



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES  
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa

# Fisheries Plans

What we want from  
our fisheries



## Minister's Message



Hon. Jim Anderton  
Minister of Fisheries

Our fisheries provide valuable social, cultural and economic benefits for all New Zealanders.

The Government works to ensure these valuable, natural resources are managed in an environmentally sustainable way. We also aim to have New Zealanders get the best value from these resources.

For the commercial sector, best value might mean harvest and management strategies that maximise net economic return or maximise quota value. Or it may mean reducing the size of the allowable catch in order to reduce research costs. For our recreational fishers, it may be the ability to catch bigger fish more easily. For tangata whenua it may be the ability to harvest kaimoana to support their cultural wellbeing.

A key to unlocking 'best value' is to get the New Zealanders who use and value these resources involved in developing their management objectives. The Ministry of Fisheries and I hope Fisheries Plans will achieve this.

But Fisheries Plans are not just aimed at getting 'better value' from our fisheries. They are also designed to make management more transparent and accountable. They do this by setting out objectives, describing how these will be achieved, what roles we all have to play, and how levels of achievement will be monitored. This will bring more certainty for everybody involved in fisheries management.

The concept of Fisheries Plans is the end result of a long process of consultation and discussion on how to best manage New Zealand's fisheries. They build on the Ministry's past work in developing the Quota Management System, settling Treaty of Waitangi fisheries' claims, and developing an approach for managing the environmental effects of fishing.

Fisheries Plans represent a new way of doing business, so their rollout will be a learning process for everyone concerned. Consequently, we have chosen three smaller, single-stock fisheries to work on first – southern blue whiting, Coromandel scallops, and Foveaux Strait oysters.

The Ministry will lead the processes of developing these Fisheries Plans, and help stakeholders to become involved in them. The new approach will require participants with strong people skills – communication and relationship management, consensus building, and problem solving.

I encourage everyone who has an interest in the future of New Zealand's fisheries and their associated marine environments to get involved.

Hon. Jim Anderton  
MINISTER OF FISHERIES



Photo: NIWA



Photo: Dave Hanford



## What are Fisheries Plans?

Tangata whenua and stakeholders have the best understanding of their fisheries' value. They also often have experience and views about the type of management that best suits their needs and their fishery. Fisheries Plans will help us incorporate this knowledge and experience into our fisheries management processes.

Fisheries Plans will set out the objectives we all want to achieve for specific fisheries. They will let tangata whenua and stakeholders participate more in fisheries management, and allow them to propose innovative management options tailored to the particular characteristics of a fishery.

These plans will provide an integrated, transparent way of working out what management and services should be provided in a fishery. They must also meet all relevant legislative obligations and standards, like those that ensure the long-term sustainability of fisheries, associated species (like seabirds and marine mammals), and the habitats and ecosystems that support them.

The scope of Fisheries Plans may vary. They could be based on a single fish stock, a number of fish stocks taken in a single fishery, or a number of different but connected fisheries, such as deep water trawl fisheries.

We expect that Fisheries Plans will evolve in the direction of larger plans, covering multiple species. However, we will begin by developing Fisheries Plans for three smaller, single stock fisheries – southern blue whiting, Coromandel scallops, and Foveaux Strait oysters.

Fisheries Plans represent a further development of the approach set out in the Stock Strategies Consultation Document, which was released in December 2004. For more detailed information on Fisheries Plans, read the Fisheries Plan Framework document on the Ministry of Fisheries' website ([www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz)).

## THE BENEFITS OF FISHERIES PLANS

Fisheries Plans provide three key benefits that together ensure sustainability, while maximising the value we all get from New Zealand's fisheries:

- They allow greater opportunity for participants to be involved, and work together, in managing fisheries
- They provide greater transparency in how we manage fisheries
- They provide a strong link between objectives and management – better integrating science, policy, compliance, and other services in fisheries management.





## Why be involved in their development?

It makes sense having the people who use and value the fishery helping to develop its management objectives. It also makes sense to involve those people who value the wider benefits of having healthy marine ecosystems.

By getting involved in Fisheries Plans, you can ensure your group becomes part of the process of developing objectives and management options in a fishery they particularly care about.

Some or all of the following groups may have an interest in specific Fisheries Plans:

- Hapu or iwi groups who hold mana whenua (customary authority) over the fishing grounds concerned.
- Fisheries stakeholders – those groups who have a strong interest in the sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources, including commercial and recreational fishers and environmental interests.
- Other marine resource users like marine farmers or mining/oil companies.
- Other government agencies like regional councils, Department of Conservation, Maritime New Zealand, Ministry of Economic Development.
- Community groups and the general public.



Photo: Sean Cooper





# How will Fisheries Plans be developed?

Under the Fisheries Act, anyone can prepare a Fisheries Plan. However, we expect most Fisheries Plans will be led by the Ministry of Fisheries, in collaboration with tangata whenua and stakeholders.

