Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Review of Management Controls for the Snapper 7 Fishery (SNA 7) in 2016

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1 Submission Information

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) welcomes written submissions on any or all of the proposals contained in the Discussion Document. All written submissions must be received by MPI no later than 5pm on Monday 11 July 2016.

Written submissions should be sent directly to:

Inshore Fisheries Management
Ministry for Primary Industries
P O Box 2526
Wellington 6011

or emailed to FMsubmissions@mpi.govt.nz

1.1 OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

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Snapper (SNA 7)

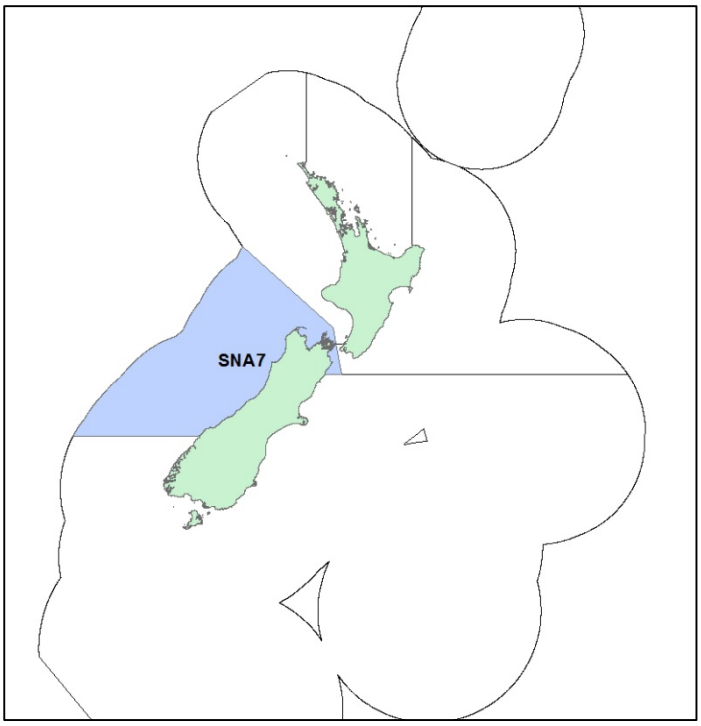

Figure 1: Quota management area (QMA) for SNA 7

2 Executive Summary

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is seeking information and views from tangata whenua and stakeholders to inform a review of catch limits for snapper (*Pagrus auratus*) in quota management area 7 (SNA 7; Figure 1.)

MPI proposes the following options for the upcoming fishing year (Table 1):

Table 1: Proposed TACs, TACCs and allowances for SNA 7 (all values in tonnes)

Option	Total Allowable Catch	Total Allowable Commercial Catch	Allowances		
			Customary **Māori**	Recreational	Other sources of fishing-related mortality
Option 1 *(Status quo)*	306	200	16	90	0
Option 2	545	250	20	250	25

SNA 7 has been rebuilding rapidly over the last five years after a sustained period of low abundance. Increased abundance has improved catch rates for all sectors within parts of SNA 7 and resulted in additional commercial bycatch and higher recreational catches.

The most recent stock assessment of SNA 7 (2015) estimates the stock to be at 29% B_0 (29% of the unfished biomass) in 2014/15 and projects the stock will increase to almost 35% B_0 by 2018/19. In the absence of a more detailed management plan the target biomass is 40% B_0 which is estimated to support annual catches of 600-800 tonnes.

A management review has been put forward to promote discussion of the new information on SNA 7 and to consider approaches toward the key outcomes of ensuring sustainability and maintaining the rebuild of the fishery toward its management target.

Following pre-consultation and discussion with a multi-sector SNA 7 management group, two options are proposed for the total allowable catch (TAC) and associated allowances. Option one is the *status quo* and reflects some uncertainty in the information on current catches and the impact of future catches on rebuilding biomass. As information becomes more certain in coming years this option may require further action to constrain catch to the TAC.

Option two proposes an increase to the TAC at a level that is not considered to be putting the rebuild of the fishery at risk. It is proposed to distribute this increase across the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and all allowances in the fishery. The largest change would be to the recreational allowance, better aligning it with estimated (although uncertain) current catches and shifting the ratio between commercial and recreational fisheries from 70/30 to 50/50.

The increased recreational share acknowledges not only the change in estimated catches but the relative value of the fishery to recreational fishers which was not provided for while the fishery was more depleted.

