

SUBMISSION SUMMARY

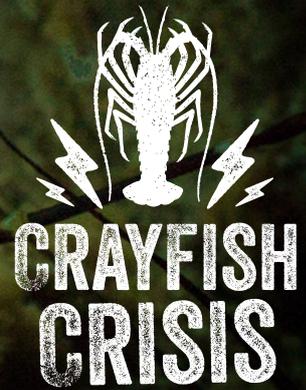


Image: Sam Wild

North and South Island crayfish review

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Crayfish is a significant species for environmental, customary, recreational and commercial fishing interests in Northland, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Otago and Southland. In December 2019 Fisheries New Zealand proposed changes to catch limits for crayfish in these areas.

An alliance of the largest representative recreational fishing organisations in Aotearoa jointly submitted a response in February 2020. Fifteen recommendations were made to the Minister in the interests of rebuilding our depleted crayfish stocks. The Minister of Fisheries is due to make a decision by April 2020.

Crayfish management

In the past crayfish were abundant and an integral part in the coastal ecosystem. It's a concern that years of large catches have depleted rock lobster abundance in many areas accessible to the public.

Before any new catch increases are granted the Minister must revoke the concession that allows commercial fishers to take male crayfish down to 52mm tail width from the Gisborne, Otago and Southland fisheries. The concessions are no longer valid and are unfair.

Affected areas

The current status of the Southland stock is unknown. It used to be a large stock. Catch rates are improving from low levels. The concession must be revoked before the Minister grants any commercial catch increase.

The status of the Otago rock lobster fishery is uncertain. We submitted against any increase because history shows us that annual commercial catches over 120 tonnes cannot be sustained for long.

For years CRA 4, between Hawke's Bay and Wellington, was the 2nd largest rock lobster fishery in Aotearoa.

Abundance and catches have varied over the past decade.

Work to determine the current stock level is proposed for this year. It would be risky for the Minister to increase commercial catches without updated information and while the concession remains intact.

Around Gisborne and East Cape the fishery is depleted. It is only around 18% of its natural size. We submitted significant cuts were required to rebuild crayfish abundance within 5 years.

We supported the proposed 16% commercial catch reduction in Northland, although we wanted greater cuts so the fishery would rebuild within 5 years. The stock is close to its lowest ever level. On the east coast abundance is below 10% of its original level, which is why people are struggling to find a legal size crayfish.

Joint submitters

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council-LegaSea and the New Zealand Angling & Casting Association jointly submitted a response to the management proposals. This work was completed in collaboration with the New Zealand Underwater Association and Spearfishing New Zealand.

What next?

The Minister of Fisheries Stuart Nash is due to make a decision in March 2020. Any new catch limits will apply from 1 April, 2020.

