



# Auckland Waikato Fish & Game Council 2025 Sports Fishing Regulations Review

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# 1 SUMMARY

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Fish & Game regions are required to manage sports fish in accordance with the Conservation Act 1987 and the regional Sports Fish & Game Management Plan (SF&GMP). The Conservation Act 1987 and Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council SF&GMP require sports fish to be managed with the following principles:

1. Ensure that the sustainability of the resource has priority over utilisation.
2. A precautionary approach will be adopted in managing fish and game populations if information is lacking.
3. Maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers.
4. Establish where necessary controlling mechanisms for access to, and use of, fisheries within defined carrying capacities manage and advocate for appropriate social carrying capacities.
5. Protect pressure sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries and to manage within those capacities to preserve high quality recreational experiences.

The 2025 fishing regulation review was unique as it proposed a national initiative to simplify regulations similar to Northland and Southland regions allowing all methods in most waterways with a conservative limit. The initiative was introduced to increase opportunity for anglers and to simplify complex regulations that are seen as a barrier to new anglers. The Southland Fish & Game Council were the first to implement simplified regulations, and although their licence sales have not increased, there have not been significant complaints, noticeable impacts to fisheries or dramatic shifts in anglers use (former fly fishing only areas have not been overrun with spin anglers).

The Auckland Waikato fishing regulations are complicated and seen as a barrier to new users. Staff frequently receive calls from anglers requesting clarifications on fishing regulations and requests for areas to fish with children. Currently, there are 5 fly fishing only, 72 spin fly, and 10 fly spin bait streams listed in the Auckland Waikato fishing regulations. There are 10 listed lakes that are open to all gear types aside from two reservoirs where bait is restricted for biosecurity reasons. In addition, there are 15 notes (additional rules) that can be applied to the 97 listed streams and lakes.

Anglers were consulted via the Reel Life Newsletter, Spring Flyer, and direct email. Remits were collected via an online survey or written letter (email or paper). The number of responses was relatively low with 168 respondents to the online survey, 31 emails, and no written submissions.

Most anglers agreed that simplifying regulations would be beneficial (72%). The most selected limit was two fish for both streams (51%) and lakes (31%; see section 3.2.1). Removing minimum size limits was less popular with 40% support and allowing year-round fishing had 55% support from anglers.

Fly anglers are the primary users of steam (63%) and backcountry fisheries in the Auckland Waikato region and strongly opposed sharing fly only areas with bait or spin anglers. Some fly anglers believed their superior skill should be rewarded with access to the best fishing areas and that allowing other gear types would reduce their enjoyment of the fishery, ruin sensitive fisheries and degrade waterways. Bait and spin anglers generally supported opening more water to bait anglers and providing more opportunities for all anglers. The lack of legal fishing areas for elderly and young anglers who cannot fly or spin fish was raised as a significant concern.

There is valid evidence to support restrictions to protect backcountry fisheries with heavy angling pressure like the Whakapapa River. In addition, warm summer water temperatures are likely causing elevated mortality even in catch and release fisheries, making the fly fishing only restriction ineffective at protecting some sensitive fisheries like the Mangatutu, where drift dive surveys have documented declines in fish populations. The council has previously decided to manage catch and release mortality with education limiting the tools available for management. The Controlled Fisheries licence could be used to manage angler use in sensitive fisheries but must be approved by the minister and is not immediately available. Summer closures are also an option and have been used by DOC but would need to last from December through February during the peak of the fishing season. Annual summer closures would restrict fishing even when stream temperatures were safe for fishing, unnecessarily restricting angler use.

