

# New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council

(Incorporated)

**Patron:**

President: J A Romeril

Secretary: R T Nelson



PO Box 93

Whangarei

Phone: 09 433 9648

Fax: 09 433 9640

Email: [nzbgfc@bordnet.co.nz](mailto:nzbgfc@bordnet.co.nz)

Website: [www.nzbgfc.org.nz](http://www.nzbgfc.org.nz)

Tracey Steel  
Ministry of Fisheries  
PO Box 1020  
WELLINGTON

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## **NZ Big Game Fishing Council Submission on Reviewing the Tarakihi (TAR1) Commercial and Non-commercial Allowances This submission is endorsed by option4**

### **NZ Big Game Fishing Council**

1. The NZ Big Game Fishing Council (NZBGFC) was formed in 1957 to act as an umbrella group for sport fishing clubs and to organise a tournament that would attract anglers from around the world. Club membership has grown steadily and we now represent over 30,000 members in 60 clubs spread throughout NZ. We still run the nation-wide fishing tournament, which has evolved over time and remains successful.
2. NZBGFC compile and publish the New Zealand records for fish caught in saltwater by recreational anglers and are members of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) who publish catches that qualify as recreational world records.
3. In 1996 the NZBGFC helped establish the NZ Marine Research Foundation, which aims to sponsor research on marine species and fisheries, for the benefit of all New Zealanders, including participants in ocean recreation.
4. The NZBGFC has a national management structure. The delegates from fishing clubs in each region meet regularly at one of the 8 zone meetings (1 in the South Island 7 in the North Island). Each zone has a representative on the management committee which meets 4 times a year. Over 100 delegates representing 60 clubs attend the AGM.
5. Many of our most established fishing clubs have a focus on fishing for large pelagic species such as marlin, tuna, and sharks. In recent years our membership has expanded beyond the traditional deep sea angling clubs to include many local clubs targeting inshore species.

## Background

6. MFish has released a discussion document proposing an increase in the commercial quota and non-commercial allowances for tarakihi in the top half of the North Island (TAR1). Following the receipt of submissions, MFish will prepare a Final Advice Paper (FAP) for the Minister addressing the proposals and issues raised in submissions. This will include management options for the Minister to consider.
7. MFish propose to either increase the total allowable catch (TAC) by 70 t or by 140 t or leave it unchanged. Then there are 3 options given for allocation, whether an increase is proposed or not. They are:
  - a proportional allocation of any increase based on estimated shares of the fishery; or
  - a non-proportional allocation, in favour of commercial fishers; or
  - a non-proportional allocation, in favour of non-commercial fishers.
8. The result is a rather complex mix of options which should be quite readily narrowed down once the objective of the TAC review is made clear.

**Table 1. The range of options for changing non-commercial allowances and commercial allocations given in the discussion document with the % change from the current allowances**

	Allowance Approach	Recreational Allowance tonnes	% Change in rec allowance	Customary Allowance tonnes	% Change in cust allowance	Commercial Allocation tonnes	% Change in comm allocation
<b>Option 1 TAC not changed</b>	a. No change/ Status quo	470	<b>0%</b>	70	<b>0%</b>	1399	<b>0%</b>
	b. Non-proportional in favour of commercial	410	<b>-13%</b>	59	<b>-16%</b>	1469	<b>5%</b>
	c. Non-proportional in favour of non-commercial	539	<b>15%</b>	80	<b>14%</b>	1329	<b>-5%</b>
<b>Option 2 TAC increase of 70 tonnes</b>	a. Proportional	487	<b>4%</b>	73	<b>4%</b>	1449	<b>4%</b>
	b. Non-proportional in favour of commercial	470	<b>0%</b>	70	<b>0%</b>	1469	<b>5%</b>
	c. Non-proportional in favour of non-commercial	499	<b>6%</b>	75	<b>7%</b>	1433	<b>2%</b>
<b>Option 3 TAC increase of 140 tonnes</b>	a. Proportional	505	<b>7%</b>	76	<b>9%</b>	1498	<b>7%</b>
	b. Non-proportional in favour of commercial	470	<b>0%</b>	70	<b>0%</b>	1539	<b>10%</b>
	c. Non-proportional in favour of non-commercial	530	<b>13%</b>	80	<b>14%</b>	1469	<b>5%</b>