Option 2 is proposed as an initial step, and is intended to be followed by further work to develop a tailored management plan that will consider not only how to obtain and maintain target abundance but also attempt to assess the Marlborough Sounds snapper fishery which is not experiencing the same catch trends as seen in Golden/Tasman Bay.

The development of a management plan will be advanced with tangata whenua and the SNA 7 Management Group that helped contribute to this review and supported by new information including updated estimates of recreational catch (finalised in 2017), sampling of year classes (2017/18), an updated stock assessment (2018) and further information on recreational catch (2018/19).

MPI is seeking tangata whenua and stakeholder information and views on the proposed options to support the development of final advice for decision by the Minister for Primary Industries.

3 Purpose

3.1 NEED FOR ACTION

Recent stock assessment research suggests that since 2009 the amount of snapper within the SNA 7 area has increased rapidly and this is projected to continue until at least 2018/19. This means more catchable snapper are entering the fishery, which aligns with the recent experiences of fishers from all sectors (with the exception of Marlborough Sounds).

Commercial landings of SNA 7 are largely constrained by the TACC and deemed value regime and therefore targeting of snapper has decreased to stay within these limits. Despite decreased targeting (25% of snapper catch in 2014/15 compared to 50% in 2007/08) catches have remained just over the TACC.

Recreational catches are primarily constrained by fishing rules such as the daily bag limit. Best available information suggests that under these rules the total recreational catch has increased significantly since the annual allowance was set (*e.g.*, recreational fishers could be catching more of their bag limit or fishing more frequently).

Collectively the fishing sectors may be exceeding the TAC for SNA 7.

MPI considers it important to develop a management plan over the next few years that takes into account the recent changes while putting in place strategies to complete the final stages of the rebuild and to maintain target biomass levels.

As an initial step MPI has initiated this management review to consider whether the TAC should be adjusted for the 2016/17 fishing year.

3.2 MANAGEMENT APPROACH

MPI is in initial stages of a discussion among all stakeholders on how inshore finfish fisheries are managed, with plans to update the National Fisheries Plan for Inshore Finfish and confirm management approaches for specific inshore finfish stocks. This project will provide an opportunity to develop a long-term management strategy for SNA 7 with the input of tangata whenua and fishery stakeholders to guide future management.

In the interim, proposals for the upcoming fishing year reflect the best available information and note that while a future review could occur ahead of any future fishing year, it is most likely that a review would next be considered for SNA 7 in 2018 when an updated stock assessment is scheduled that would include new information from catch sampling, recreational catch estimates, and latest West Coast trawl survey information.

4 Background Information

4.1 BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SNAPPER

Snapper are demersal fish found down to depths of about 200m. They occupy a wide range of habitats, including rocky reefs and areas of mud and sandy bottom. Snapper are serial spawners, releasing many batches of eggs during spring and summer. Snapper first reach maturity from 20 to 28 cm fork length at 3-4 years of age. Water temperature appears to play an important part in the success of recruitment. Generally, strong year classes correspond to warm years and weak classes correspond to cold years.

Growth rate varies geographically and from year to year. The snapper from Tasman Bay/Golden Bay (and the west coast North Island) grow faster and reach a larger average size than elsewhere. They may live up to 60 years or more.

4.2 COMMERCIAL FISHERY

The SNA 7 fishery is small relative to other snapper fisheries around the North Island and is at the southern limit of the distribution of snapper in New Zealand

The majority of commercial catch in SNA 7 has been taken using trawl nets. The method of pair trawling (BPT) became dominant in the 1970s but declined to about 20% of the catch by the mid-1980s. In the past ten years pair trawling has continued to decrease and the proportion of single trawl (BT) has increased. Bottom longlining (BLL) has increased to 5% of catch in 2014/15 and set net (SN) accounts for approximately 4% of catch in recent years.

In the last 10 fishing years approximately 60% of commercial snapper catch (all methods) has come from statistical area 038 (Golden Bay/ Tasman Bay), 11% from 037, 10% from 035, 8% from 036 and 7% from 017 (Marlborough Sounds)

Despite reports of decreased targeting, the TACC for SNA 7 has been overcaught by ~4-8% over the last five years. Other key target species in the mixed fishery include flatfish and gurnard.

4.3 RECREATIONAL FISHERY

Snapper is a very popular recreational fishery in SNA 7 and is primarily taken by hook and line (92% of take in the 2011/12 fishing year).