**With the limited options available staff recommend:**

- 1. Reducing limits to 2 trout for all water bodies to provide a conservative and uniform approach to harvest.**
- 2. To retain most fly fishing only areas due to a lack of other angler use controls.**
- 3. Retain traditional fishing season on sensitive fisheries only.**
- 4. Remove minimum size limits.**

The addition of bait fishing to spin and fly-only areas is largely a political decision and should be decided by the council as it would be unpopular with fly anglers but is unlikely to significantly impact fisheries with a two-fish limit. Option A would retain 24 spin fly areas with a two-fish limit open year-round, and option B would open all non-sensitive waterways to all methods with a two-fish limit year-round (full list in Table 5). All other notes and closed waters would remain the same.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

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### **2.1 NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO CONSOLIDATE AND SIMPLIFY RULES**

The 2025 rule changes have been unique due to a national push to simplify rules and make them consistent across regions while protecting sensitive fisheries. For example, Northland has opened their rivers up year-round with a two fish limit (two stocked lakes have a three fish limit) and Southland has retained most of their seasons but has opened nearly all rivers to all methods (fly, spin, and bait) with a two fish limit. The goal is to reduce the complexity of regulations as a barrier to participation and increase opportunity by allowing longer seasons and liberal gear restrictions. The results of the changes have not been significant, with no substantial increases in licence sales and little or no negative feedback from anglers. However, complex regulations have been raised as a barrier to participation in the Auckland Waikato region and well covered in international literature (Heyser & Messerli, 2022; Miller et al., 2003).

### **2.2 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Conservation Act 1987 provides guidance on setting sports fish regulations based on sports fish and game management plans. The key points are to “have regard to sustainability” and to “include such provisions as may be necessary to maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers”. The specific provisions are as follows:

(17L (1)) The purpose of a sports fish and game management plan is to establish objectives for the management of sports fish and game, or both, within any region or part of any region.

(17L (4) (a)) “have regard to the sustainability of sports fish and game in the area to which the plan relates” and 17(L) (4) (c) “include such provisions as may be necessary to maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers”

The Sports Fish & Game Management Plan for Auckland Waikato Fish & Game Region 2021 – 2031 has several key outcomes, issues, and policies (Appendix 1) around setting regulations that hinge on taking a conservative approach to managing sustainable sports fish populations, maximising angler and hunter participation while maintaining the quality of the recreational experience. The outcomes, Issues, objectives and policies are conflicting as they call for maximum opportunity, simple regulations, angling methods that cater for all users and maintaining a quality experience in pressure sensitive areas. The policies call for a conservative approach to ensuring sustainable sports fish populations and maintaining a quality experience by protecting pressure sensitive fisheries. The following are excerpts from the SF&GMP:

**SF&GMP relevant outcomes:**

1. To maintain sustainable populations of harvestable sports fish and game bird species.
2. To manage sports fisheries and game resources having regard to sustainability to meet the interests and recreational needs of present and future generations of anglers and hunters.
3. To encourage maximum angler and hunter participation while maintaining the quality of the recreational experience.

**SF&GMP relevant issues:**

1. There is a statutory requirement to manage sports fish and game to ensure species and population sustainability. There is an ongoing need for information on sports fish and game populations dynamics and factors affecting their abundance, including harvest, as well as a precautionary approach to their management. Declines in habitat quality and quantity may also lead to declines in fish and game habitat values and productivity. As such, there is a need to demonstrate a cautious management approach considering any perceived decline to the fish and game resource.
2. It is difficult to monitor all sports fish and game species and habitats to a desirable level of precision and therefore we must prioritise resourcing into areas and species where the populations are under greatest stress and where regulations are likely to influence population levels.
3. There is a demand for clear and simple angling and hunting regulations and some anglers and hunters want liberalisation of methods and season restrictions when sports fish and game populations allow for additional harvest.
4. Angling and hunting methods must cater for all including the young and the elderly. Young anglers and hunters in particular are an important market and are the future of the sports. They may need assistance to learn about sports fishing and game bird hunting.
5. Participation levels, user density and methods of angler access are impacting on the quality of recreational experience in some circumstances such as in ‘backcountry’ and ‘remote’ fisheries where wilderness values are important. Problems with fisheries at this end of the recreational opportunity spectrum require active management to avoid conflicts between users over user densities or modes of access (e.g. aircraft or jet boats).

**SF&GMP relevant objectives:**

1. To manage sports fisheries and game resources having regard to sustainability to meet the interests and recreational needs of present and future generations of anglers and hunters.

