

Commercial fishing for freshwater eels in protected areas managed by the Department of Conservation

FACTSHEET

Freshwater eel fisheries are managed for sustainability and use through the Quota Management System (QMS) under the Fisheries Act 1996, administered by the Ministry of Fisheries.

A key aspect of management under the QMS is the catch limit set by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, which forms the basis of an Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) allocated to quota owners.

While ACE effectively allocates to fishers a portion of the total catch limit of freshwater eels for a particular Quota Management Area, fishers must also comply with requirements of the Fisheries Act or regulations under that Act.

These include area closures, size limits and method/gear restrictions that support the sustainability of freshwater eel fisheries by, for example, allowing spawner escape.

However, fishers must also comply with relevant Conservation legislation. A key restriction under that legislation is that commercial fishers may not operate in protected areas managed by the Department without a *concession*, regardless of whether they hold ACE under the Fisheries Act.



The Department has the responsibility to ensure that activities (like commercial fishing) carried out in protected areas it manages are consistent with the purposes for which those areas are held. The concession process is in place to ensure that is the case.

Concessions for commercial freshwater eel fishing are generally not able to be granted for Reserves or National Parks, except in very specific circumstances.

Concessions may, in some cases, be granted for other protected areas managed by the Department. Key considerations in those cases are the provisions of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans.

Fishers, like other members of the public, are able to provide input into the development of these strategies and plans.

The map overleaf shows Reserves, National Parks, and Conservation Areas and freshwater eel Quota Management Areas. Please note this map is intended as a guide only; commercial fishers need to contact their nearest [Department of Conservation office](#) to confirm the status of their intended fishing grounds before going fishing.

How are concession applications assessed?

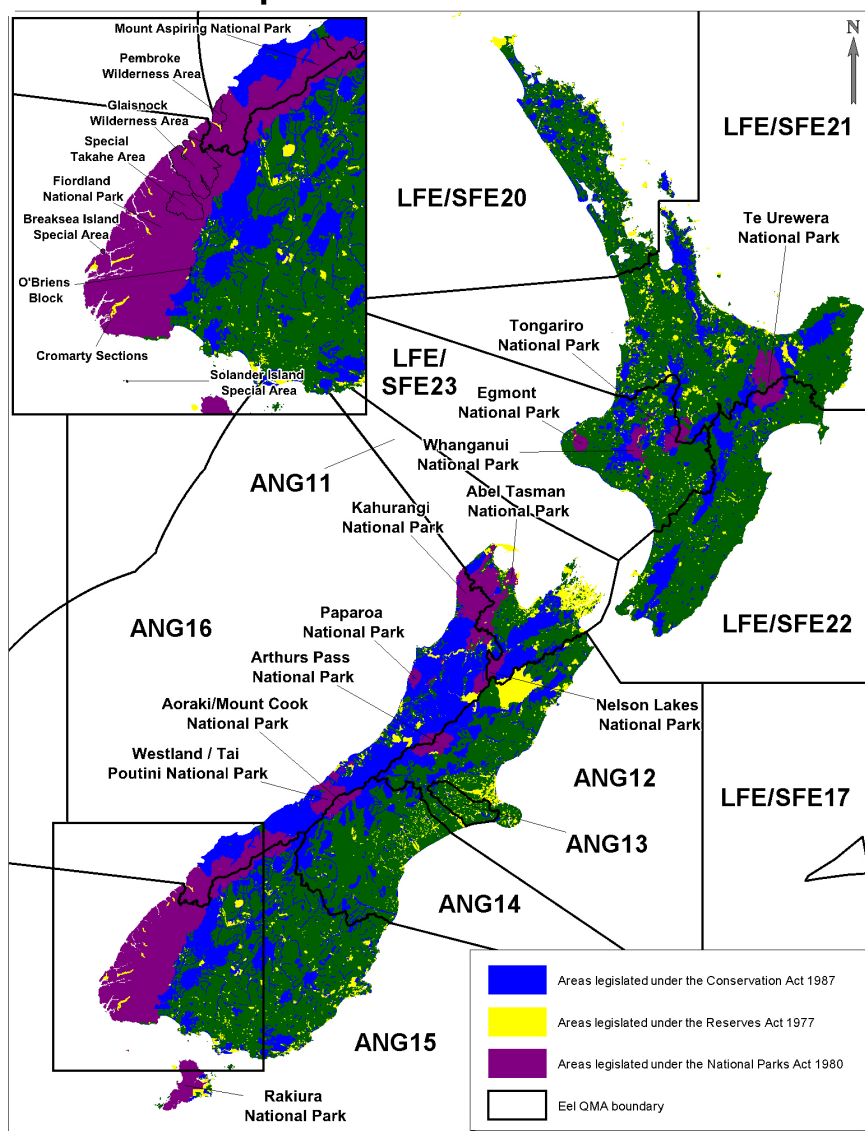
The Department assesses concession applications in accordance with relevant legislation and policies. It generally considers the impacts of the proposed activity within the protected area. It does not consider the sustainability of the freshwater eel fishery when assessing concession applications; because that is, as described above, the responsibility of the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Effects considered when assessing applications for concessions

Effects commonly considered when assessing applications for concessions for commercial freshwater eel fishing include:

- > the effect that the removal of freshwater eels might have on the ecosystem *within the protected area* and on the freshwater eel population *within that area*
- > the effects of the fishing method on other species or the habitat, for example:
 - disturbance of the bed of the water body *within the protected area*
 - damage to other species within the protected area, including possible bycatch of other aquatic organisms
 - disturbance of sensitive species (e.g. nesting birds) *within the protected area*
 - movement of pests and weeds on equipment, vehicles or footwear used *within the protected area*
- > impacts on recreational users of the protected area (e.g. from use of tracks and huts, noise from vehicles, nets in water bodies being used for water recreation, etc)
- > impacts on departmental assets *within the protected area*, such as damage to roads and bridges from vehicles
- > impacts on existing commercial users of the protected area
- > the creation of liabilities in the protected area for which the Department could become responsible (e.g. possible spills of chemicals).

Selected Department of Conservation Areas



Where can I get more information?

If you require further information about commercial fishing for freshwater eels and the applicable regulations under the Fisheries Act please contact your nearest [Ministry of Fisheries office](#). To enquire about the status of a particular area where you intend to fish, or if you require further information about the concession process, please contact your nearest [Department of Conservation office](#).

