

30 March 2004

Dear Fisheries Stakeholder

DECISIONS FOR THE SBW 6I (CAMPBELL ISLAND RISE) FISHERY YEAR STARTING ON 1 APRIL 2004

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of my decisions in relation to sustainability measures and management controls for SBW 6I for the 2004-05 fishing year.

I have decided not to reduce the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) or Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for SBW 6I for the 2004-05 fishing year.

The available stock assessment information indicates that the stock size is likely to decline under current catch levels. The information suggests that a fishery of 15 000-20 000 tonnes may be sustainable in the long term. The current TAC is 25 000 tonnes. On the basis of the stock assessment information, I am inclined to reduce the TAC toward what is more likely to be a long-term sustainable level.

However, industry has expressed concern over a possible reduction to the TAC and TACC on the basis that:

- stock assessment information is uncertain;
- new (and costly) research will be undertaken in the fishery in 2004 to provide more information on current stock status;
- a reduction in the SBW 6I catch would have an adverse socio-economic impact which would be aggravated by the difficult economic climate and the possibility of catch reductions in other fisheries.

In making my decision to retain the current TAC and TACC, the key factors that I have taken into account are that:

- the risk to the stock relative to my legislative obligations will not be significant over the period of a year;

- retaining the current TAC and TACC is consistent with my obligations to move the stock towards or above the level that will support the MSY, in a way and at a rate that has regard to the particular socio-economic factors that industry raised in submissions;
- new information will be available to confirm the status of the stock in time for management decisions for the 2005-06 fishing year.

I believe that my decision provides a window of opportunity for stakeholders to work together on developing a management framework for this fishery that better suits their objectives. Over the coming year, I encourage stakeholders to:

- work with the Ministry to develop a decision rule that will enable incorporation of the new 2004 research acoustic survey information into the management decision-making process for the 2005-06 fishing year;
- develop a fishery plan for the SBW 6I fishery that will set out a long-term management strategy that will deliver the industry's preferred balance between utilisation and sustainability, and better facilitate the timely and cost-effective use of research information for this fishery. In the absence of an agreed position amongst stakeholders that is consistent with my legislative obligations, the Ministry will need to decide on the appropriate stock harvesting strategy for southern blue whiting stocks.

I wish to advise that if no new information is available, or the new information does not support retention of the current TAC, I will be looking to reduce the TAC and TACC for the 2005-06 fishing year on the basis of the current stock assessment.

In reaching my final management decisions for 2004-05, I have carefully considered the available fishery assessment information, advice from the Ministry and all of the issues and information put forward by submitters. I have also given careful regard to the legislative provisions of the Fisheries Act 1996, especially those relating to the purpose of the Act (s 8), the environmental and information principles (ss 9 and 10, respectively), and the setting and amending of sustainability measures (ss 11 and 13).

In closing, I am mindful that this is my first sustainability and management controls decision as Minister of Fisheries. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the submissions I have received as part of this review. I appreciate the time taken to prepare and provide submissions. I will look forward with interest to see what stakeholders can do to further develop the management framework for this fishery.

Yours sincerely

Hon David Benson-Pope
Minister of Fisheries