

## QUOTA HIKE FOR CRAYFISHERS

Southern commercial rock lobster fishermen had utilised a 25 percent quota increase this season to take advantage of the market when prices were high, the CRA8 management committee chief executive, Malcolm Lawson, said on January 12.

The southern fishery, which extends from Long Point on the southeastern coast to above Haast, opted for quota cuts in recent years to allow breeding stocks to replenish. The total quota had dropped to as low as 568 tonnes between 2001 and 2004. This season it increased to 754 tonnes. The increase in quota presented a challenge for the four processors in the south to deal with demand.

The quota would stay the same next season, as increases could only occur every second season, Lawson said. About 80 tonnes of quota remained this season, and many fishermen were holding off catching more lobster until the Chinese New Year, a traditionally busy and potentially profitable period.

The New Zealand dollar was still too high for exporters, but returns were higher than during the 2005-06 season, he said.

The fact fishermen were more willing to wait until the market peaked before going after the fish showed they had confidence in stocks, Lawson said. "They are targeting the market and getting the returns."

The number of boats in the southern fleet had remained stable at about 60, and it was encouraging to see some young fishers getting into the industry, he said.

## FISHING FOR PAUA POACHERS

On December 27, two Wellington Fishery Officers, Scott Bernie and Barry Lanauze, caught two men carrying 800 paua at Palliser Bay on the Wainuiomata coast. The legal catch is 10 per person per day. The isolated coastline is favoured by sophisticated poaching operations, so the pair had decided to take another look.

"About 95 percent of seizures are about being at the right place at the right time," says Bernie. But public assistance can still be vital.

Barry and Scott search for evidence of poaching, such as discarded shells, supplies and equipment, but 10km of rocky shore has countless hiding places.

After an hour they find a bivouac used by suspected poachers, with clothing, a drink bottle and week-old paua shells. Barry says the poachers would have been there from 6am till late evening every day.

After destroying the makeshift shelter, they head for Pencarrow Lighthouse at the entrance to Wellington Harbour. Whenever they see snorkel equipment, they stop the vehicle to check, reminding people of the rules.

Everyone is cooperative. "We enjoy chasing paua poachers, but education is pretty important," says Lanauze.

## FISHERS MEET TO SOLVE DIFFERENCES

Recreational, commercial and customary fishers are still poles apart, but a meeting organised by the Ministry of Fisheries in Nelson suggests their differences can be resolved.

The ministry has released a discussion paper on shared fisheries where recreational, commercial and customary fisheries overlap. It held the last of seven nationwide, public meetings in Nelson to present the key points of the paper and seek feedback from the region's fishers.

New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council vice-president Geoff Rowling of Upper Moutere said about 50 people attended the meeting. All three parties were represented and one of their main concerns was the lack of detail in the paper.

"People are looking for positive changes but there's a bit of concern about a lack of detail. But that's what you'd expect from

a discussion paper rather than a legislative proposal - they are about principles."

Rowling said there was also concern that the rights of one sector would prevail. Commercial fishers were particularly worried about the paper's suggestion that there would be "priority access for amateur fishers over commercial fishers." In contrast, some amateur fishers thought the paper did not go far enough to protect their rights to shared fisheries.

However, Rowling said a negotiated management of shared fisheries was a possibility and was already happening in some areas. "The reality is that a number of the initiatives proposed in the Shared Fisheries paper, in terms of multi-stakeholder and management, are already happening in the Nelson area. So the outcome from legislative changes may just add a bit of bite to those arrangements that have been developed for some years."

Fishers have until February 28 to make submissions on the paper. Submissions can be made by e-mail to [shared.fisheries@fish.govt.nz](mailto:shared.fisheries@fish.govt.nz) or on a form available on the Ministry of Fisheries' website. See [www.fish.govt.nz](http://www.fish.govt.nz)

## TIGHT CONTROLS HELP SAVE SEABIRDS

The Minister of Fisheries, Jim Anderton, has restricted the use of surface longlines to address threats to albatross and other seabirds.



The measures were a response to two incidents, including one in the Kermadec Fisheries Management Area last November in which a boat targeting tuna and swordfish caught seven petrels and 51 albatross.

All surface longlines targeting tuna or swordfish will be required to be set at night. Approved bird-scaring devices (tori lines) must be used when surface longlining, regardless of whether tuna or swordfish is the prime target.

All fishers using surface longlines must also notify the Ministry of Fisheries' observer programme of their departure date for a fishing trip at least five days prior to sailing.

The three interim mitigation measures will stay in place until a satisfactory long-term solution can be found.

## CRAY INDUSTRY MIGHT HALVE CRA 4 TAKE

Dwindling crayfish stocks in waters off the lower North Island have led the industry to consider nearly halving the commercial take for next season.

