

# SOUTH ISLAND MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHERIES POLICY

November 2019

## INTRODUCTION

To date, New Zealand has failed to address problems that inevitably arise in shared fisheries. Those are fisheries where commercial, recreational and Māori customary fishers have a shared interest, and they value their share quite differently.

An exception to this policy occurred in 1989 when the same government that implemented the Quota Management System developed what turned out to be an unacceptable policy position on recreational fishing.

The position was that the recreational right to fish would have priority status where there was insufficient fisheries abundance to support both commercial and non-commercial fishing. This policy was not taken to Cabinet for legislative approval, nor has it been endorsed by any subsequent governments. Furthermore, the courts have confirmed there is no legal basis for favouring recreational fishing over commercial fishing when allocating sustainable yields in fisheries.

The policy vacuum has continued for the last three decades, leading to the recreational fishing sector being largely ignored and increasingly disadvantaged as the commercial fishing sector and Māori fishing interests have had the ability to advance organisational arrangements to improve representation of their interests in management decision making.

Based on feedback received, South Island recreational fishers are near unanimous in recognising the status quo is not working in their interests, and the outlook is less favourable because of it.

The establishment of [Fish Mainland](#) addresses this imbalance by providing the best possible means of representing South Islanders' recreational fishing interests, based on an electoral system for Board of Director selection at the regional and Iwi level. [Fish Mainland](#) demonstrates professional, adequately-funded representation that could not be possible without fishers' collective commitment and financial contributions.

[Fish Mainland's](#) purpose is to coordinate, represent, and promote the interests of the South Island marine recreational fishing community in restoring and sustaining fisheries resources to maximise their experiences and opportunities.

While [Fish Mainland](#) has an explicit role in promoting recreational fishing, its effectiveness will largely come through its ability to work respectfully and collaboratively with the Crown, Iwi, the other fishing sectors and interests to find workable solutions that provide the best outcomes for New Zealand.

Collaboration embodies South Islanders' approach to shared fisheries problems. The gathering together of various fishing sectors and interests to find workable solutions characterises the Guardians of Fiordland and Kaikoura. This same approach is suitable for resolving most other regional fisheries problems.

The establishment of [Fish Mainland](#) provides the best possible means of representing South Islanders' recreational fishing interests.

These problems are wide ranging, including spatial and temporal conflicts between fishing sectors, various land-based activities that threaten the health of marine habitats and ecosystems, and the growing adverse effects of climate change. All fishing sectors and interests would benefit by having representative bodies that can collaboratively address a range of issues and work with diverse groups to resolve shared problems.

On this basis, this policy acknowledges that recreational fishing is a valuable and integral component of South Island fisheries, as are commercial and Māori customary fishing, and that a healthy marine environment is crucial to the wellbeing of all sectors and interests.

## PURPOSE

This policy demonstrates the direction that South Island recreational fisheries development and management should follow in the coming years. Its purpose is to guide and coordinate the actions of the South Island recreational fishing sector, the Crown, Iwi, other fishing sectors and interests in realising opportunities and meeting the challenges facing the recreational sector in shared fisheries.

For recreational fishers, the policy should be seen as aspirational in setting out the way to improve their experiences and opportunities now and in the future. For the other fishing sectors and interests, the policy should provide assurance that the intended way forward is through collaboration and pursuit of balanced results that benefit all sectors and interests. This requires upholding the rights associated with quota holdings and the settlement of Treaty claims.

*For recreational fishers, the policy should be seen as aspirational in setting out the way to improve their experiences and opportunities—now and in the future.*

For the Crown, the policy should be both reassuring and challenging. Its purpose is to pursue those arrangements that provide the best outcomes, benefiting all who enjoy the South Island marine environment and its resources. Importantly, its purpose is also to clearly state a position on New Zealanders' right to fish. That is, New Zealanders have a right to access a reasonable share of fisheries resources. And, in some shared fisheries, recreational fishing levels may be as significant as commercial fishing and, therefore, warrant equitable outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, allocations between the two fishing sectors could change over time to reflect changing values and resource use. Allocations can be spatial, temporal and as proportions of sustainable yields.

The challenge will be in determining which shared fisheries warrant changes in allocations, as these fisheries reflect changing values and resource use. True sharing of fisheries should incentivise the fishing sectors to improve fisheries for their mutual benefit.

<sup>1</sup> Customary fishing rights are not defined by quantity, as the legislation does not state the amount or proportion of fish and shellfish to be taken for customary purposes. Also, fishing for customary purposes is not subject to Government-imposed regulatory measures, as are commercial and recreational fishing.

## SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy is inclusive of the broad South Island marine recreational fishing sector, which includes all who fish under the amateur fishing rules, along with the producers, distributors and suppliers of fishing tackle and bait, boats and services, such as fuel, charter, guide and dive services, media and tourism. It is also inclusive of the individuals, businesses and other organisations that have an interest in and support recreational fishing and sustainable fisheries management practices.

This policy applies to all South Island marine recreational fisheries, including fish, shellfish, rock lobsters and other invertebrates collected for food and the enjoyable challenge of fishing. In so doing, the policy acknowledges the dependence that some communities have on local fisheries as a source of food. It also acknowledges the spiritual and cultural relationships between Māori and Tangaroa, and the importance of commercial fishing as a source of food for non-fishers and fishers alike.

Furthermore, the policy applies to species that are dependent for only part of their life cycle in the ocean and may be caught either in marine or estuarine environments. It also applies to acclimatised species in areas outside the control of the New Zealand Fish & Game Council and wildlife conservancies.



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## Policy Structure: Key Principles

This part sets out 10 key principles for managing South Island recreational fisheries. These principles apply to all fisheries and types of recreational fishing:

1. Healthy marine habitats and ecosystems are fundamental to sustainable fisheries resources and recreational fishing.
2. Recreational fishing makes a valuable contribution to the health and wellbeing of South Islanders by providing nutritional benefits, along with psychological, social, cultural and economic benefits that should be encouraged.
3. South Island communities benefit by improving the range and quality of recreational fishing opportunities.
4. Recreational fishers have a right to access a reasonable share of fisheries resources.
5. Recreational fishers share in the stewardship of fisheries resources through their ability and desire to address issues that affect their fishing experiences and opportunities.
6. Management decision making that affects recreational fishing should be based on sound scientific, ecological, social, cultural and economic information.
7. Recreational fishers encourage safe fishing and the use of best practices in all aspects of fishers' activities.
8. Recreational fishing should be a valuable component of environmental and sustainable resource use subjects in educational and training programmes.
9. Recreational fishers and the Crown should share the responsibility and costs of managing and enhancing recreational fishing.
10. Recreational fishers are willing to partner with the Crown, Iwi, other fishing sectors and interests to resolve shared problems that threaten the health of marine habitats and ecosystems.

## GOALS

The following five goals are consistent with the key principles laid out above and form the basis for the South Island recreational fishing sector's priorities in the coming years:

### **Goal 1: To support recreational fishing as a valuable and integral component of the South Island culture at the individual, family and community level.**

The recreational fishing sector and related industries contribute significant value for the South Island economy. They also contribute more-difficult-to-measure health and wellbeing benefits at the individual, family and community level.

For individuals, recreational fishing is a valued pastime, a connection to nature and tradition, and something that constitutes an integral part of the South Island culture.

At the family level, recreational fishing benefits relationship building through the passing down of values, skills and motivation for outdoor activities.

At the community level, many depend on locally caught fish and shellfish as a source of food. Depletion of these resources could adversely affect these communities. Fishers often share their catch with community members who may not be able to fish or cannot afford to buy fish and shellfish, and this is a valued reward for their efforts.

Nonetheless, little attention has been directed towards understanding the extent to which recreational fishing occurs, the value placed on recreational fishing experiences and opportunities and the health and wellbeing benefits. This lack of understanding has led to the Crown failing to recognise its important role in supporting and encouraging participation in fishing.



## Goal 1 (continued)

### Action 1

Gain a better understanding of the extent to which recreational fishing occurs, the value placed on recreational fishing experiences and opportunities and the health and wellbeing benefits.

### Action 2

Partner with community health, sport, research and recreational bodies about the nutritional, psychological, social, cultural and economic benefits of recreational fishing and communicate those benefits.

## Goal 2: To establish recreational fishers as respected partners in the stewardship of the South Island marine environment and fisheries resources.

Fisheries New Zealand was formed in 2018 with a new focus on innovation and improved engagement. **Fish Mainland** was designed with this focus in mind. It will partner with Fisheries New Zealand and others to find innovative ways for the recreational fishing sector to be stewards of the environment and shared fisheries.

Partnerships by definition lead to more inclusive engagement, and over time develop mutual trust and respect. The development of trust and respect amongst the Crown, Iwi, the other fishing sectors and interests will form the basis for resolving differences and forming more effective partnerships.

The long-term goal is for some partnerships to progress to co-management arrangements whereby responsibilities and obligations for sustainable fisheries management are negotiated, shared and delegated between the Crown, Iwi, the other fishing sectors and interests. These arrangements are conducive to each sector being involved in problem definition and resolution and able to contribute to policy developments on issues that could have an effect on them.

For partnerships and co-management arrangements to develop, there is an acknowledged need to build the South Island recreational fishing sector's capability and capacity. This includes having professional and dedicated Board of Directors and staff in **Fish Mainland**, and the ability to collect better information on fishing experiences and opportunities. This information is crucial for ensuring the recreational voice is heard in management decision making.

