletion is occurring in the CFMA*

- 27 Submitters do not support reports of localised depletion in FMA 8. Zone 6 state reported localised depletion is not occurring in the two main non-commercial hāpuku/bass fisheries of Taranaki (FMA 8) and Raglan (FMA 9). The NZBGFC and Zone 6 also confirm there is no robust independent evidence to support reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in FMA 8.
- 28 Submitters reaffirm reports of localised depletion in the northern part of FMA 2 (East Cape, Gisborne, Mahia, Hawke Bay and Wairarapa), but have mixed views on the occurrence of localised depletion in the southern part of FMA 2 (Wellington south coast). WCC and NTNK believe localised depletion is occurring in the Wellington south coast area and substantiate this with lower reported catch rates of hāpuku/bass, while Nitschke, MCC and WRFA state the hāpuku/bass fishery is “in good or better shape than previous years”.
- 29 MFish also asked submitters to provide additional information on the location of reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass within both FMA 2 and 8. Although some submitters provided non-specific information on the main areas of their fishing effort, only one submitter identified additional areas of localised depletion. WCC suggest ‘fisherman’s rock’ and Mana in the Wellington/south coast area are suffering from localised depletion.

*Widespread agreement among non-commercial fishers that localised depletion is caused by increased recreational fishing effort*

- 30 Submitters believe an increase in recreational fishing effort has occurred in the CFMA. However there is no widespread agreement linking the increase in recreational fishing effort to reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in either FMA 2 or 8.
- 31 NZBGFC, A2IFMC, SeaFIC and Sanford believe the recreational charter fleet is the cause of increasing recreational fishing effort in FMA 2 and 8. McIntosh, WRFA, MCC and NISE indicate the operation of recreational charter vessels is having a “huge effect on local reefs” that were previously only fished by recreational fishers on private vessels in FMA 2. McIntosh and NISE directly attribute fishing by recreational charter vessels to reported localised depletion in FMA 2. The views of these submitters are partly supported by one recreational charter vessel operator who estimates “90% of hāpuku/bass” in the Wellington/south coast area is “probably taken” by the recreational charter fleet.
- 32 However contrary to the views expressed above, McClutchie, WCC, Fargher and PLF believe there has been an increase in the number of private recreational vessels operating in FMA 2. These submitters also believe recreational fishers have become more efficient at targeting hāpuku/bass through the use of electronic aids such as Geographic Positioning Systems

(GPS), sounders and fish finders, fish more frequently and have larger vessels with the capability of travelling to more remote fishing locations.

- 33 BFC, MCC, McClutchie, NISE and PLF, while agreeing recreational fishing effort has increased, believe commercial fishing effort is the cause of any decline in hāpuku/bass stocks in FMA 2. MCC state commercial fishing vessels are repetitively targeting and “cleaning out” known hāpuku/bass areas, and causing damage to the environment. McClutchie also views commercial fishing effort as “vacuuming up” hāpuku/bass in areas where “sustainable fishing policies” are being observed by recreational charter vessels.

*Management intervention would increase the overall value of the non-commercial hapuku/bass fishery in the CFMA*

- 34 Submitters consider management intervention would not lead to an increase in the value of non-commercial hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. MFish also asked submitters to provide additional information on the value and importance of hāpuku/bass as a target species for non-commercial fishers, and the ‘value-costs’ and ‘value-benefits’ of the options presented in the IPP.
- 35 NZBGFC, WRFA, Zone 6 indicate the introduction of a daily bag limit for hāpuku/bass would “erode the rights” of recreational fishers in the CFMA, and result in a decline in value for recreational fishers. Zone 6 also believes the issue of localised depletion in FMA 2 should be dealt with by the non-commercial fishers in FMA 2, and should not translate to management intervention affecting non-commercial values in FMA 8. Subsequently, Zone 6 states they do not accept any change to bag limits on recreational fishers on the west coast of the North Island.
- 36 Submissions from a number of recreational charter vessel operators, recreational fishers and recreational fishing/boating clubs indicate voluntary limits are already in place to manage the take of finfish, including hāpuku/bass, in the CFMA. A number of these submitters also believed Option 2 (and in some cases a combination of Option 2 and 3) were consistent with voluntary limits already in place, and would not result in a decline in recreational value if amendments were made to the existing amateur fishing regulations. However this view was not widespread among submitters, as not all submitters noted the use of voluntary limits, or belong to recreational fishing clubs, or use recreational charter vessels, with voluntary limits.
- 37 NTNK and MCC are opposed to the introduction of an accumulation limit in the CFMA, as it would disadvantage fishers undertaking multi-day trips. This view is supported by most of the recreational charter vessel operators who claim the accumulation limit will result in a drop in demand for multi-day trips targeting in hāpuku/bass and lead to a loss of revenue. Fargher believes the “attack on the recreational charter fleet is not fair”.