Quota holders in the CRA 4 fishery area voted on the proposal, with a deadline of January 25.



The fishery stretches south from the Wairoa River in Hawke's Bay to Wairarapa, Wellington, Cook Strait, and up to the Manawatu River.

If 95 percent of the quota holders agree, the 2007-08 Total Allowable Commercial Catch, or

TACC, will drop by 44 percent from 576 tonnes a year, worth \$16 million, to 329 tonnes.

Crayfish numbers had fallen because of fishing activity, combined with fewer than normal juvenile crays, said Daryl Sykes, the executive officer of the Rock Lobster Industry Council.



The crayfish stocks had been closely monitored since November 2005. "Overall economic performance has declined to the point where it's worthwhile to increase stock abundance." After the vote, the CRA 4's executive committee would look at the results and decide on their next move, Sykes said.

Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton, who has backed the plan, called it a pre-emptive strike. "They've taken an approach that shows sensitivity to sustainability issues and one that also makes good sense economically."

The minister can reduce the catch if research shows the fishery is struggling and nothing is being done.

Port Nicholson Fisheries director Paul Morgan said the move could lead to quite a few leaving the industry. The company is the biggest quota holder in the region.

Sykes said the proposed cut would not affect local crayfish prices, which were determined by the export market. Frozen crayfish sells for about \$50 a kilo.

### NEW RULES TO PROTECT RARE DOLPHINS

The Minister of Fisheries, the Hon Jim Anderton, has introduced new measures to better ensure responsible set net use in areas where the endangered Hector's dolphins are most at risk.

Non-commercial fishers at Te Waewae Bay and Kaikoura, between the Waiau and Clarence Rivers, must now stay with their nets, he said on December 21. The measures complement controls already in place.



Voluntary codes of practice were already in place for commercial set netters around the eastern coast of the South Island, but Anderton said he wanted to be sure they were being implemented "robustly and effectively."

He was also looking at developing a code of practice for trawl vessels and set net fishers for the West Coast of the South Island. MFish staff were meeting with drift and set net fishers in Port Waikato to determine whether they represent a threat to Maui's dolphins in the area.

"I consider the period from now until the development of the Threat Management Plan to be a trial," Anderton said. "All sectors should be on notice that these additional controls are interim measures only."

In another move, the government is boosting the number of "observers" on fishing boats as part of moves to save the critically endangered Maui's dolphin, its close relative, of which only about 110 remain. It is native to the western coast of the North Island between Dargaville and New Plymouth.

Conservation Minister Chris Carter said the number of fisheries observers would be quadrupled to more than 400 observation days a year. The observers would also provide information about other endangered species, including shags, shearwaters and penguins.

Maui's dolphins grow to a maximum of 1.7m and weigh about 50kg.

### MOST FISHERS ABIDE BY THE RULES

Most recreational fishers are keeping to the fishing regulations, Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton said on January 18. Ministry of Fisheries compliance figures for December 2006 showed that 95 percent of recreational fishers inspected met the regulations.

"Hardcore professional poachers are responsible for most illegal fishing around the coast. With substantial penalties, there is a lot at stake for poachers, so the most experienced and highly trained fisheries officers are used to target them."

Last December, surveillance staff inspected 1075 recreational ►

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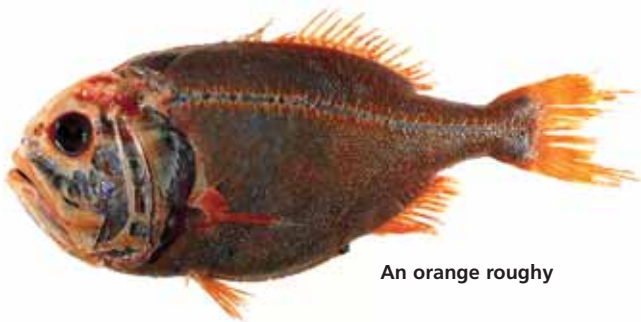
vessels and conducted 345 patrols on land and at sea. Staff issued 77 infringements and five individuals were prosecuted. On any day of the month up to 11 active patrols operated around the country.

“This work is not wasted, as every inspection is a chance to reinforce regulations, and all fisheries officers report that there is an ever-increasing knowledge of regulations among fishers,” Anderton said. The Coastwatch programme had helped raise awareness of fisheries regulations and penalties.

### JAIL FOR ORANGE ROUGHY FRAUD

An Auckland commercial fisherman believed to have illegally taken over 190 tonnes of orange roughy was sentenced on January 31 to 18 months imprisonment for quota fraud.