The sources of this information will be individuals and groups of South Island fishers, along with those in

support industries. As partners, Iwi, the other fishing sectors and interests will also be important sources of information. Their voices are crucial to achieving balanced results that benefit all sectors and interests and, therefore, provide the best outcomes for New Zealand.

### Action 1

Partner with Fisheries New Zealand, Iwi and others to find innovative ways for the recreational fishing sector to be active stewards of the marine environment and fisheries resources.

### Action 2

Commit to inclusive engagement and the development of trust and respect amongst the Crown, Iwi, the other fishing sectors and interests so that differences can be resolved and effective partnerships and co-management arrangements can be formed.

### Action 3

Strive for the recreational fishing sector being directly involved in problem definition and resolution and contributing to policy development on issues that could have an effect on fishing experiences and opportunities.

### Action 4

Invest in the recreational fishing sector's capability and capacity, including networks for information gathering to better inform management decision making and achieve balanced results that benefit all sectors and interests.



### **Goal 3: To achieve recognition of New Zealanders' right to access a reasonable share of fisheries resources.**

New Zealanders' right to fish has remained poorly defined compared to the rights associated with quota holdings and Māori customary fishing rights. Ill-defined rights are difficult to protect when pressure increases for use of the nearshore environment and fisheries resources. Recreational fishers have remained concerned about their access to a reasonable share of fisheries resources. Fishers have encountered incremental reductions in access to preferred fishing grounds through regulatory restrictions, including establishment of Marine Protected Areas, and changes in voluntary resource sharing arrangements.

Recreational fishers view some reductions in spatial access as an erosion of the rights of all fishing sectors, especially when the objective is perceived as an intent to constrain fishing despite other factors (e.g. land-based activities) likely causing greater adverse effects on fisheries resources, biodiversity or ecosystems. This occurrence should incline the fishing sectors to partner in their efforts to address the potential underlying causes of adverse effects on the environment.

New Zealanders' right to fish can also be eroded when voluntary arrangements cease for resource sharing. If there are no opportunities to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes, then tensions and conflicts between fishing sectors can worsen to the detriment of all sectors.

Recreational fishers often view reductions in their allocations of sustainable yields as an erosion of their right to fish. While recreational fishers have been involved in allocation processes that have resulted in favourable outcomes, the common experience has been incremental reductions in allocations and bag limits.

New Zealanders have a right to access a reasonable share of fisheries resources. And, in some shared fisheries, recreational fishing levels may be as significant as commercial fishing and, therefore, warrant equitable outcomes. In other words, allocations (spatial, temporal and as sustainable yields) could change over time to reflect changing values and resource use.

The challenge will be in determining which shared fisheries warrant changes in allocations, as these fisheries reflect changing values and resource use. True sharing of fisheries should incentivise the fishing sectors to improve fisheries for their mutual benefit.

Allocations will be an increasingly important issue as more shared fisheries rebuild and are managed at higher levels of abundance. It will be important for the Crown, Iwi and other fishing sectors and interest to keep informed of developments in overseas allocation models and consider how they could be adapted for New Zealand's conditions.

#### *Action 1*

Ensure that any proposed reductions in spatial access to fisheries resources are well informed of the value placed on that access and potential non-fishing causes of adverse effects on the environment.

#### *Action 2*

Pursue voluntary resource sharing arrangements, where possible, and seek resolution of the causes of tensions and conflicts between fishing sectors through mutual understanding and appropriate trade-offs.

#### *Action 3*

Uphold New Zealanders' right to access a reasonable share of the fisheries resources by ensuring that allocation decisions are well informed of the most social, cultural and economic beneficial use of the resource, and changes in values and resource use over time.

#### *Action 4*

Keep informed of overseas fisheries allocations models and consider their adaptation for New Zealand's conditions.

### **Goal 4: To provide information on recreational fishing to improve management decision making.**

Adequate and appropriate information on recreational fishing is fundamental to effective management decision making.

However, in most fisheries there is very limited quantitative information on total recreational catch and catch relative to bag limits. This lack of information disadvantages the recreational fishing sector when decisions are made on fishing access and resource allocations.

## Goal 4 (continued)

While improved collection of information is an ongoing management priority, little has changed during the last few years beyond the use of the expensive and infrequent National Panel Survey (NPS) and a few other research methodologies. While the NPS and other methodologies provide valuable information, there are particular challenges in their use in South Island fisheries.

For example, some meshblocks and fisheries are not well represented in the NPS, causing some estimates of catch and effort to be less precise. Aerial surveys are infrequently used in the South Island, and only at the top of the South. Similarly, webcams are set up at only two boat ramps, also at the top of the South, and few research-based creel surveys take place. In summary, South Island fisheries receive a relatively small portion of the recreational fisheries research budget.