*Other fishery stakeholders would not be negatively impacted by the chosen management intervention*

- 38 Submitters are silent on whether there would be a negative impact on other fishery stakeholders from undertaking management intervention.

*Other matters raised in submissions*

- 39 MFish notes prior to consultation on the IPP, stakeholders reporting localised depletion were of the view immediate action was required to reduce or resolve reported localised depletion. However wider consultation with fishery stakeholders has revealed a lack of agreement about the problem, its cause and the appropriate solution. MFish therefore considers a cautious approach to amending recreational fishing regulations as they relate to hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.
- 40 A number of submitters expressed concern there is not a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limit set for hāpuku/bass. MFish considers the establishment of a TAC for hāpuku/bass stocks would not directly resolve or reduce reported localised depletion in the CFMA. This is because reported localised depletion is not currently considered to be a sustainability risk for hāpuku/bass stocks. MFish notes that undertaking a stock assessment process for hāpuku/bass is also not likely to be effective at resolving or reducing reported localised depletion in the CFMA. This is because accurate information on the recreational harvest of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA is not available.
- 41 WRFA believes MFish has failed to consider other management options in the IPP such as restricting the use of multiple long lines by recreational charter boats, removing the use of 25 hook long lines by recreational fishers and limiting all lines to two hooks only. MFish has no independent information to quantify how much hāpuku/bass is taken in the CFMA by non-commercial fishers using different fishing methods. MFish believes method restrictions for targeting hāpuku/bass in the CFMA would only be effective if a significant proportion of hāpuku/bass are taken by one fishing method. Restricting fishing methods for targeting hāpuku/bass would also be difficult to enforce because: (i) the CFMA covers a substantial area, (ii) there is more than one species of finfish present that could be targeted by the method being restricted and (iii) apprehension of offenders would require on-water detection.
- 42 SeaFIC and A2IMFC also believe MFish has failed to consider all options in developing the IPP. In particular SeaFIC and A2IFMC believe there should be no discarding or high-grading of any hāpuku/bass taken in the CFMA, as there is no survivability if returned to the sea. SeaFIC state discarding or high-grading of hāpuku/bass may constitute a risk to sustainability of the stock, and result in a significant underestimation of recreational fishing related mortality. MFish has no independent information to determine the rate of discarding or high-grading of hāpuku/bass by non-commercial fishers in the CFMA.
- 43 PBFC is concerned the commercial harvest of hāpuku/bass in FMA 2 was not allowing hāpuku/bass to reach sexual maturity. MFish notes research to develop age-at-maturity information, and a monitoring tool to better assess the status of hāpuku/bass fish stocks around New Zealand, is being commissioned

in 2008. The results of this research will be available to MFish in 2009, and may assist with determining the number of hāpuku/bass caught by commercial fishers before reaching sexual maturity.