9. Tarakihi can be found from the Three Kings to Stewart Island and are known to spawn in summer–autumn in several areas around New Zealand. Sexual maturity is reached at 25–35 cm at an age of 4–6 years, after which the growth rate slows. This species reaches a maximum age of 40+ years. Fish tagged near Kaikoura have been recaptured from as far away as the Kaipara Harbour, Whangarei and Timaru.
10. The east and west coast tarakihi fisheries of northern New Zealand are in one quota management area. The commercial quota was set at 1,210 t in 1986. This increased to about 1400 t through decisions of the Quota Appeal Authority. In 2002 the Minister decided against

an application by industry for an adaptive management project (AMP) to increase the TACC by 43% for five years. At that time he did set other allowances at 470 t for recreational, 70.5 t for customary Maori and 20 t for other sources of mortality.

11. The main recreational tarakihi fisheries in New Zealand are in the Bay of Plenty and east Northland. Tarakihi fishing is also popular in the outer Hauraki Gulf over winter in a mixed snapper and tarakihi target fishery. In areas from Wairapapa south tarakihi can be caught from the shore, but the fishery is boat based in the north. There is a national minimum size of 25 cm for tarakihi and it is part of the 20 fish per day combined species bag limit in TAR1. MFish recognise this as a shared fishery and “setting TACs to maintain the stock above the BMSY level is a valid objective”.<sup>1</sup>
12. Historically, Maori targeted and caught tarakihi in well known areas and seasons. MFish have little information about the extent of current customary catch of tarakihi. They say that while tarakihi is known to have value as a customary food source, recent and current harvest levels are unknown. The customary allowance is just 15% of the recreational allowance.
13. Commercially TAR1 catch is concentrated in the Bay of Plenty, east Northland and off Ninety Mile Beach and is usually taken by trawler in 100–200 m of water. The commercial catch has exceeded quota for 8 of the last 10 years by an average of 5% (70 t). Over 95% of commercial tarakihi is sold on the local market.
14. There is also a large trawl catch of tarakihi on the spawning grounds between Cape Runaway and East Cape just east of the TAR1 quota area. Some of these fish probably spend some of their life in TAR1. Commercial fishers report a significant decline in catch rates on the East Cape grounds this year. The TACC in TAR2 was over caught by 190 t in 2005/06.

## **NZBGFC Submission**

### **Consultation**

15. The submitters object to the lack of provision for tangata whenua to have meaningful “input and participation” as per s12 of the Fisheries Act 1996.
16. Section 12 of the Act requires that the Minister, ‘before doing anything’ – making any decisions on sustainability measures – must provide for the input and participation of tangata whenua (iwi or hapu holding mana whenua over the particular area) having a non-commercial interest in the stock concerned, or an interest in the effects of fishing on the aquatic environment in the area concerned. The Minister must also consult widely with Maori, environmental, commercial and recreational interests. Before making any decision on a proposed measure it is obligatory on the Minister to **have particular regard to kaitiakitanga**.
17. The submitters are not aware of any effort by the Minister, through MFish, to initiate any or adequate input and participation into the formulation of the TAR1 proposal or the ensuing consultation process. The submitters strongly recommend that the Crown avoids creating any new grievances by providing for tangata whenua’s non-commercial fishing interests in this and further processes regarding tarakihi.

### **Non-commercial catch**

18. Catch rates in non-commercial fisheries tend to vary from season to season. If abundance has increased then non-commercial catch per unit effort and total harvest is likely to increase.
19. There have been advances in gear and technology since the last recreational survey that included a tarakihi harvest estimate in 2000. For example, there has been a large increase in the use of non-stretch fishing line for fishing in deeper water. Braid and similar products have less drag and allow the fisher to feel what is happening at the other end of the line. More

fishers also have good quality depth sounders and GPS chart plotters than in 2000. People should be able to fish deep water with better success than before.