Regulations[1] governing the recreational harvest of SNA 7 include a recreational daily bag limit of 10 snapper per person, which includes a sub-limit of 3 that may be taken from the Marlborough Sounds Area where snapper is less abundant. The recreational minimum legal size (MLS) for snapper is 25 cm in SNA 7.

Both anecdotal and preliminary survey information indicate that the total recreational catch of snapper in SNA 7 has increased substantially since an offsite (interview-based) National Panel Survey was completed in 2011/12. The National Panel Survey estimated recreational catch in the 2011/12 fishing year to be 89 t for SNA 7 (CV of 0.17) which aligns closely with the current recreational allowance of 90 tonnes.

An accepted stock assessment shows that the biomass in SNA 7 has increased rapidly since 2011/12. Assuming that the total recreational catch has increased proportionally with biomass, recreational harvest is predicted to have tripled between the last estimate and the upcoming fishing year.

MPI currently has a research project underway that is using aerial overflights, boat ramp interviews and web-based ramp cameras to estimate the recreational catch of a range of key species in the SNA 7 area[2]. The project will provide an estimate for the current fishing year (2015/16) and therefore is not complete at this time. An interim comparison of average boat counts and the gross average SNA catch rates between this survey and the last on-site survey in 2004/5 indicate a substantial increase in recreational catch in Tasman and Golden Bay and indicate that the model prediction is not unrealistic.

The complete results of this survey will not be available until after March 2017.

The on-site survey does not include recreational catch of SNA 7 taken from commercial vessels (under Section 111 authorisation) which amounts to approximately 1 tonne per year. An accurate estimate of the weight is difficult as s111 take is commonly reported as numbers of individual fish.

4.4 MĀORI CUSTOMARY FISHERY

Snapper (tāmure) is an important kaimoana species for tangata whenua. It is identified by Te Waka a Māui me Ōna Toka iwi forum as a taonga species in the Te Waipounamu Iwi

[1] Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013

[2] The project will estimate harvest of blue cod in BCO 7, snapper in SNA 7, and the relative harvest of scallops in SCA 7 and rock lobster within the survey area in FMA 7

Fisheries Plan. This plan also includes objectives relating to supporting and providing for the customary and commercial interests of South Island iwi.

Information currently held by MPI on Māori customary catch of SNA 7 is uncertain. For those tangata whenua groups operating under the South Island customary fishing regulations, there is a requirement for Tangata Kaitiaki/Tiaki to provide MPI with information on Māori customary harvest of fish. However, for those tangata whenua groups still operating under regulations 50 and 51 of the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations 2013 (the Amateur Regulations), it is not mandatory to report permits that are issued.

There have been very few customary authorisations for SNA 7 reported to MPI at this time. This may be a reflection that tangata whenua in the Tasman/Golden Bay and Marlborough Sounds area are still operating under the Amateur Regulations and/or it may suggest that tangata whenua use of the customary fishing regulations to harvest SNA 7 is low at this time.

4.4.1 Mātaitai reserves and taiāpure

Mātaitai reserves can be established over traditional fishing grounds to recognise and provide for customary food gathering by Māori and the special relationship between tangata whenua and places of importance for customary food gathering. Taiāpure can be established in areas that have customarily been of species significance to an iwi or hapu as a source of food, or for spiritual or cultural reasons.

Within SNA 7 there is one taiāpure (Whakapuaka (Delaware Bay) Taiāpure) and two mātaitai reserves - Te Tai Tapu (Kaihoka) and Te Tai Tapu (Anatori). MPI notes that the proposals in this paper will not impact on the taiāpure and mātaitai reserves, nor will the mātaitai or taiāpure reserves affect the options proposed.

4.5 OTHER SOURCES OF FISHING-RELATED MORTALITY

Other potential sources of fishing-related mortality of SNA 7 include mortality associated with the requirement to return fish below the minimum legal size of 25 cm to the sea, other mortality from fish that escape the fishing gear or illegal discarding.

The sources of mortality outlined above are not able to be quantified precisely. Verified catch reporting information from the SNA 1 fishery indicates juvenile mortality could be 6-8% for the commercial sector based on the return of undersize snapper but similar information is not available for SNA 7.

MPI proposes setting an allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality of 10% of the TACC which aligns with the current approach in other snapper stocks.