There are four main stages in developing a Fisheries Plan:

## 1. Document the current situation

The first step is to bring together all relevant information about a fishery. These 'Information Briefs' will contain the following information:

- biological information
- social, economic and cultural factors
- management measures
- existing stakeholder management
- performance (against sustainability and environmental targets)

## 2. Develop management objectives

The Ministry will work to clarify what everyone wants out of the fishery, and where they each want the fishery to be in the future.

The Ministry will do its best to help the different parties reach a common ground. However, sometimes those parties will have different views that can't be reconciled. In such cases, the Minister of Fisheries must step in and make a decision.

## 3. Assess the fishery

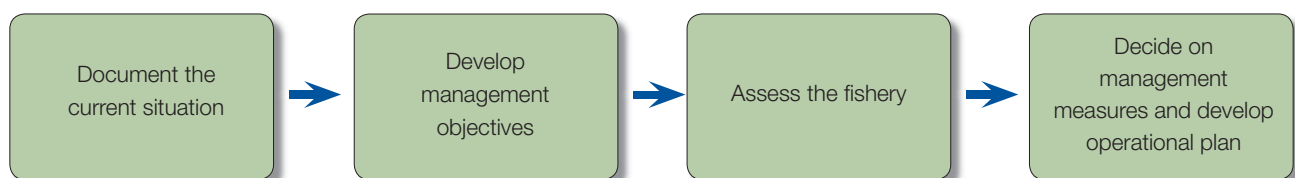
The next step is to look at how well our existing management framework meets the newly-developed Fisheries Plan objectives and relevant standards (e.g. fisheries sustainability and environmental effects of fishing).

Where objectives and standards are not being met, we will plan to make improvements.

## 4. Decide on management measures and develop operational plan

We want management options that deliver the most efficient and cost-effective results. Where possible, we also want to allow stakeholders discretion and flexibility around how and when they harvest seafoods, as well as encouraging voluntary compliance.

The final plan will also include the specific responsibilities for implementation, contingency strategies (where necessary), performance measures, and monitoring of the fishery.



Four main stages in developing a Fisheries Plan





Malcolm Francis

## Where to now?

As an initial step, the Ministry of Fisheries will work with tangata whenua and stakeholders to develop Fisheries Plans for the southern blue whiting, Coromandel scallop, and Foveaux Strait oyster fisheries. Once these have been developed and lessons learned, the Ministry will work with tangata whenua and stakeholders to agree on what plans may be appropriate for other fisheries.

The Ministry will do background work to prepare for future Fisheries Plans.

A number of initiatives are already underway to develop plans to manage fisheries – for example, with the Challenger Scallop and Paua 7 fisheries. The new Fisheries Plans will build on this work and the Ministry will work with stakeholders to decide the most appropriate way for this to occur.

### SOUTHERN BLUE WHITING

Southern blue whiting is an important commercial species found in New Zealand's sub-Antarctic waters. Scientific research is undertaken regularly to ensure that fishing is sustainable. This is primarily a mid-water trawl fishery, so there are few effects of fishing on the seafloor. However, there are issues around occasional captures or incidental deaths of seals, seabirds, and to a lesser extent sea lions. These require monitoring and management. Development of a Fisheries Plan will involve balancing the costs of scientific research with the benefits of yield from the fishery, and managing the impacts on protected species.

### COROMANDEL SCALLOPS

Coromandel scallops are fished from the Hauraki Gulf to the Bay of Plenty, and are important to commercial, customary, and recreational fishers. The current management system allows for an in-season fishing increase when the abundance of scallops is high; reflecting scallop biology and, in particular, their variable abundance. However, this process can be lengthy and difficult, and could be streamlined. Some scallop beds are reserved for non-commercial fishers, to help reduce tensions between sectors. There are some concerns with the environmental impacts of dredging, which is the main commercial harvesting method. A Fisheries Plan will provide an opportunity to review the appropriate baseline catch limit, the process for an in-season increase, the environmental impact, and the spatial separation between commercial and non-commercial fishers.

### FOVEAUX OYSTER

The dredge oyster fishery in Foveaux Strait is one of New Zealand's most iconic fisheries. It is significant for our recreational, customary and commercial sectors. One of the critical issues is the parasite *Bonamia* that kills mature dredge oysters. *Bonamia* has severely limited the fishery, and we estimate that 1 billion oysters in the Foveaux Strait have been killed by this parasite over the past five years. Catch has dwindled to a tenth of historical production. On the environmental impact side, much of the harvest is taken by dredging the seafloor, which affects seabed habitat and may reduce biodiversity. Development of a Fisheries Plan will involve reviewing the *Bonamia* problem, working to balance commercial, recreational and customary uses, and ensuring that environmental effects are managed.



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The full *Fisheries Plan Framework* document is available on the Ministry's website ([www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz))