# BARRACOUTA (BAR) 

(Thyrsites atun)<br>Manga, maka



## 1. FISHERY SUMMARY

### 1.1 Commercial fisheries

Barracouta are caught in coastal waters around mainland New Zealand, The Snares and Chatham Islands, down to about 400 m and have been managed under the Quota Management System since 1 October 1986. Catches by New Zealand vessels increased significantly in the late 1960s and total annual catch peaked at about 47000 t in 1977, with the addition of foreign vessels around New Zealand. Between 1983-84 and 2012-13, catches fluctuated between 18000 and 28000 t per annum (Table 2), at an average 25000 t . Figure 1 shows the historical landings and TACC values for the main BAR stocks.

Table 1: Reported landings ( $\mathbf{t}$ ) by nationality from 1977 to 1987-88.

| Fishing | New Zealand |  | Foreign |  |  | Total |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Year | Domestic | Chartered | Japan | Korea | USSR | (FSU) | (QMS) |
| 1977 | 4697 | 0 | 34357 | 8109 | 0 | 47163 | ) |
| 1978-79 | 5335 | 58 | 4781 | 2481 | 0 | 12655 | - |
| 1979-80 | 7748 | 6679 | 4339 | 3879 | 47 | 22922 | - |
| 1980-81 | 10058 | 4995 | 4227 | 15 | 60 | 19355 | - |
| 1981-82 | 12055 | 11077 | 2813 | 373 | 0 | 26328 | - |
| 1982-83 | 10814 | 7110 | 1746 | 1888 | 31 | 21589 | - |
| 1983-83* | 7763 | 2961 | 803 | 1115 | 0 | 12642 | - |
| 1983-84 | 12390 | 10226 | 1786 | 4355 | 0 | 28757 | - |
| 1984-85 | 7869 | 10425 | 1430 | 5252 | 0 | 24976 | - |
| 1985-86 | 8427 | 7865 | 1371 | 815 | 0 | 18478 | - |
| 1986-87 | 9829 | 13732 | 1575 | 742 | 0 | 25878 | 27 660† |
| 1987-88 | 9335 | 12077 | 896 | 609 | 0 | 22971 | 26 607† |
| * 6 month changeover in fishing years. <br> $\dagger$ The discrepancies between QMS and FSU total landings are due to under-reporting to the FSU. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Over $99 \%$ of the recorded catch is taken by trawlers. Major target fisheries have been developed on spring spawning aggregations (Chatham Islands, Stewart Island, west coast South Island and northern and central east coast South Island) as well as on summer feeding aggregations, particularly around The Snares and on the east coast of the South Island. Barracouta also comprise a significant proportion of the bycatch in the west coast North Island jack mackerel and The Snares squid fisheries. Catches
have increased in recent years in BAR 1 to the level of the TAC, but have dropped in BAR 4 in the last three years. The TACC in BAR 5 was reduced from 9282 t to 7470 t on 1 October 1998 with a 2 t customary and 3 t recreational allocation and a TAC of 7475 t . Recent catches have fluctuated about the new TAC in this fishery. In BAR 7 the catch limit was exceeded from 2004-05 to 2006-07 (catches nearly reached 15000 t in 2006-07), but catch has decreased since, to well below the TAC.

Table 2: Reported landings (t) of barracouta by Fishstock from 1983-84 to 2012-13 and actual TACCs (t) from 1986-87 to 2012-13. QMS data from 1986-present.

| Fishstock | BAR 1$1,2,3$ |  | $\begin{array}{r} \text { BAR } 4 \\ 4 \end{array}$ |  | $\begin{array}{r} \text { BAR } 5 \\ 5 \& 6 \\ \hline \end{array}$ |  | $\begin{array}{r} \text { BAR } 7 \\ 7,8,9 \\ \hline \end{array}$ |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| FMAs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Landings | TACC | Landings | TACC | Landings | TACC | Landings | TACC |
| 1983-84* | 7805 | - | 1743 | - | 11291 | - | 7222 | - |
| 1984-85* | 5442 | - | 1909 | - | 12487 | - | 4425 | - |
| 1985-86* | 5395 | - | 1509 | - | 6380 | - | 4536 | - |
| 1986-87 | 8877 | 8510 | 3084 | 3010 | 7653 | 9010 | 8046 | 10510 |
| 1987-88 | 9256 | 8837 | 1775 | 3010 | 6457 | 9011 | 9117 | 10603 |
| 1988-89 | 5838 | 9426 | 946 | 3010 | 5323 | 9011 | 8071 | 10702 |
| 1989-90 | 9209 | 9841 | 1349 | 3016 | 5960 | 9282 | 7050 | 10925 |
| 1990-91 | 9401 | 9957 | 1399 | 3016 | 8817 | 9282 | 7138 | 10925 |
| 1991-92 | 6733 | 9957 | 1156 | 3016 | 6897 | 9282 | 7326 | 10925 |
| 1992-93 | 9032 | 9969 | 2251 | 3016 | 7019 | 9282 | 10141 | 10925 |
| 1993-94 | 7299 | 9969 | 606 | 3016 | 3410 | 9282 | 8030 | 10925 |
| 1994-95 | 10023 | 9969 | 331 | 3016 | 2645 | 9282 | 9345 | 10925 |
| 1995-96 | 11252 | 9969 | 2234 | 3016 | 4255 | 9282 | 8593 | 10925 |
| 1996-97 | 11873 | 11000 | 1081 | 3016 | 2839 | 9282 | 10203 | 10925 |
| 1997-98 | 11543 | 11000 | 1966 | 3016 | 6167 | 9282 | 8717 | 10925 |
| 1998-99 | 9229 | 11000 | 459 | 3016 | 7302 | 7470 | 4427 | 10925 |
| 1999-00 | 10032 | 11000 | 1911 | 3016 | 6205 | 7470 | 3288 | 10925 |
| 2000-01 | 7118 | 11000 | 2122 | 3016 | 6101 | 7470 | 6890 | 10925 |
| 2001-02 | 6900 | 11000 | 1160 | 3019 | 5883 | 7470 | 7655 | 11173 |
| 2002-03 | 7595 | 11000 | 573 | 3019 | 7843 | 7470 | 9025 | 11173 |
| 2003-04 | 5949 | 11000 | 477 | 3019 | 6919 | 7470 | 9114 | 11173 |
| 2004-05 | 6085 | 11000 | 98 | 3019 | 8593 | 7470 | 12156 | 11173 |
| 2005-06 | 7030 | 11000 | 687 | 3019 | 9479 | 7470 | 10685 | 11173 |
| 2006-07 | 5351 | 11000 | 3233 | 3019 | 6334 | 7470 | 14699 | 11173 |
| 2007-08 | 5987 | 11000 | 2975 | 3019 | 8561 | 7470 | 10451 | 11173 |
| 2008-09 | 8861 | 11000 | 968 | 3019 | 7659 | 7470 | 8955 | 11173 |
| 2009-10 | 10635 | 11000 | 1223 | 3019 | 6951 | 7470 | 9642 | 11173 |
| 2010-11 | 11420 | 11000 | 1190 | 3019 | 8201 | 7470 | 6129 | 11173 |
| 2011-12 | 9305 | 11000 | 1423 | 3019 | 7071 | 7470 | 8643 | 11173 |
| 2012-13 | 9740 | 11000 | 706 | 3019 | 7931 | 7470 | 6897 | 11173 |
| Fishstock |  | BAR 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FMAs |  | 10 | Total |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Landings | TACC | Landings | TACC |  |  |  |  |
| 1983-84* | 0 | - | 28061 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 1984-85* | 0 | - | 24263 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 1985-86* | 0 | - | 17820 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 1986-87 | 0 | 10 | 27660 | 31050 |  |  |  |  |
| 1987-88 | 0 | 10 | 26605 | 31471 |  |  |  |  |
| 1988-89 | 0 | 10 | 20178 | 32159 |  |  |  |  |
| 1989-90 | 0 | 10 | 23568 | 33073 |  |  |  |  |
| 1990-91 | 0 | 10 | 26755 | 33190 |  |  |  |  |
| 1991-92 | 0 | 10 | 22212 | 33190 |  |  |  |  |
| 1992-93 | 0 | 10 | 28443 | 33202 |  |  |  |  |
| 1993-94 | 0 | 10 | 19345 | 33202 |  |  |  |  |
| 1994-95 | 0 | 10 | 22345 | 33202 |  |  |  |  |
| 1995-96 | 0 | 10 | 26334 | 33202 |  |  |  |  |
| 1996-97 | 0 | 10 | 25996 | 34233 |  |  |  |  |
| 1997-98 | 0 | 10 | 28393 | 34233 |  |  |  |  |
| 1998-99 | 0 | 10 | 21417 | 32421 |  |  |  |  |
| 1999-00 | 0 | 10 | 21436 | 32421 |  |  |  |  |
| 2000-01 | 0 | 10 | 22231 | 32421 |  |  |  |  |
| 2001-02 | 0 | 10 | 21598 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2002-03 | 0 | 10 | 25036 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2003-04 | 0 | 10 | 22459 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2004-05 | 0 | 10 | 26919 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2005-06 | 0 | 10 | 27881 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2006-07 | 0 | 10 | 29617 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2007-08 | 0 | 10 | 27968 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2008-09 | 0 | 10 | 26443 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2009-10 | 0 | 10 | 28451 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2010-11 | 0 | 10 | 26937 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2011-12 | 0 | 10 | 26442 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |
| 2012-13 | 0 - | 10 | 24973 | 32672 |  |  |  |  |



Figure 1: Historical landings and TACC for the four main BAR stocks. From top to bottom: BAR 1 (Auckland East), BAR 4 (Chatham Rise), and BAR 5 (Southland). [Contined on next page].


Figure 1 [Continued]: Historical landings and TACC for the four main BAR stocks. BAR7 (Challenger).

### 1.2 Recreational fisheries

Estimates of recreational catch from the recreational catch and effort surveys are shown in Table 3.
A key component of the estimation of recreational harvest from diary surveys is determining the proportion of the population that fish. The Recreational Working Group has concluded that the methodological framework used for telephone interviews produced incorrect eligibility figures for the 1996 and previous surveys. Consequently the harvest estimates derived from these surveys are considered to be considerably underestimated and not reliable. However, relative comparisons can be made between stocks within these surveys. The Recreational Working Group considered that the 2000 survey using face-to-face interviews better estimated eligibility and that the derived recreational harvest estimates are believed to be more accurate. FMA 2 catches are nevertheless considered to be overestimated, probably because of an unrepresentative diarist sample. The 1999-00 harvest estimates for each Fishstock should be evaluated with reference to the coefficient of variation.

### 1.3 Customary non-commercial fisheries

Quantitative information on the current level of customary non-commercial take is not available.
Table 3: Estimated number and weight of barracouta harvested by recreational fishers by Fishstock and survey*.

| Fishstock | Survey | Total |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | Number | CV | Survey harvest ( $t$ ) |
|  |  |  |  | 1991-92 |
| BAR 1 | South | 27000 | 47\% | 30-90 |
| BAR 7 | South | 2100 | 44\% | - |
|  |  |  |  | 1992-93 |
| BAR 1 | Central | 17000 | 22\% | 25-35 |
| BAR 7 | Central | 15600 | 24\% | 25-35 |
|  |  |  |  | 1993-94 |
| BAR 1 | North | * |  |  |
| BAR 7 | North | * |  | - |
|  |  |  |  | 1996 |
| BAR 1 | National | 68000 | 8\% | 160-190 |
| BAR 7 | National | 74000 | 15\% | 160-220 |
|  |  |  |  | 1999-00 |
| BAR 1 | National | 156000 | 35\% | 182-377 |
| BAR 5 | National | 2000 | 51\% | 2-7 |
| BAR 7 | National | 35000 | 28\% | 68-120 |

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### 1.4 Illegal catch

Quantitative information on the level of illegal catch is not available.

### 1.5 Other sources of mortality

There may have been considerable amounts of barracouta discarded prior to the QMS, either because of quota restrictions under the deepwater policy, low value, or undesirable small size fish. There is also likely to be some mortality associated with escapement from trawl nets. Some discarding may also have occurred in BAR 1 because of the lack of quota availability and the high deemed value in relation to the low value of the fish.

## 2. BIOLOGY

Barracouta spawn mainly in late-winter/spring (August-September) on the east and west coasts of both of the main islands, and in late spring (November-December) in Southland and in the Chatham Islands. Some spawning activity may also extend into summer/autumn. Sexual maturity is reached at about $50-$ 60 cm fork length (FL) at about 2-3 years of age.

Juvenile barracouta have been recorded from inshore areas (less than 100 m ) all around New Zealand and the Chatham Islands, although they appear to be less common on the west coast of the South Island. Adult fish are found down to about 400 m depth. Tagged barracouta have moved considerable distances to spawn (up to 500 nautical miles).

No age data is available for the period prior to the onset of commercial fishing, which developed rapidly from 1968. Ageing studies carried out in the mid-1970s showed that the maximum age rarely exceeded 10 years. Data have been validated for fish up to 3 years old by following modal progressions over time.
$M$ was estimated using the equation $M=\log _{\mathrm{e}} 100 /$ maximum age, where maximum age is the age to which $1 \%$ of the population survives in an unexploited stock. Using 10 years for the maximum age suggests an $M$ of up to 0.46 . The effect of fishing on age structure prior to the mid-1970s is unknown, but $M$ is unlikely to be less than 0.3 , which has been assumed in previous stock assessments.

Biological parameters relevant to the stock assessment are shown in Table 4.
Table 4: Estimates of biological parameters.


## 3. STOCKS AND AREAS

There are no new data which would alter the stock boundaries given in previous assessment documents.

Four barracouta management areas were established in 1983, based on knowledge at the time: EEZ areas E + F, G + H, B + C and D. Stock boundaries are not well understood, but the Chatham Islands stock is probably separate. However, there may be some overlap between mainland stock management areas as currently defined from analysis of tagging data, commercial fishery data, biological data (i.e., length frequencies, otoliths, parasites, spawning areas and seasons) and from seasonal relative biomass estimates. In particular, it appears that there is considerable overlap of Southland fish with other areas, probably the west coast of the South Island and possibly the east coast as well. However, there is not enough data at this stage to alter the existing stock boundaries.

## 4. STOCK ASSESSMENT

There are no new data which would alter the yield estimates given in the 1997 Plenary Report. The obsolete MCY estimates based on biomass estimates from trawl surveys have been removed and yield estimates are based on commercial landings data only. These estimates have not changed since 1992.

### 4.1 Estimates of fishery parameters and abundance

The results from trawl surveys carried out during the mid 1980s (sometimes from a variety of different vessels) were used to provide an approximate estimate of minimum absolute biomass. This approach required an assumption about catchability to convert the trawl survey catches to estimates of absolute biomass. This method is now considered obsolete and the estimates of absolute biomass have not been included.

A time series of trawl surveys was carried out in the Southland area (QMA 5) in February-March from 1993 to 1996 using Tangaroa (Table 5). Trawl surveys on the east and west coasts of the South Island in autumn using Kaharoa may help interpretation of trends in biomass around the South Island.

### 4.2 Biomass estimates

Biomass in the core strata ( $30-400 \mathrm{~m}$ ) of the East Coast South Island trawl survey appears to be increasing and is about three-fold larger in 2009 and 2012 than the average biomass of the early 1990s. Coefficients of variation are generally low ranging from 16 to $34 \%$, but were below $20 \%$ on the last four surveys. The additional biomass captured in the $10-30 \mathrm{~m}$ depth range accounts for $15 \%$ and $6 \%$ of the biomass in the core plus shallow strata ( $10-400 \mathrm{~m}$ ) for 2007 and 2012 respectively, indicating that shallow strata should be monitored for this species (Figure 2).

### 4.3 Length frequency distributions

The length distributions from the East Coast South Island trawl survey show at least three clear prerecruit modes at about $20 \mathrm{~cm}, 25 \mathrm{~cm}$, and 50 cm (combined males, females, and unsexed) consistent with ages of $0+, 1+$, and $2+$ (Harley et al 1999). Plots of time series length frequency distributions are consistent, showing the presence of the pre-recruited cohorts on nearly all surveys, with indications that these could be tracked through time (modal progression). The addition of the $10-30 \mathrm{~m}$ depth range does not change the shape of the length distribution (Figure 3).

## BAR



Figure 2: Barracouta total biomass and 95\% confidence intervals for the all ECSI winter surveys in core strata ( $30-400 \mathrm{~m}$ ), and core plus shallow strata ( $10-400 \mathrm{~m}$ ) in 2007 and 2012.

Table 5: Relative biomass indices ( $\mathbf{t}$ ) and coefficients of variation (CV) for barracouta for east coast South Island (ECSI) - winter, east coast North Island (ECNI), west coast South Island (WCSI) and Southland survey areas. Biomass estimates for ECSI in 1991 have been adjusted to allow for non-sampled strata ( 7 \& 9 equivalent to current strata 13, 16 and 17). - , not measured; NA, not applicable.



Figure 3: Scaled length frequency distributions for barracouta in core strata ( $\mathbf{3 0}-\mathbf{4 0 0} \mathbf{~ m}$ ) for all nine ECSI winter surveys. The length distribution is also shown in the $10-\mathbf{3 0} \mathrm{m}$ depth strata for the 2007 and 2012 surveys overlaid in red, otherwise in light grey (not stacked). Population estimates are for the core strata only. n, number of fish measured; no., population number; c.v., coefficient of variation.

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### 4.4 Yield estimates and projections

It is not feasible to estimate MCY from commercial landings data for most Fishstocks (except for BAR 1), as the amount of effort has varied considerably since the beginning of the fishery in the late 1960s i.e., foreign licensed access has declined, effort was encouraged by subsidies in 1979 and 1981, an unknown amount of fish has been and may still be dumped, and effort is related to the availability of more preferred, higher value species. These, and other factors, also result in CPUE data being of limited use.

Estimates of current biomass are not available and CAY cannot be estimated.

### 4.4.1 Auckland (East), Central (East) and South-East (Coast) (BAR 1)

$M C Y$ was estimated using the equation $M C Y=c Y_{A V}$ (Method 4), where $Y_{A V}$ average estimated catch from 1968-1975 and $c=0.7$. The estimated average catch includes 2000 t which is assumed to have been caught and either dumped or not reported. Fishing activity is assumed to have been on the total stock, even though the entire area was not fished. Due to problems with QMA boundaries not corresponding to the fishing history boundaries, 500 t is subtracted and added to BAR 7 .

$$
M C Y=0.7 \text { * }(12000 \mathrm{t}-500 \mathrm{t})=8050 \mathrm{t} .
$$

The level of risk to the stock by harvesting the population at the estimated $M C Y$ value cannot be determined. However, the risk is probably low given the sustainability of catches at about the MCY level since 1970.
$M C Y$ has not been determined for the other Fishstocks.

### 4.5 Other factors

The relationship of the southern area stock to the east and west coast South Island stocks is uncertain, so these areas have been treated separately as in the past. However, if fish from BAR 5 overlap significantly with other South Island stocks, then the MCYs for all Fishstocks on the South Island may all need adjusting downward.

Barracouta are part of the shelf ( $30-300 \mathrm{~m}$ ) mixed fishery and are usually the dominant species in these depths around the South Island (except perhaps in good red cod years in Canterbury Bight). Any increase or decrease in barracouta quotas will have overflow effects onto bycatch species. The economics of targeting on barracouta is probably affected by its availability relative to other more preferred species and this will, in turn, affect fishing patterns.

An analysis of trends in biomass of the Southland fishery suggests that recruitment may have been relatively low in the years after 1989 and that biomass may have declined between surveys by the Shinkai Maru (1981 and 1986) and the Tangaroa (annually 1993 to 1996). The scale of decline appeared to be greater than could be explained by different catching efficiency of the two vessels.

## 5. STATUS OF THE STOCKS

Estimates of current and reference biomass are not available for any barracouta stocks and therefore it is not known if current TACCs and recent catches are sustainable or whether they are at levels which will allow the stocks to move towards a size that will support the maximum sustainable yield.

Yield estimates and reported landings are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of yields (t), TACCs (t), and reported landings (t) for barracouta for the most recent fishing year.

| Fishstock | FMAs | $M C Y$ | $2012-13$ <br> Actual TACC | 2012-13 <br> Reported landings |  |
| :--- | :--- | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
| BAR 1 | Auckland (East), Central <br> (East), South-East (Coast) | $1,2, \& 3$ | 8050 | 11000 | 9740 |
| BAR 4 | South-East (Chatham) |  |  |  |  |
| BAR 5 | Southland, Sub-Antarctic | 5 | - | 3019 | 706 |
| BAR 7 | Challenger, Central (West), |  | - | 7470 | 7931 |
|  | Auckland (West) | $7,8, \& 9$ | - | 11173 | 6597 |
| BAR 10 | Kermadec | 10 | - | 10 | 0 |
| Total |  |  |  | 32672 | 24973 |

## 6. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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[^0]:    * Surveys were carried out in different years in the MAF Fisheries regions: South in 1991-92, Central in 1992-93, North in 1993-94 (Teirney et al 1997) and nationally in 1996 (Bradford 1998) and 1999-2000 (Boyd \& Reilly 2002). The estimated Fishstock harvest is indicative and made by combining estimates from the different years.

