

FISHERIES PLAN: NEW ZEALAND SEAWEED FISHERIES



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Introduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 To be completed.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

2 The New Zealand Seaweeds Fisheries Plan (the plan) is a collaborative approach between the Government, tāngata whenua, and commercial, environmental, and recreational stakeholders to maximise value to New Zealanders through the sustainable use of seaweed resources and protection of the aquatic environment.

3 The seaweed plan is incomplete, as it only outlines the current situation, available information and existing outcomes for the fishery from the Government's perspective. Completion of the plan requires collaboration with tāngata whenua and stakeholders to ensure the best available information¹ on the current situation is available for consideration. Stakeholder collaboration is also required to further develop management objectives, assess the fishery, suggest viable management measures, and propose an operational plan for the future management of the fishery.

4 The implementation of management measures proposed through this plan will be prioritised against measures proposed in other fisheries plans. Once the plan is operational, the Government, tāngata whenua, and stakeholders will monitor and review it. The plan will be fully reviewed at appropriate times in the future to update the best available information, review objectives, re-assess the fishery, and develop new management measures where required.

CONTEXT OF THE PLAN

5 The Ministry of Fisheries (MFish), through its *Statement of Intent* (SOI), has an overarching goal to “Maximise the value New Zealanders obtain through the sustainable use of fisheries resources and protection of the aquatic environment”.

The SOI has three contributing outcomes to achieve this goal. These are:

- health of aquatic environment protected
- best value able to be realised
- credible fisheries management

6 Fisheries plans approved under s 11A of the Fisheries Act 1996 will be the key tool to maximise value of New Zealand's fisheries while ensuring statutory obligations are met.

7 To achieve these outcomes for New Zealand's seaweed resources, the Ministry of Fisheries (MFish), in collaboration with tāngata whenua and stakeholders, must ensure seaweed fisheries are

¹ Section 10 of the Fisheries Act 1996 requires the best available information to be used for fisheries management.

utilised on a sustainable basis while protecting the aquatic environment. The required level of performance to achieve this goal will be defined as “standards”. The desired results for each seaweed fishery, in relation to the standards, will be achieved through fisheries plans using an objectives-based approach.

8 Where objectives and standards are not being met, MFish, in collaboration with tāngata whenua and stakeholders, will develop new management measures and standards to achieve the desired outcomes.

9 The first section looks at information that will enable people to assess the status of New Zealand’s seaweed resources against those three contributing outcomes.

10 The second section will describe the outcome of MFish’s work to clarify what everyone wants out of the seaweed fisheries, and where they each want these fisheries to be in the future.

11 The third section will look at how well the existing management framework meets the objectives and standards of the plan (e.g. fisheries sustainability and environmental effects of fishing).

12 The fourth section describes the management measures that will deliver the most efficient and cost-effective results for New Zealand’s seaweeds. Where possible, stakeholders will be allowed discretion and flexibility around how and when they harvest seaweeds, as well as encouraging voluntary compliance.

13 The final plan will also include the specific responsibilities for implementation, contingency strategies (where necessary), performance measures, and monitoring of the plan.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

14 Seaweeds are found in all inshore inter-tidal to sub-tidal habitats throughout New Zealand. Seaweeds play very important ecological roles in many aquatic communities - they are the nutritional base for aquatic food webs, and provide habitat and shelter for numerous fishes, invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Seaweed beds support high biodiversity. Seaweed fisheries are shared by commercial, customary and recreational fishers.

15 ‘Seaweed’ is defined under s 2 of the Fisheries Act 1996 (the Act) as:

“...all kinds of algae and sea-grasses that grow in New Zealand fisheries waters at any stages of their life history, whether living or dead”.

16 The scope of the definition is broader than might usually be considered under the term ‘seaweed’. It includes not only marine macro-algae (ie, kelps), but also sea-grasses and freshwater algae. Vascular aquatic plants, such as mangroves and watercress (puha), are not included in this definition.

17 This plan encompasses all seaweed fisheries (except those defined as unwanted organisms under the Biosecurity Act 1993). However, the plan focuses most attention on those seaweed species that are of primary value to commercial, customary, and recreational fishers. These species are listed below.

Brown seaweeds (Class Phaeophyceae)

Ecklonia radiata

Lessionia variegata & *L. brevifolia*

Macrocystis pyrifera (bladder kelp)

Durvillaea antarctica (bull kelp, rimurapa, kōauau)

Red seaweeds (Class Rhodophyceae)

Pterocladia lucida, *Pterocladia capillacea* (agar weed)

Gigartina spp (rehia, rimu rehia)

Gracilaria chilensis

Porphyra spp. (karengo, parengo, kareko, reporepo)

Green seaweeds (Class Chlorophyceae)

Ulva spp. (sea lettuce)

18 Any algal species that is managed as an ‘unwanted organism’ under the Biosecurity Act 1993 (eg, the invasive Japanese seaweed *Undaria pinnatifida*) is exempt from the requirement to hold a fishing permit under s 89 of the Act. These species are effectively managed outside the Act and are not considered under this plan.

19 Seaweeds occur in three physical states.

- attached – plant is attached to the substrate
- free-floating – plant is detached from the substrate and is floating within or on surface of water column
- beach-cast – plant is detached from the substrate and is deposited above the low tide level.

20 This plan encompasses all three physical seaweed states.

21 All seaweeds are presently managed using the generic fisheries management areas (FMAs) shown in Figure 1. This plan encompasses all FMAs except FMA 4 (Chatham Islands) and FMA 10 (Kermadecs). Separate fisheries plans are being developed for FMA s 4 and 10 and will include seaweeds.

Catch Data Limitations

22 Compared with other fisheries, New Zealand’s seaweed fisheries have a relatively low number of commercial participants. This means that catch information released in a public document must be aggregated to avoid revealing potentially commercially sensitive information provided by individual seaweed fishers. For this reason, the commercial catch information presented in this document is aggregated to large geographical areas where appropriate.

23 Commercial fishers were required to furnish statutory fishing returns for seaweed from 1 October 2001. Fishing information before this date is uncertain. Catch information presented in this plan is restricted to fishing returns furnished since October 2001.

Figure 1: Generic seaweed fisheries management areas