20. However, the minutes of the Bay of Plenty zone meetings of the NZBGFC record that members have experienced fewer tarakihi available and they have had to travel further to find them in recent years. The Northland non-commercial fishers forum also indicated that there had been a decline in tarakihi catches in recent years and that they were harder to find.

### **Commercial catch**

21. Increases in commercial quotas and non-commercial allowances should be made on the basis of quantifiable proof that the stock has rebuilt. Current information is dated (up to 2002) but shows commercial tarakihi CPUE indices were flat or increasing in TAR1.<sup>2</sup> The current estimate of Maximum Constant Yield published by MFish is just 4540 t for all areas except TAR4 (Chathams) and TAR10 (Kermadecs). However, the actual current commercial catch is 5420 t and the TACC is 6064 t for this area<sup>2</sup>. Where is the justification that the status of the stocks in 2007 warrants an increase in commercial quotas in TAR1?
22. Caution is needed when drawing conclusions from the trends in CPUE. Improvement in technology has also benefited commercial fishers. Is the Ministry certain that the double rigged trawl gear being used in TAR2 has not been used in TAR1? Also, the use of a more detailed trawl reporting system, introduced gradually since 1995, has been shown to increase the CPUE in the tarakihi target fishery.<sup>2</sup>
23. An overall gradual increase in CPUE can mean that the size of the stock is rebuilding. A gradual decline in CPUE means that the stock may be getting smaller. An increase of 100% in just 2 years, as seen in the target fishery CPUE in the BOP between 1999/2000 and 2001/02, is too big a jump in stock abundance to be believable, especially in a species that is long lived with at least 10 main year classes present in the fishery. This jump could be a result of a range of factors such as more effective targeting, better reporting, good recruitment, or migration into the area.
24. MFish figures also show a significant decline in commercial catch in the Bay of Plenty in the years since the CPUE data was last analysed. It was over 800 t in 2003–04 (Stat Area 008, 009 and 010) but in 2005–06 had dropped to 576 t.<sup>3</sup> This is about a 30% decrease. No one has seen the CPUE trends from this period yet.
25. Larry Paul, one of New Zealand's most experienced fisheries scientists states that tarakihi are most readily caught by trawling "on certain known grounds near the shelf edge preceding, during and after spawning. This behaviour, combined with their low growth rate, renders them vulnerable to over-fishing".<sup>4</sup> The Minister must be reminded that he must act with caution when information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate.

### **Why reward overfishing?**

26. The TACC in TAR1 has been exceeded for 8 of the last 10 years by an average of 5% (70 t). The majority of commercial catch comes from target fisheries. The fishing industry could balance their Annual Catch entitlement (ACE) and catch to avoid exceeding their quota, but they choose not to. The chronic use of deeming to allow catch in excess of quota should not be used as a justification for increasing the commercial allocation. This provides the wrong incentives to commercial fishers and is reminiscent of the claims based fisheries management of the past. This was where the fisher or sector that could fish the hardest established the largest catch history then got the lion's share of fishing rights when restrictions were finally introduced to repair the damage they did to the stock.

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<sup>2</sup> MFish Plenary Report on Tarakihi, May 2006.

<sup>3</sup> MFish catch data by statistical area by fishing year.