4.6 PREVIOUS REVIEW

The SNA 7 TAC/TACC was reviewed in 1990, 1997 and 2013. Historical catch data indicated the initial biomass of SNA 7 had been large but, based on a 1986-88 tag estimate of abundance and low catches, the stock was assumed to have collapsed by the mid-1980s. In 1990, the TACC was reduced from 374 tonnes to 160.3 tonnes. In 1997, a stock assessment indicated that the fishery was slowly rebuilding and a TAC was set at 306 tonnes and the TACC was increased from 160.3 tonnes to 200 tonnes. Allowances were made for Māori customary fishing of 16 tonnes and for recreational fishing of 90 tonnes.

In the 2013 review, industry requested an increase to the TACC to ease pressure from bycatch as the snapper CPUE was increasing. The Minister decided to retain the status quo (set in 1997) until more information regarding the CPUE increase could be collected and the situation better understood.

Since that time, the SNA 7 stock assessment has been updated, and industry has partially funded a catch-at-age project.

4.7 NEW INFORMATION

The most recent stock assessment of SNA 7 (2015) estimates the stock to have been at 29% B_0 in 2014/15, which is above the soft limit set for this fishery, but below the interim target of 40% B_0. 40% B_0 is a default proxy for B_{MSY} as set out in MPI's *Harvest Strategy Standard* and has also been used as an interim target for SNA 1.

The assessment indicates that the stock is rebuilding rapidly following substantial decline from 1950 to the mid-1980s due to the impact of high levels of commercial catch (particularly during the late 1970s and early 1980s) and a sustained period of low recruitment between 1980 and 2010 (Figure 1).

While recreational harvest, and therefore total catches of SNA 7, are estimated to have increased in recent years, current rates of fishing mortality are considered likely to be below the corresponding target fishing mortality level ($F_{SB40\%}$). These conclusions were robust to the range of key model assumptions investigated.

The model assumes that the recreational catch will increase proportionally with increasing biomass. Even though this means that total catches will continue to increase the SNA 7 spawning biomass is projected to increase by about 28% by 2018/19 to 34.8% B_0 (Figure 2).

To inform analysis of management proposals in this paper the scenario of also increasing commercial catch by 50 tonnes from October 2016 was also modelled (Figure 3). This resulted in minimal differences to the projections (an estimate of 34.6% B_0 in 2018/19).

The rate of increase in stock biomass declines during the projection period as the biomass of a strong 2007 year class approaches a maximum level.

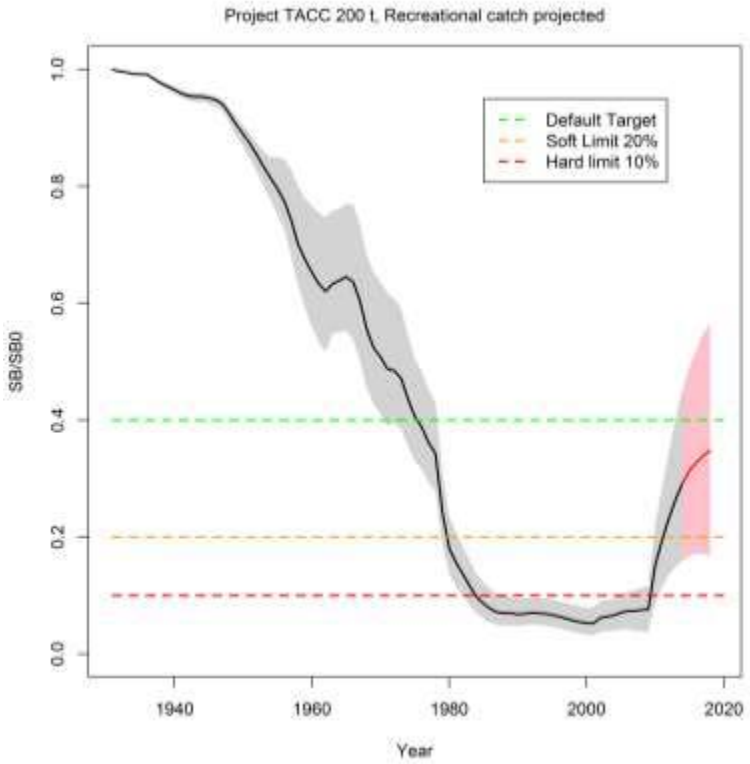

Figure 2. Stock biomass trajectory for the base model with a projected commercial catch (TACC) of 200 tonnes and recreational catch based on a constant exploitation rate. The projection period is from 2014/15 to 2018/19 (red). The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval.