- 44 WRFA is of the view any decline in hāpuku/bass stocks in the south east coast of the North Island is the result of environmental factors, as opposed to an increase in non-commercial fishing effort. MFish has no independent information to verify if environmental factors are causing a decline in hāpuku/bass in the south east coast of the North Island. WRFA also notes the “biggest impact on hāpuku/bass” in the Wellington/south coast area is the proposal to install “7000 twin twelve metre diameter turbines” designed to harness currents moving through Cook Strait for energy generation. MFish notes this issue falls outside the scope of the IPP, as it is not a cause of the reported localised depletion.
- 45 Sanford, SeaFIC and A2IFMC suggest there is no methodology presented in the IPP to specify how the proposed options will be monitored to ensure they are effective in reducing or resolving reported localised depletion in the CFMA. MFish was explicit in stating there was no independent information to determine how many recreational fishers regularly take five hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. Therefore the IPP centred on getting widespread agreement from non-commercial fishers to select an option, or package of options, to reduce or resolve reported localised depletion.
- 46 McClutchie and PLF suggest MFish also look at the recreational allowances for bluenose. These submitters claim the existing allowances are “very excessive”. Bluenose stocks in the CFMA (BNS 2 and BNS 8) are presently managed as part of the Adaptive Management Programme. At the time of completing this FAP, the final report from the Adaptive Management Programme fisheries advisory working group summarising the review of all bluenose stocks was unavailable.

### *Summary*

- 47 MFish asked fishery stakeholders to provide additional information to determine whether management intervention was necessary to reduce or resolve reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. The purpose of management intervention was to increase the value of the non-commercial hāpuku/bass fishery, which in the view of non-commercial stakeholders had declined over time due to localised depletion.
- 48 MFish received 23 submissions from a range of fishery stakeholders from within the FMA 2 and 8. Analysis of the submissions has revealed:
- no widespread agreement between submitters to verify if reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass is occurring within the CFMA;
  - widespread agreement recreational fishing effort generally has increased, but no agreement that this is the cause of reported localised depletion in the CFMA;

- no widespread agreement between submitters management intervention would increase the value of the non-commercial hāpuku/bass fishery in the CFMA;
- 49 Some submitters expressed a view that MFish should take a cautious approach to amending the existing amateur regulations, and not make a management decision based on anecdotal and limited information, regardless of whether the information was received from non-commercial stakeholders, on a non-commercial problem and directed at increasing non-commercial fishing values in the CFMA.

## Assessment of Management Options

- 50 The IPP was advanced at the request of non-commercial fishery stakeholders to address reported localised depletion in parts of the CFMA. As noted, the information identifying localised depletion is anecdotal; MFish has no independent information to verify the existence of reported localised depletion and its reported causes.

### *Option 1: Status quo (no action)*

#### *Impacts*

- 51 The status quo option retains the existing management framework for hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.

#### *Benefits*

- 52 The existing rules managing the take of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA would continue to apply. Submissions, particularly those relating to FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2, indicate localised depletion is not a significant issue and retaining the existing amateur fishing regulations would achieve the highest value-benefit.
- 53 The status quo enables management intervention to be considered again in the future when more information is available. Information that is likely to become available in the short-term includes:
- research to develop age-at-maturity information and identify an improved monitoring tool for hāpuku/bass fishstocks due to be reported in 2009;
  - a telephone diary survey to estimate recreational harvest is planned for 2009/10;
  - finer-scale information on commercial catch distribution from new catch reporting forms operating from 2007/08;
  - information on recreational charter boat fishing effort (may become available through 'activity and catch reporting for recreational charter vessels' – a proposal which formed part of the November 2007 Cabinet decision on the Shared Fisheries Policy).

- 54 Retaining the status quo has the lowest implementation cost as no change to the amateur fishing regulations is required.

### *Costs*

- 55 Non-commercial fishers in the northern part of FMA 2 may experience reduced fishing values. Submitters reaffirm anecdotal reports of localised depletion in the northern part of FMA 2. However these submitters do not agree on the cause or solution to address localised depletion. Consequently, amending the amateur fishing regulations to address localised depletion in the northern part of FMA 2 is not likely to receive widespread support.
- 56 If localised depletion is occurring in parts of the CFMA, retaining the status quo may increase the risks to sustainability. The biological characteristics of hāpuku/bass make the species vulnerable to localised depletion. Some submitters state that recreational fishers relocating their fishing effort to improve catch rates could lead to spreading or 'serial' localised depletion. MFish would continue to monitor the status of HPB 2 and HPB 8 fisheries, and incorporate new information as this becomes available.
- 57 The status quo may not be perceived as a credible option by non-commercial fishers in the northern part of FMA 2. A number of submitters in FMA 2 consider a maximum allowable catch of five hāpuku/bass is excessive given the size of the fish, its popularity and value among non-commercial fishers and its vulnerability to localised depletion.