<sup>4</sup> Larry Paul, New Zealand Fishes: Identification, Natural History & Fisheries, Reed

27. As we have stated consistently in other submissions the problem of fishing in excess of quota and chronic deemed won't go away on its own. There must be clear incentives to limit catch to sustainable limits. We support increasing the deemed value of tarakihi regardless of the TACC decisions.
28. Catch in excess of commercial allocations is a serious management problem at the moment. Fish that are deemed are never replaced or included as part of the total fishing related mortality the following year. If fishers under catch their ACE by up to 10% they can carry that over to the following year. We submit that this should also work the other way, so that fishers who over catch their ACE of major target species such as tarakihi must provide ACE in the following year to cover it, or the Minister should reduce the TACC to reclaim those fish.
29. We also note that there are no guarantees that the commercial bycatch problem will be solved by increasing the TACC. If more quota is issued, ACE will go to the fishers that value it most, as has happened in a number of fisheries like swordfish, SNA2 and TAR2. The companies that want to target tarakihi will take the increase and the bycatch problem will remain.

### **The lessons learnt from TAR2 and TAR3**

30. MFish must describe to the Minister what has happened in the TAR2 and TAR3 adaptive management programmes (AMPs). This information is particularly relevant to his decision as it shows how the fishers and tarakihi stocks have responded in recent years to increases in the TACC in other areas.
31. The TAR2 TACC (Cape Runaway to Wellington) had been exceeded five years in a row and in 2004 it was increased by 10% (from 1633 to 1796 t) under AMP management. The landed catch in 2005–06 was 190 t over the new TACC, an 11% over-run. The review of the TAR2 AMP in 2007 found that there was not sufficient characterisation of the fishery and that twin rig boats have entered the inshore fishery in the last 3-5 years, which may affect the CPUE data.
32. The shift over to the new trawl reporting forms (TCEPR) was gradual in TAR2 but there is a jump in CPUE followed by a decline in CPUE and there needs to be more detail to investigate what is happening. Under the AMP there are no additional logbook requirements and the onshore sampling is ineffectual as it cannot be determined where all the catch comes from. If the fishery has increased spatially over the AMP, as the total number of tows has increased, there is a need to take into account the additional effects on all aspects of the environment.
33. In the TAR3 area (east coast of the South Island) catches fluctuated from 750 t to 1200 t until 1998–99, and then exceeded the TACC from 1999–00 to 2001–02, prompting the request for a TACC increase using an AMP. In October 2004 the TAR3 TACC was boosted by 20%, from 1169 t to 1403 t. However, catches immediately declined to less than 1000 t, well below the previous TACC, and have remained at about the 1000 t level. Estimates of recreational tarakihi catch are highly uncertain, but according to MFish the recreational catch is unlikely to exceed 10 t per year in TAR3.
34. The TAR3 standardised bottom trawl CPUE index shows a generally increasing trend in catch rate from 1989–90 to a peak in 1999–00, followed by a marked decline to near the lowest levels in the series by 2005–06. Standardisation has a substantial effect on recent CPUE, converting the increase in unstandardised CPUE in the past few years into a decline. Increased targeting for tarakihi appears to be the main cause of this standardisation effect. The setnet index shows a similar trend, except that it shows a trough in catch rates where the trawl index shows a peak in 1999–00, and is rather stable from 1989–90 to 1998–99.
35. A bottom trawl logbook programme was initiated by the SE Finfish Management Company in 2002, primarily as part of the elephant fish AMP. The programme was only extended to tarakihi in 2004–05. Although quite a few vessels participated, coverage of TAR3 catch has been very low in the two years of this programme, achieving 3.1% in the first year, and declining to only 0.6% in 2005–06. The numbers of fish sampled were small and logbook

coverage is inadequate in terms of catch and effort covered. There has been no logbook coverage of Pegasus Bay (area 20). Rates of non-fish bycatch were not reported and the effects of fishing are not adequately monitored. Some observer coverage has been implemented for the first time on inshore trawlers off Kaikoura, but this has so far been inadequate to provide estimates of fishery effects.

36. The standardised bottom trawl CPUE index in TAR3 indicates that abundance is near its lowest point across the series, having declined steadily from a peak in 1999–00. However, the Working Group noted that the bottom trawl fishery catches smaller fish, and primarily provides a recruitment index. The setnet fishery is indexing the adult population, and this index is flatter, but still shows a declining trend since 2001–02, similar to that in the trawl index. Recent declines in CPUE are of concern.