2. To optimise angling and hunting opportunity and maintain or improve the recreational fishing and hunting opportunities available in Auckland/Waikato.

**SF&GMP relevant policies:**

1. Ensure that the sustainability of the resource has priority over utilisation.
2. A precautionary approach will be adopted in managing fish and game populations if information is lacking.
3. Establish where necessary controlling mechanisms for access to, and use of, fisheries within defined carrying capacities manage and advocate for appropriate social carrying capacities.
4. Protect pressure sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries and to manage within those capacities to preserve high quality recreational experiences.

Although the Auckland Waikato SF&GMP has been approved, the current document does not prioritise conflicting policies or give effect to the Conservation Act 1987 section 17(L) (4) (c) “include such provisions as may be necessary to maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers”. The first minister of Hunting Fishing (Tod McClay) repeatedly stated that he would like Fish & Game to “maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers”. Considering the policies in the SF&GMP and the requirements of the Conservation Act 1987 the following criteria, listed in order of importance, will be applied to evaluating the proposed rule changes.

1. **Ensure that the sustainability of the resource has priority over utilisation.**
2. **A precautionary approach will be adopted in managing fish and game populations if information is lacking.**
3. **Maximise recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers.**
4. **Establish, where necessary, controlling mechanisms for access to and use of fisheries within defined carrying capacities, and manage and advocate for appropriate social carrying capacities.**
5. **Protect pressure-sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries and manage within those capacities to preserve high-quality recreational experiences.**

## **2.3 TROUT POPULATIONS**

To manage trout populations, it is important to know the range of the population and potential overlaps with other populations. Unlike waterfowl where the population is managed as one unit there are hundreds of distinct trout populations in the Auckland Waikato region. The current regulations list 94 separate management units just for streams making the regulations relatively complex. The Wild Fish Tagging Program has provided essential information about both brown and rainbow trout populations within the region with over 4500 fish tagged in 28 waterbodies within the Auckland Waikato region since 1996.

Rainbow trout are the dominant species, making up 92% of tagged fish within the Auckland Waikato region. Tag returns have shown very little movement (<0.1%). The movement that has been detected has been within the same river system for example, fish tagged in the Puniu have been recaptured upstream in the Mangatutu (likely spawning). The lack of movement between streams indicates that rainbow trout populations should be managed as distinct populations.

Although brown trout only make up about 8% of fish tagged in the Wild Fish Tagging Program (unpublished data) and 2% of fish counted on drift dives (Daniel, 2022) they are highly sought after by anglers. Brown trout are highly mobile within the Auckland Waikato region (Wilson & Boubee, 1996) with fish from the upper Waipa and Mangatutu travelling to the Waikato River during the winter to

feed (Wilson & Boubee, 1996). The wild fish tagging program has detected similar movement, with 20% of brown trout tag recoveries occurring in other rivers, including fish from the Ngakoaohia being recovered in Lake Whangape. Although brown trout are highly mobile, the populations are thought to be distinct as the adult fish return to spawn in their natal streams (Charteris, 2015; Gabriëlsson et al., 2014). Brown trout spawning habitat within the Waikato and Waipa systems was identified using otolith microchemistry, the primary spawning areas were the upper Waipa, Mangatutu and a third unidentified stream (Gabriëlsson & Knight, 2014). Brown trout require slightly cooler water to initiate spawning and avoid spawning in some rivers, like the Puniu (Gabriëlsson & Knight, 2014).

Due to the separate nature of fish populations in the Auckland Waikato region, it is important to manage each individual population based on the criteria listed in section 2.1. This has led to complicated regulations that are seen as a barrier to many inexperienced anglers.