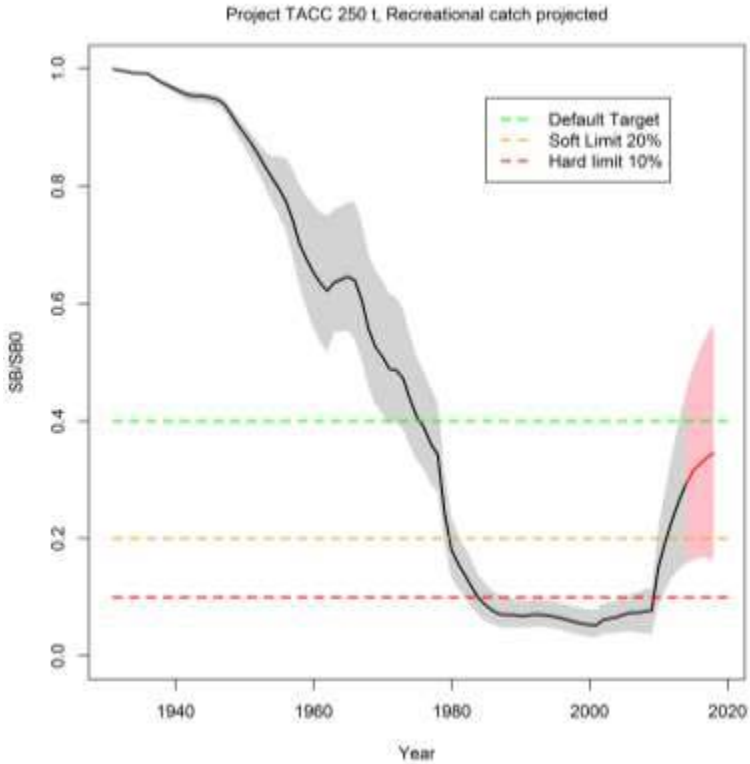

Figure 3. Stock biomass trajectory for the base model with a projected commercial catch (TACC) of 250 tonnes from 2016/17 and recreational catch based on a constant exploitation rate. The projection period is from 2014/15 to 2018/19 (red). The shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval.

The current and projected stock status is sensitive to the estimate of the strength of the 2007 year class and the strength of subsequent recruitment, especially the 2010 year class (Figure 4). Further sampling of the age composition of the commercial catch will provide information regarding the relative strength of these year classes. Ideally, sampling would be undertaken once the 2010 year class is fully recruited to the commercial fishery (2016/17). This project is included in planning for research services for 2016/17. It is recommended that a full update of the stock assessment is conducted in 2017/18 to confirm that the stock is continuing to rebuild towards the target biomass level.