Several South Island recreational fishers, fishing clubs and the Guardians of Fiordland and Kaikoura have highlighted the value they place on collecting more information and with greater frequency in order to gain a better understanding of localised trends in abundance, size distribution and availability of fish stocks that are important to recreational fishers. Accordingly, more attention should be directed at developing new ways to collect information on recreational catch and effort, including self-reporting systems, that augment the infrequent use of the NPS and other methodologies.

### *Action 1*

Pursue ways to collect information on recreational catch and effort, starting with promoting more frequent use of the NPS and other methodologies.

### *Action 2*

Explore the design of other methodologies, including self-reporting systems, especially those that involve recreational fishers in monitoring local trends in fisheries that are important to them.

### *Action 3*

Partner with universities and other research institutions to develop local and regional research projects.

### *Action 4*

Participate in Fisheries New Zealand research prioritisation and planning.

## Goal 5: To ensure the quality of sustainable recreational fishing opportunities into the future.

Recreational fishers are increasingly aware of the risks posed to themselves when fishing from boats or from shore. Sustainable recreational fishing opportunities begin with fishers taking appropriate actions to ensure they return home safely and able to fish another day.

**Fish Mainland** promotes Maritime New Zealand's educational programme for safe boating and fishing. This programme highlights the importance of carrying essential safety gear, avoiding alcohol while on board, checking the weather, keeping a lookout for boats, knowing the rules for sharing the water and understanding the responsibilities of the skipper.

Recreational fishers are also increasingly aware of their collective effect on fisheries and the marine environment. It is now common for them to advocate for voluntary compliance or tighter regulatory controls on their fishing practices and catches to reduce their effect.

It is important that Fisheries New Zealand continues to put in place relevant controls and enforces them, along with providing explanations of their importance to ensuring the quality of sustainable fishing opportunities. The success of these controls largely depends on the degree of public acceptance. Individual fishers and fishing clubs can play an important role in informing and educating the public about the benefits of complying with these controls, along with other key messages, such as safe boating and fishing.

A growing sense of personal responsibility amongst recreational fishers has led to greater engagement in habitat protection and restoration projects, the use of more sustainable fishing gear and other products, and increased public awareness through relevant educational and training programmes.

Expectantly, recreational fishers often perceive factors other than fishing as posing greater threats to the marine environment, including other human activities that intensify sedimentation and nutrient loading in nearshore environments, urban development and climate change. It is important that recreational fishers engage constructively on these factors while demonstrating improvements in their own environmental credentials.



## Goal 5 (continued)

### *Action 1*

Support Maritime New Zealand in promoting safe boating and fishing practices.

### *Action 2*

Promote compliance with voluntary and regulatory controls that reduce the environmental effect of recreational fishing activities.

### *Action 3*

Encourage recreational fishers to use best practices in all aspects of fishing, and support their involvement in educational and training programmes.

### *Action 4*

Develop a stewardship framework (e.g. code of practice) that addresses socially important environmental issues and demonstrates the recreational fishing sector's environmental credentials.

## CONCLUSION

Recreational fishers are collectively taking greater responsibility for many of the activities that will shape the future of marine fishing in South Island waters. They are increasingly becoming involved in the activities that underpin sustainable resource use now and in the future.

While recreational fishing competes with many other activities for Crown attention and resources, fishing continues to be an important component of the South Island culture and a source of health and wellbeing benefits that should be encouraged.

**The South Island recreational fishing sector is committed to achieving results that benefit all sectors, thereby providing the best outcomes for New Zealand.**

Recreational fishing in New Zealand faces the same challenges as overseas fisheries. That is, the challenge to present an effective recreational voice that is respected and listened to by the Crown and others.

In most cases, this challenge is best met by forming strong leadership through a representative body and a



Tautuku Fishing Club

coordinated approach to funding it. How this challenge is met will largely determine the success of other efforts to improve the management of recreational fisheries.

With **Fish Mainland** established and secure, long-term funding in place, it is timely to turn attention to the types of policy positions necessary to address inevitable problems that arise in shared fisheries.

This policy's purpose is to guide and coordinate the actions of the South Island recreational fishing sector, the Crown, Iwi, other fishing sectors and interests in realising opportunities and meeting the challenges facing the recreational sector in shared fisheries.

The South Island recreational fishing sector is committed to working collaboratively to achieve balanced results that benefit all sectors and interests and, therefore, provide the best outcomes for New Zealand.

This policy acknowledges the need for continual evolution in the way shared fisheries are managed and, therefore, recommends a regular process of reviewing progress, publicly reporting the results and making amendments that reflect the public's feedback.