### **Side-stepping the new management processes**

37. For some time now MFish have been promoting the concepts of objectives based fisheries management, fisheries plans, and fisheries standards. We fail to see where this TAR1 proposal fits within this process. MFish should clearly state in the Final Advice Paper to the Minister:

- what the management objective is;
- how this is supported by the best available information;
- which fisheries standards will be met;
- why a better outcome could not be achieved as part of a fisheries plan.

38. In our view this decision is premature given that the inshore fisheries plans are due to be launched this year and research is currently underway to determine more recent trends in relative abundance for TAR1 with results available later in 2008.

39. Given that the inshore fisheries plans will be split into east coast and west coast of the North Island and that the new CPUE analysis will be split into east coast and west coast, MFish should consider splitting TAR1 into east and west coast stocks. This would have to be discussed with quota owners but a more comprehensive review of tarakihi management is warranted at this time.

### **Non-commercial allowances**

40. The current allowance for amateur fishers of 470 t seems adequate. Given the uncertainty about the current (2007) status of the TAR1 fishery and concerns from non-commercial fishers we submit that the Minister should maintain the commercial allocation and recreational allowance in order to ensure that this important shared fishery is managed above the Biomass that will support the Maximum Sustainable Yield ( $B_{MSY}$ ). This is option 1 a. This would also allow the new fisheries management systems such as Fisheries Plans, shared fisheries policy and Fisheries Standards to be applied to a more comprehensive review of tarakihi in area one.

41. The proposed allowance for customary fishers of just 15% of the recreational harvest estimate is inconsistent with other allowances proposed in this sustainability round. The customary allowance for school shark is proposed to be 150% of the recreational harvest estimate. Is school shark 10 times more important to customary fishers than tarakihi? MFish may want to consider increasing this allowance after providing for the input and participation of tangata whenua.

## Summary

42. NZBGFC supports cautious management of Tarakihi and maintaining the status quo at this time in TAR1. Maintaining a biomass above that which would support the maximum sustainable yield is a valid objective in this important shared fishery.
43. Persistent catch in excess of quota and chronic deeming are not a sufficient justification for increasing the TACC. Doing so provides the wrong incentives to commercial fishers.
44. There is no new or current information on which the Minister can justify an increase in commercial quota which is so urgent that it cannot wait to be included in the Fisheries Planning process and be subject to the new Fisheries Standards. This would also allow the Minister time to meet his obligations under section 12 of the Fisheries Act and provide for the input and participation of non-commercial Maori.
45. An increase in the TAC is premature given that research is currently underway to determine more recent trends in relative abundance for TAR1 with results available later in 2008.
46. Experience has shown that a spike in the abundance or availability of tarakihi that occurred in TAR3 in 1999–00 was not sustained. The quota increases under the TAR3 AMP have not been caught and now there is concern about declines in CPUE.
47. How certain is the Minister that the experience in TAR3 will not be repeated in TAR1? Already we have seen a decline in commercial tarakihi catch in the Bay of Plenty between 2003–04 and 2005–06. Recreational fishers also report fewer tarakihi in Bay of Plenty and East Northland.
48. If an increase in the TAC is proposed MFish should clearly state in the Final Advice Paper to the Minister: what the management objective is; how this is supported by the best available information; which fisheries standards will be met; and why a better outcome could not be achieved as part of a fisheries plan
49. The submitters support increasing the tarakihi deemed value to \$3.00 per kilo regardless of the TAC decisions.
50. MFish should consider consulting on a split in the TAR1 quota management area into east and west coast stocks.
51. The proposed allowance for amateur fishers of 470 t seems adequate to provide for social economic and cultural wellbeing at this time. The customary allowance may be too low.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the initial position paper on tarakihi.

Jeff Romeril  
**PRESIDENT**  
NZ Big Game Fishing Council

Endorsed by Trish Rea  
On behalf of the option4 team