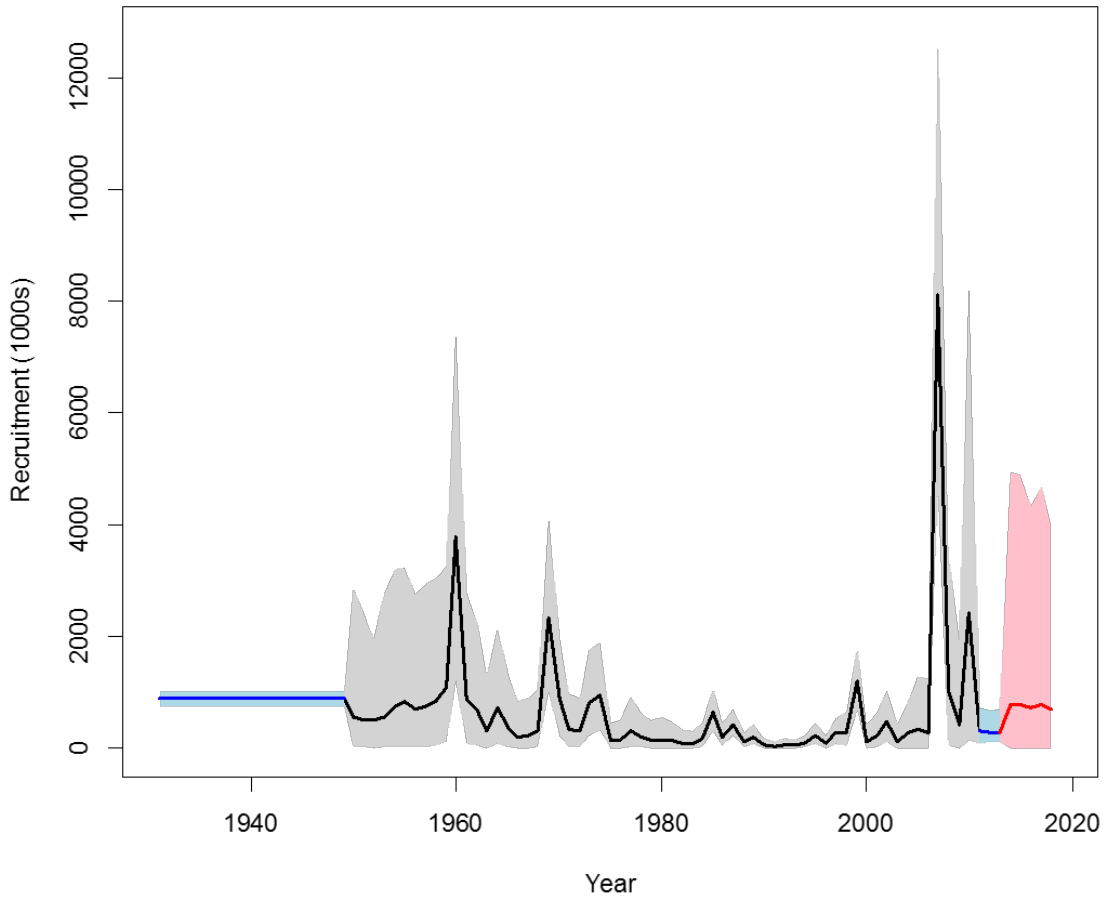

Figure 4: Estimates of annual recruitment (numbers of fish) from the base assessment model. The line represents the median of the Markov Chain Monte Carlo samples and the shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval. The grey time block represents the period for which recruitment deviates are estimated. The blue time blocks correspond to years within the model period for which recruitment deviates were not estimated. The red time block represents the 4-year forecast (projection) period.

5 Legal Considerations

5.1 SETTING MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The TAC for SNA 7 can be varied under section 13 of the Fisheries Act 1996. Section 13(2) of the Act specifies requirements for setting a TAC where a reliable estimate of the current biomass of the stock and the level of biomass that can produce the maximum sustainable yield

(B_{MSY}), is known. In cases such as SNA 7, where B_{MSY} is not known, and a proxy (in this case 40%B_0) is used, section 13(2A) of the Act provides for the Minister to use the best available information to set a TAC that is not inconsistent with the objective of maintaining the stock at or above, or moving the stock towards or above, the B_{MSY} level.

MPI considers the options presented in this paper are not inconsistent with the requirements under section 13(2A) that the stock should be managed at or above B_{MSY}, or moving the stock towards or above B_{MSY}.

5.2 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Section 12(1)(b) of the Act requires that the Minister provide for the input and participation of tangata whenua and have particular regard to kaitiakitanga before setting or varying a TAC. MPI has presented information and rationale for the review of SNA 7 to the Te Waka a Mäui me öna toka iwi forum which represents the nine iwi of the South Island, each holding mana moana and significant interests (both commercial and non-commercial) in South Island fisheries. MPI also met with the Te Tau Ihu Forum in March 2016 to discuss the SNA 7 assessment information, projections and aspirations for the fishery that have been used to inform the proposals. In addition specific customary fishing information was incorporated into the community drop ins as part of the pre consultation on the advice of this forum.

When making a decision concerning the TAC for a stock under section 13(2A), the Minister must have regard to interdependence of stocks, the biological characteristics (discussed earlier) and any environmental conditions affecting the stock.

Sections 9(a) and (b) also require the Minister to take into account that associated or dependent species be maintained at or above a level that ensures their long-term viability, and that the biological diversity of the aquatic environment should be maintained.

The key environmental interactions associated with the SNA 7 fishery are discussed below with reference to the likely impacts of the proposed management options.

5.2.1 Seabirds, mammals, and protected fish

Due to their low abundance in both the North and South Island, the endemic Hector's dolphin is declared as a threatened species waters under the provisions of the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. The set net and bottom trawl (when targeting flatfish) fisheries have been subject to a range of measures designed to reduce interactions of this fishery with Hector's dolphins. The Plenary report states the current interactions between the FLA 7 fishery with protected species are believed to be low. MPI considers there will be no significant change as any additional fishing effort will be mostly in the bottom trawl fishery which, as a result of the measures that now apply, is considered low risk to dolphins.