### ***Option 2: Introduce a daily bag limit of three hāpuku/bass per person***

#### *Impacts*

- 58 Introducing a daily bag limit of three hāpuku/bass per person would reduce the maximum quantity of hāpuku/bass a recreational fisher is able to take in the CFMA from five to three per day.

#### *Benefits*

- 59 The introduction of a daily bag limit would apply to every recreational fisher targeting hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. Reducing the maximum quantity of hāpuku/bass able to be taken by a recreational fisher may reduce risks of localised depletion in the CFMA. Particularly as there is widespread agreement among submitters that recreational fishing effort generally is increasing. However, the effectiveness of introducing a daily bag limit is uncertain as information on the proportion of recreational fishers regularly taking more than three hāpuku/bass per day is unavailable.
- 60 Management intervention would not negatively affect the values of Tangata/Tiaki Kaitiaki and customary fishers, commercial quota owners and fishers, or environmental stakeholders. Commercial fishery stakeholders confirm amending the amateur fishing regulations to introduce a daily bag limit would not negatively affect commercial fishing values in the CFMA.

## *Costs*

- 61 Introducing a hāpuku/bass-specific daily bag limit may reduce recreational fishing values in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2. Submitters believe the value-benefit of constraining recreational harvest of hāpuku/bass to reduce or resolve localised depletion in the northern part of FMA 2, would not offset the value-cost to recreational fishers targeting hāpuku/bass in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2.
- 62 The introduction of a daily bag limit may not be perceived as a credible option by non-commercial fishers in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2. A number of submitters in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2 do not support management intervention, claiming it would “erode the rights” of recreational fishers in the CFMA.
- 63 Introducing a daily bag limit may only be effective at reducing risks of localised depletion in the short-medium term. Fishery stakeholders confirm an increase in recreational fishing effort in the CFMA. MFish has no independent information to quantify the rate of increase in recreational fishing effort over time, and is unable to determine the long-term effectiveness of introducing a daily bag limit.
- 64 The introduction of a hāpuku/bass-specific bag limit potentially reduces the values of recreational fishers in other FMA’s by constraining the activity of fishers travelling into the CFMA to target hāpuku/bass. Whilst in the CFMA, recreational fishers would be unable to possess more than three hāpuku/bass even if the fish were taken in another FMA.
- 65 Introducing a hāpuku/bass-specific bag limit would result in administrative costs to undertake regulatory amendments and education costs to inform non-commercial stakeholders of the new regulation. The education costs include the cost of updating published recreation rules information (eg, the ‘Recreational Fisher’s Handbook’), information boards within the CFMA and education activities to inform fishers of the new rule.

## ***Option 3: Introduce a boat limit of 15 hāpuku/bass per vessel***

### *Impacts*

- 66 Introducing a boat limit of 15 hāpuku/bass would limit the maximum quantity of hāpuku/bass able to be possessed per vessel in the CFMA to 15.

### *Benefits*

- 67 The introduction of a boat limit would apply to every recreational vessel targeting hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. Introducing the bag limit may reduce catch and therefore reduce risks of localised depletion. The effectiveness of a boat limit is uncertain however, as there was not widespread agreement among submitters that recreational charter vessels and large private vessels are a principal harvester of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.
- 68 Management intervention would not negatively affect the values of Tangata/Tiaki Kaitiaki and customary fishers, commercial quota owners and

fishers, or environmental stakeholders. Commercial fishery stakeholders confirm amending the amateur fishing regulations to introduce a boat limit would not negatively affect commercial fishing values in the CFMA.