Stephen John Krynicki, aged 40, was sentenced in the Auckland District Court on January 21 by Judge Russell Callander. He had earlier pleaded guilty to several charges of falsifying his fishing catch returns, in which he claimed that he was fishing in one location when he was actually catching fish elsewhere.



An orange roughy

The Ministry of Fisheries said it was believed to be the first time a fisherman had been jailed for quota fraud.

Krynicki was also banned from fishing for three years.

MFish investigations manager Mark Nicholson said the offence had the potential to affect the viability of the entire orange roughy fishery. It was Krynicki’s second conviction for such offending. In 1998, he was also caught deliberately misreporting catches and was fined \$14,000.

The president of the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council, Keith Ingram, said the sentence was justified and welcomed.

“All too often we are seeing greedy fish thieves plundering our fish stocks to a level where it is no longer sustainable, and to turn a blind eye is just condoning the practice. Recreational fishers are asking for tougher and more sensible sentences for offenders, as these thieves are robbing the public of New Zealand,” Ingram said.

“We look forward to the courts following this judge’s example in coming down hard on all fish thieves, be they commercial, recreational or customary.”

The New Zealand Seafood Industry Council said the sentence was totally justified. “The sustainability of the fisheries depends upon the quota management system, and any infringement, particularly an extreme one, can put a fishery at risk,” said the chief executive, Owen Symmans.

### SHELLFISH LIMITS MAY BE LOWERED

Shellfish limits may be unrealistic, says the Ministry of Fisheries. It says the daily limit of 50 cockles, pipi and tuatua may be unworkable because people persistently break the rules, and it is reviewing its policy on how to protect marine life.

Fisheries analyst Richard Faneslow says the limits were set about seven years ago and it is time for a rethink. Lower levels were originally introduced for Auckland and the Coromandel Peninsula because they were coming under increasing pressure from a growing population.

“Our compliance team is increasingly finding people are simply ignoring their 50 per person per day limit and taking much more,” Faneslow says. Reducing the daily limit to fewer than 50 has not been ruled out, and shellfish gathering could be limited to a designated season, as with scallops. The ministry wants to consult with the community before making any changes, and will start examining scientific data and asking for submissions in March.

Even closing beaches might not return some shellfish to their previous levels. Eastern Beach in Auckland has been closed to harvesting for several years, and the shellfish have not recovered.

### ILLEGAL DUMPING OF FISH ALLEGED

The Ministry of Fisheries charged a New Zealand fishing company, a deep-sea skipper and two crew members with illegally dumping fish when they appeared in the Nelson District Court on February 2.

A fisherman and a ship factory manager each admitted 15 charges of procuring a commercial fisher to dump southern blue whiting. The fish, a member of the cod family, is popular with Japanese for surimi and falls under the quota management system. The fishing company and the skipper, whose names were suppressed, denied the charges, which arose from a trip in September 2004 to the Southern Ocean fishing grounds. Crew members’ estimates of the amount of fish dumped ranged between 40 and 311 tonnes.

The Crown prosecutor, Chris Lange, said fish dumping was the greatest threat to the integrity of the QMS. The practice was thought to be widespread but was difficult to detect, he said.

Judge Margaret Lee remanded the two fishermen at large until March 22, when the company and the skipper will also reappear for a status hearing.

### MAORI NOT KEEN ON SHARED FISHERIES

Government proposals for so-called “shared fisheries” could have a detrimental effect on the Maori Commercial Fisheries Settlement, Te Ohu Kaimoana said on February 2.

That’s the message the Maori Fisheries Trust took to a hui in Wellington on February 9. “We believe it will undermine the value of the settlement with the Crown, reduce individual iwis’ share of quota and provide greater uncertainty throughout all fishing sectors,” said the chief executive, Peter Douglas.

“There doesn’t appear to be any good reason for this action, other than to give recreational fishers a greater catch at the expense of the industry.” The proposals would mean a greater share of the overall catch would not be known, because recreational fishers do not have to report their catch, Douglas said.

### CONSULTATION CLOSING FOR SHARED FISHERIES

Fishers from all sectors have until the end of February to comment on proposals for the future management of shared fisheries.

Shared fisheries are fisheries where commercial, customary and amateur fishers all target the same species. Examples are snapper, blue cod, kahawai, tarakihi, gurnard, rock lobster (crayfish) and paua.

The Minister of Fisheries, Jim Anderton, launched the Shared Fisheries Discussion Document in October. The consultation period finishes on February 28, and all submissions must be in by this date.

“I encourage people to read the discussion document to come to their own view and have their say.”

He said he would not allow any reallocation to occur without compensation to quota owners, and hoped that any reallocation could be on a willing buyer/willing seller basis.

See [www.fish.govt.nz/shared\\_fisheries](http://www.fish.govt.nz/shared_fisheries)