5.2.2 Benthic impacts

As snapper are largely taken in mixed fisheries, MPI considers that increasing the TACC for at a level that provides for increased bycatch of SNA 7 is unlikely to translate to a significant increase in overall trawling effort. Therefore, the trawl footprint and associated impacts on benthic habitat classes that have been assessed are unlikely to be altered by proposals in this paper. Option 2 does not anticipate any significant increase in trawling activity and, therefore, benthic impacts arising from the proposed TAC increases.

Research has been reported to characterise both New Zealand's benthic environment and the level of benthic impact from fisheries activity. This research combined the trawl footprint

created for all target species for five years and overlaid benthic habitat classes to get a measure of the coverage of habitat classes by trawl gear.

6 Proposed Response

MPI proposes the following options for the upcoming fishing year (Table 1):

Table 3: Proposed TACs, TACCs and allowances for SNA 7 (all values in tonnes)

Option	Total Allowable Catch	Total Allowable Commercial Catch	Allowances		
			Customary **Māori**	Recreational	Other sources of fishing-related mortality
Option 1 *(Status quo)*	306	200	16	90	0
Option 2	545	250	20	250	25

6.1 OPTION 1

Under Option 1, the existing TAC would be retained. The TACC and allowances would be retained in line with the *status quo*.

This option is a cautious approach to change given current information on catches is uncertain and projections are not available beyond 2018/19.

Impact
The longer the current controls remain, the higher the risk that the TAC is being exceeded. Currently the risk of exceeding the TAC does not pose a significant sustainability risk as the stock continues to rebuild toward target. However, over time overcatch of the TAC could impact the ability to reach the target.

If preliminary estimates on overcatch is verified in the next few years management action may be needed to constrain catch to the TAC, or another review of the TAC contemplated.

The status quo option does not provide for any change to management of the commercial sector. This means that the industry would have to continue to adapt fishing behaviour to ensure their collective catches do not increase and meet increased costs from deemed value penalties.

Despite decreased targeting of snapper $70,812.45 in deemed values was paid for over-catch in the 2014/15 fishing year. Information indicates that because of abundance and increased catchability increased commercial catch of snapper is likely to be unavoidable in the flatfish and gurnard target fisheries and may also occur in a number of other fisheries.

6.2 OPTION 2

Option 2 proposes:

- The TAC be increased from 306 tonnes to 545 tonnes
- The TACC be increased from 200 tonnes to 250 tonnes
- The customary Māori customary allowance would increase from 16 tonnes to 20 tonnes

- The recreational allowance would increase from 90 tonnes to 250 tonnes
- The allowance for other sources of fishing-related mortality would be set at 25 tonnes.

Stock assessment information suggests that SNA 7 will be able to sustain annual catches of approximately 600 – 800 tonnes once it has reached the target level of 40% B_0. The TAC proposed of 545 tonnes is not considered to prevent the stock from increasing towards these levels.

However, projections are currently only available to 2018/19 and a key element of this option would be ongoing work to monitor the stock and fishing activity and develop a plan of how best to reach and maintain target levels.

Discussions about future management and the rate of rebuild will be equally important to all sectors who have an allocation in the SNA 7 fishery as is the need to understand current catches and the impact that they may be having on the rebuild.

The proposal of 250 tonne for both the TACC and the recreational allowance recognises that both commercial and recreational fishers currently take significant portions of SNA 7 catch. A 50:50 allocation recognises the value of snapper for recreational fishers in this area, which historically hasn't translated to catches because the stock was depleted. An increased customary allowance notes that customary catches may also be increasing and the importance of snapper to tangata whenua.

Collectively this acknowledges the importance of this fishery to all sectors and acknowledges the shared responsibility for SNA 7 guardianship, while incentivising working together to ensure all fishers are satisfied with the fishing experience and the management of the SNA 7 fishery. The increases are proposed in the context that, while trying to move a stock towards a B_{MSY} based target, modest increases in catch could be appropriate as the stock biomass increases.

Impact
MPI considers that where abundance is increasing, opportunities to increase sector productivity can be provided, thereby enabling industry to find ways to utilise this resource, a 50 tonne increase would result in an additional income for this stock of $211,000 based on the 2016/17 port price of $4.22/kg.

The increase in the recreational allowance better aligns the level that the current projections suggest is the estimated current recreational catch.

Further work is envisaged under this option to determine how best to manage the fishery toward target biomass and to maintain an abundant and sustainable fishery for future generations.