### *Costs*

- 69 The introduction of a boat limit may reduce the value to recreational fishers using recreational charter vessels and large private vessels in the CFMA. Some submitters consider the introduction of a boat limit would “penalise” recreational fishers using recreational charter vessels and large private vessels to target hāpuku/bass.
- 70 Introducing a daily boat limit may not be perceived as a credible option by non-commercial fishers in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2. A number of submitters in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2 do not support management intervention, claiming it would “erode the rights” of recreational fishers in the CFMA.
- 71 Introducing a hāpuku/bass boat limit potentially impacts on the values of recreational fishers in other FMA’s by constraining the activity of fishers travelling into the CFMA to target hāpuku/bass. Whilst in the CFMA, vessels cannot possess more than 15 hāpuku/bass even if the hāpuku/bass were taken from the neighbouring FMA’s where no boat limit applied.
- 72 MFish notes boat limits are more difficult to enforce than bag limits. The opportunities to intercept fishers not complying with boat limits are limited to on-the-water and boat ramp inspections. Other interactions, for example vehicle inspections, would be less effective as once the hāpuku/bass are removed from the vessel, securing evidence of illegal activity would become more difficult.
- 73 The costs of implementing the hāpuku/bass boat limit would be higher than Option 1 and 2 because boat limits as a management tool are not familiar to, or widely understood by, recreational fishers. A more intensive education and information programme would therefore be required to ensure fishers understood the tool and how it operated.

### ***Option 4: Introduce an accumulation limit of one daily bag limit of hāpuku/ bass per person***

#### *Impacts*

- 74 Introducing an accumulation limit of one daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass would limit the maximum quantity of hāpuku/bass able to be possessed in the CFMA.

#### *Benefits*

- 75 The introduction of an accumulation limit would apply to every recreational fisher possessing hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. Introducing an accumulation limit may reduce the total recreational catch and therefore reduce risks of localised depletion. The effectiveness of an accumulation limit is uncertain however, as information on frequency of fishing and accumulation of bag limits is unavailable.

- 76 Management intervention would not negatively affect the values of Tangata/Tiaki Kaitiaki and customary fishers, commercial quota owners and fishers, or environmental stakeholders. Commercial fishery stakeholders confirm amending the amateur fishing regulations to introduce an accumulation limit would not negatively affect commercial fishing values in the CFMA.

### *Costs*

- 77 The introduction of an accumulation limit may have a negative impact on recreational fishing values by limiting possession of hāpuku/bass on multi-day trips in the CFMA to one daily bag limit. Submissions from recreational charter vessel operators and recreational fishers state the introduction of an accumulation limit would have a negative impact on value of recreational fishing within the CFMA.
- 78 Introducing an accumulation limit may not be perceived as a credible option by non-commercial fishers in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2. A number of submitters in FMA 8 and the southern part of FMA 2 do not support management intervention to address reported localised depletion, claiming management intervention would “erode the rights” of recreational fishers in the CFMA.
- 79 The introduction of an accumulation limit on its own may not be effective. No additional information was provided by submitters to assist MFish with determining the number of times recreational fishers possess more than one daily bag limit of hāpuku/bass. Consequently the introduction of an accumulation limit may not reduce or resolve localised depletion in parts of the CFMA.
- 80 The introduction of an accumulation limit potentially impacts on the values of recreational fishers in other FMA’s by constraining the activity of fishers travelling into the CFMA to target hāpuku/bass. Submitters did not provide any additional information to qualify if fishers travelling into the CFMA to fish would be constrained by the introduction of an accumulation limit. MFish has no information on the number of recreational fishers travelling into the CFMA to target hāpuku/bass.
- 81 Option 4 has similar implementation costs to Option 3. Accumulation limits as a management tool are not familiar to, or widely understood by, recreational fishers. A targeted education and information programme would be required to ensure fishers understood how accumulation limits operated.