## **2.4 MANAGING ANGLERS IN THE AUCKLAND WAIKATO REGION**

The goal of most fishing regulations internationally is to manage the sport rather than the fish population. Although the Auckland Waikato SF&GMP does have provisions to manage the social aspects of fishing the primary focus is to set regulations that will ensure adequate fish populations (maintaining a precautionary approach). When considering the impact of regulation changes, it is important to consider the impact and proportion of angler time spent using each method (fly, spin, and bait). Auckland Waikato anglers have previously reported spending 63% of their time overall fly fishing in the Auckland Waikato region (streams), with spin fishing representing 27% of angling time and bait fishing 9% (A. Daniel, 2018). The Whakapapa & Whanganui River Angler Use Monitoring study photographed nearly 500 (primarily backcountry) river users and of the anglers photographed only 1% had retained fish (A. Daniel, 2017). Spin fishers represented 12% of the anglers captured in the study and 6% of them had dead fish (A. Daniel, 2017). Although there was a documented increase in retention of trout by spin anglers the overall retention was still very low, but retention alone does not represent the total loss of fish caused by fishing as catch and release fish is known to cause some fish mortality.

Auckland Waikato fisheries have been managed using three tools:

1. Bag limits to set a maximum number of fish taken.
2. Gear restrictions to reduce the number of anglers and to create fly fishing only waters to increase the enjoyment of fly anglers by restricting access to spin and bait anglers.
3. Season length to protect spawning and to let the fish rest to increase catch rates on opening day.

## **2.5 CATCH AND RELEASE**

Catch and release fishing during the summer is likely to be the biggest killer of trout in the Auckland Waikato region's streams and is difficult to manage using traditional regulations. Due to relatively warm water conditions in the Auckland Waikato region, trout are highly susceptible to post-release mortality. Aside from the spring-fed streams like the upper Waihou and Waimakariri, the only Auckland/Waikato streams that consistently stay below 19°C are high mountain waterways like the Whakapapa. About half of the overall fishing effort in the Auckland Waikato region occurs between December and March (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023) when temperatures are at their peak.

Trout generally move upstream to find thermal refuge and can only occupy about 16% of the overall habitat during peak summer temperatures. The limited movement of rainbow trout detected in the Auckland Waikato wild fish tagging program was upstream from mainstems like the Puniu to higher

elevation and cooler tributaries like the upper Mangatutu. Anglers actively target fish as they are concentrated in the upper reaches of streams like the Awakino and Mangatutu. These thermal refuges are largely fly fishing only waters or mountain fisheries where it is assumed most anglers catch and release, like the Whakapapa and Whanganui fisheries (A. Daniel, 2017).

Mortality after release was traditionally thought to be caused by hooking injuries and believed to be very low but recent research has shown that heat related stress is a far greater threat to released fish in New Zealand and abroad (Boyd, 2008; Cowx, 2017; Havn et al., 2015) with maximum mortality rates of 16-30% for Rainbow trout. A study of trout caught and released in Lake Otamangakau when water temperatures were in excess of 19°C documented a mortality rate of around 30%. A similar study of trout caught in streams in Montana (USA) resulted in 20% mortality of released fish.

Recent analysis of the Wild Fish Tagging Database shows an 8% lower recovery rate for fish tagged during the late summer. This summer related loss (assumed to be heat related stress) is in addition to normal catch and release mortality. Considering our tagging team are some of the most experienced anglers in the region and well versed in fish handling the 8% additional loss during summer is likely a conservative estimate compared to the average angler.

To put this in perspective, competition anglers on the Whanganui averaged 39 fish each during 2020 national championships with top competitors landing 25 fish an hour. The Whanganui regularly reaches 19°C during the summer, and at 20% mortality after release, a skilled fly angler could kill the equivalent of a 5-fish limit in an hour without taking any fish home. The wild fish tagging team have been landing 6-19 fish a day per angler (mean 6.6) on the Mangatutu Stream, indicating a potential loss of 1.7 per trip (20 % mortality) even if all fish are released. Post release survival can also be significantly increased by air exposure (netting the fish and taking a photo) with mortality of 48% (Ferguson & Tufts, 1991) for fish held for 30 seconds which is about the average (Lamansky & Meyer, 2016) for released trout.