7 Other Matters

7.1 DEEMED VALUES

Deemed values are an economic tool that incentivises commercial fishers not to catch in excess of their individual annual catch entitlements. MPI consider the current DV is adequately providing commercial over catch and is appropriately incentivising balancing catch with ACE at present.

7.2 RECREATIONAL CONTROLS

During the pre-consultation process discussed below, the multi-sector forum made various suggestions about bag limits, changes to the minimum legal size, and method restrictions were put forward.

MPI notes that the change in the fishery has been rapid and information from the current recreational survey will be useful to provide context for these suggestions.

Regardless of the TAC decision no immediate changes are being proposed in this review. Alteration of any recreational controls will require an additional regulatory process and this process would involve thorough additional consultation and analysis to support any recommendations by the multi-sector working group.

7.3 OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING INFORMATION

As part of the development plan MPI considers that it will be useful to identify other opportunities to gather information on the SNA 7 fishery in addition to the research proposed for SNA 7. For example, the commercial reporting of undersize snapper was initiated in SNA 1 in 2014 and could usefully be applied in SNA 7.

7.4 PRE-CONSULTATION

For stocks that MPI know are highly valued by customary, recreational and commercial fishers like SNA 7, a different pathway for review is being taken to allow for more engagement with MPI and other interests. A critical part of the pre-consultation is to hear concerns and aspirations from all viewpoints early in the process in order to better inform plans for managing the stock.

To support a review of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of snapper in the SNA 7 area. MPI coordinated a multi-sector SNA 7 management group which is made up of recreational fishers, commercial representative and MPI staff.

Customary interests chose to contribute to this group through existing well established customary engagement forums with MPI and the SNA 7 management group.

The SNA 7 management group held a series of local public drop-in information sessions to present the latest information on SNA 7 in poster form that allowed the public to ask questions and make comments.

These sessions were held in Havelock, Nelson, Motueka and Takaka in mid-April.

During this consultation process similar meetings will be held to allow all stakeholders to ask further questions and discuss the options proposed. These meeting will be advertised locally and posted on the MPI website at www.mpi.govt.nz.

8 Conclusion

Available information suggests the abundance of SNA 7 has increased in recent years. Although the fishery is still considered to be in a rebuilding phase, the science shows that stock biomass is increasing toward the target under current catches but there is uncertainty in relation to what the current recreational catch is and at what rate it is increasing. While there is the option to maintain the status quo until these uncertainties are further understood there is also an opportunity to provide for some increased catch while still ensuring the stock rebuilds.

The proposal to increase the TAC should be considered in the context that, while trying to move a stock towards B_{MSY}, increases in catch could be appropriate as the stock biomass continues to increase. However to ensure the sustainability of the stock, MPI stresses the need to continue to obtain information on the fishery including catch-at-age information from the commercial catch. As this is a shared fishery MPI will contribute to the cost of this project.

Increasing the TAC, TACC and allowances during periods of abundance creates opportunities for all fishing stakeholders to increase the social and economic benefits that can be obtained from the fishery.

Increasing the recreational allowance will contribute to increased benefits from the fishery and acknowledges the shared status of this fishery and the benefits of shared responsibility and joint guardianship. To inform future management new information on recreational catch will be available next year, and while it will only be a snapshot it will be more certain than the last estimate (89 tonnes) and the current projection based on exploitation rates.

MPI considers that a modest increase in commercial catch would provide for increasing "bycatch" in target fisheries, but that should be considered alongside further work with other sectors to determine how best to manage the fishery over the longer term.

A research programme (which would be discussed as part of the management plan) would likely include regular CPUE analysis and continued future stock assessments as well as enhanced monitoring of the fishery through the WCSI trawl turvey.

In addition to the specific SNA 7 recreational estimates due in March 2017, future estimates of recreational catch will be ongoing with the repeat of an enhanced National Panel survey to provide updated estimate of recreational harvest for SNA 7. The next National Panel survey estimates are likely to be available in 2019-20.

MPI acknowledges there is a significant amount of work needed to determine the best management strategy for SNA 7, but in the short term is seeking information and views from tangata whenua and stakeholders to support the development of final advice to the Minister on management settings for the fishing year commencing 1 October 2016.

It is important to note that the Minister has broad discretion in exercising his powers of decision-making. He will make his own independent assessment of the information presented to him before making a final decision on whether or not to vary the TAC, allowances and TACC.