## Statutory Considerations

- 82 In forming the options for addressing the problem of reported localised depletion of hāpuku/bass in the CFMA, the following statutory considerations under the Fisheries Act 1996 have been taken into account.
- 83 **Section 5(a):** You are required to act in a manner consistent with New Zealand's international obligations relating to fishing, including the Law of the Sea and the Fish Stocks Agreement as well as regional fishery management agreements. MFish considers that the management options proposed are not affected by any issues arising under international obligations relating to fishing.
- 84 **Section 5(b):** You are required to act in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992. MFish considers the options are consistent with the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992. None of the management options considered negatively impact availability of, or access to, hāpuku/bass for customary purposes, and the impacts of each management option on commercial and non-commercial fishery stakeholders are fully explored.
- 85 **Section 8:** None of the management options proposed is contrary to the purpose of the Act, which is to provide for utilisation of fisheries resources whilst ensuring sustainability. Options 2, 3 and 4 would potentially improve utilisation of the HPB 2 and 8 fish stocks by ensuring the reported value achieved by non-commercial stakeholders of catching hāpuku/bass is 'spread' over more fishers in the short to medium-term. However MFish considers further information on the extent of reported localised depletion and nature of increased recreational fishing effort is required before Options 2, 3 and 4 can be considered. MFish recommends Option 1.
- 86 **Section 9(a) and (b):** Interactions between species have been identified (eg, predator-prey relationships). It is unlikely any of the management options proposed would materially affect these interactions.
- 87 **Section 9(c):** None of the management options proposed would affect impacts on habitats of particular significance for fisheries management. Recreational fishing methods used to target hāpuku/bass are sensitive to the environment, and will not change as a result of the options proposed.
- 88 **Section 10:** Best available information is incorporated into the assessment of management options, and uncertainties in information are identified and discussed. The uncertainties in information make it difficult to accurately quantify costs and benefits to sustainable utilisation; these uncertainties have been clearly identified and discussed. After considering submissions on the IPP, MFish considers further information on the extent of reported localised depletion and nature of increased recreational fishing effort is required before Options 2, 3 and 4 can be considered. Options 2, 3 and 4 were included in the IPP for discussion with non-commercial stakeholders, and to provide an opportunity for additional information to be conveyed to MFish. MFish recommends Option 1.

- 89 **Section 11(1)(a):** The effects of non-commercial fishing activity on hāpuku/bass were considered and discussed in the IPP. Submissions confirm an increase in recreational fishing effort targeting hāpuku/bass in the CFMA. MFish considers the potential environmental impacts of non-commercial hāpuku/bass fishing are likely to be minimal.
- 90 **Section 11(1)(b):** The existing combined daily bag limit for hāpuku/bass in the Central Fisheries Management Area is set out in Regulation 3A(4) of the Fisheries (Central Area Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986. MFish's recommended option, Option 1, retaining the status quo would not affect the existing regulations, however Option 2, 3 and 4 would require amendment to Regulation 3A(4) of the Fisheries (Central Area Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986.
- 91 **Section 11(1)(c):** Little is known about the natural variability of hāpuku/bass. Research shows hāpuku/bass do have an annual spawning season, but this varies considerably between the North and South Islands. There is little information on the location of spawning grounds or nursery areas for hāpuku/bass. The management options set out in the FAP are not likely to make the HPB 2 and 8 fishstocks more or less vulnerable in terms of natural variability.
- 92 **Section 11(2)(a) and (b):** MFish is not aware of any provisions in any policy statement or plan under the Resource Management Act 1991, or any management strategy or plan under the Conservation Act 1987, which are relevant to the management options set out in the FAP.
- 93 **Section 11(2A) (a and c):** MFish is not aware of any provisions applicable to the coastal marine area known to exist in any policy statement or plan under the Resource Management Act 1991, or any management strategy or plan under the Conservation Act 1987, which are relevant to the management options set out in the FAP.
- 94 **Section 13:** The TACC for hāpuku/bass would not be affected by any of the options in the FAP.
- 95 **Section 21(1)(a and b) and (4)(i and ii) and (5) statement:** As the TACC, customary and recreational allowances are not altered, there are no implications for section 21 from retaining the existing combined daily bag limit for hāpuku/bass in the CFMA.
- 96 **Section 297(1)(ii)** prescribes the power of the Minister to regulate, authorise or prohibit the taking or possession of fish, aquatic life or seaweed from any area.
- 97 **Regulation 3A(4) of the Fisheries (Central Area Amateur Fishing) Regulations 1986:** sets out the maximum daily number of hāpuku/bass that may be taken or possessed by an individual on any one day.