

***Excerpt from the Minister of Fisheries decision letter
Dated 29 September 2003***

Tarakihi (TAR 1) AMP proposal

In my preliminary views letter of 11 July 2003, I was concerned about the potential I saw for the proposed TACC increase under the TAR 1 AMP to affect the interests of non-commercial tarakihi fishers. The AMP proposal at that time did not provide me with details of how those possible effects would be mitigated. I also noted that, as a minimum, I expected any increase in commercial catch under the AMP to be taken from areas of lesser importance to the non-commercial sector, and I identified the northern west coast as such an area.

I am encouraged by the progress that the AMP proponents have made in engaging with recreational representatives, and detailing the catch spreading arrangements they propose. However, I remain concerned about the potential effects on non-commercial interests in the fishery. The views of recreational representatives and the proponents about the spatial separation of commercial and recreational fishing for tarakihi, and the proposed measures to address the potential adverse effects of a substantial increase in commercial catch remain divided. I regret that the proponents did not obtain the level of stakeholder agreement that I wanted. I considered that the proposal had merit if a commitment was made to taking additional catch from an area of lesser importance to non-commercial fishers. I think that it is important for the AMP process to allow such measures to be explored, if shared fisheries are to be considered. However, the AMP proponents have chosen not to consider such a commitment, and I have decided to decline the AMP proposal.

Considering the AMP proposal provided an opportunity for me to review the sustainability and other management controls that apply to the tarakihi fishery in TAR 1. The allowances I made for Maori customary non-commercial fishing and recreational fishing, for the first time last year (2002), were based on the 1996 estimate of recreational catch. The current interpretation of the results of the 1996 and 1999-2000 surveys of recreational catches is that, while results from both surveys are uncertain, the 1996 estimate is probably low, and the more recent estimate is likely to be high. The approach now taken in some other fisheries has been to take the average between the two estimates as the best approximation of the actual catch level that was taken from the stock during the period between 1996 and 1999-2000. Accordingly, I have updated the non-commercial allowances (and the TAC) for TAR 1 to reflect the current information about what levels of catch had been taken from the TAR 1 stock over the past decade or so, without giving rise to sustainability concerns. I note that the amendment to the non-commercial allowances is not to provide for increased catch, but to reflect the current interpretation of the best estimate of past catch.

To give effect to the above decisions, I have set a TAC for TAR 1 of 1958 tonnes. Within that TAC, I have set an allowance of 70 tonnes for Maori customary non-commercial fishing, an allowance of 470 tonnes for recreational fishing, and an allowance of 20 tonnes for all other mortality to the stock caused by fishing. I have decided to retain the TACC at 1398 tonnes.