The Auckland Waikato council has previously decided to manage post release heat related mortality with education. The Department of Conservation has chosen to close Lake Otamangakau during peak temperatures in February and similar closures should be considered for streams like the Mangatutu and Puniu if the educational approach is not effective and drift dive monitoring data continues to show a decline in the trout population. Unfortunately, high temperatures exceeding 19°C can occur from December to March in many Auckland Waikato streams so setting fixed closed seasons could unnecessarily limit opportunity during the peak season. Exploring options to protect heat sensitive fisheries and studying the mortality rate of released fish in New Zealand streams would be prudent to inform future regulation changes.

## 2.6 GROUPING POPULATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

In an effort to keep the regulations as simple as possible, populations can be grouped so they can be managed with the same regulations. If standard limits and season lengths are set, it is possible to drastically reduce regulations, adhere to the policies in the SF&GMP and comply with the Conservation Act. For example, four groups of waterbodies can be sorted using the five criteria listed in section 2.2. The four groupings are as follows:

- 1) Closed waters
  - a. Small hydro lake spawning tributaries
- 2) Sensitive or backcountry fisheries
  - a. sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries
- 3) Controlled fisheries
  - a. Sensitive fisheries or spawning streams
- 4) All other waters

By using constant bag limits and seasons when grouping fisheries into management classes the current regulations can be simplified. The grouped classes can be colour-coded to be displayed on a map, further assisting anglers in interpreting the regulations based on their location. The goal of using the groupings with a colour system is to eventually integrate the regulations into a phone-based mapping system like Pocket Maps (Figure 1).

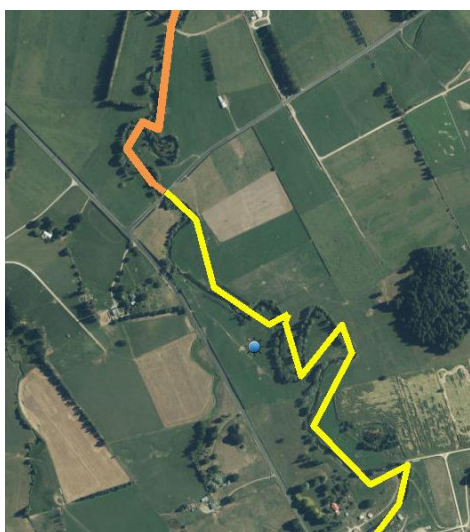


Figure 1. An example of the Mangatutu Stream with colour coded regulations.

## 2.7 CONSULTATION

The potential for liberalising the Auckland Waikato regulations was communicated to anglers in the spring flyer, Reel Life and a direct email to all licence holders in the angler database (previous five years). Anglers were asked to provide feedback via an online survey (Appendix 1), written letter or email (Appendix 2). Considering the severity of the proposed changes, feedback was limited with 168 respondents to the online survey, 31 emails, and no written submissions.

The online survey received 157 respondents that specified their preferred fishing method, and the responses were dominated by dedicated fly anglers with 51% of respondents spending 90% of their time fly fishing, only 11% of respondents spend 90% their time spin fishing. In comparison the 2018

Auckland Waikato online angler survey that was sent using the same Auckland Waikato angler database (all anglers that provided an email in the previous five years) had over 1000 respondents that indicated 37% time spent angling on streams was spin or bait fishing. It is not uncommon for user groups to be overrepresented in opt-in surveys and the proposal to eliminate exclusive fly fishing only water infuriated some anglers with one respondent labelling the proposed rule changes as “terrorism”. The most adamant objections were from fly fishing guides operating on the Whanganui and Whakapapa.

The Whanganui and Whakapapa fishery above Taumarunui has had a significant increase in angler use and added pressure from guides that have left the Taupō region due to increased fees. It would be prudent to learn more about the anglers in the area and where they are fishing to better manage the fishery.

### 3 PROPOSED RULE-CHANGES AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 BAG LIMITS

##### 3.1.1 Bag Limits Background

Bag limits are one of the primary tools used to limit fishing related trout mortality and most Auckland Waikato streams currently have a 5 fish limit with limits ranging from zero to no limit (for fish under 300 mm on some spring creeks). Unfortunately, fish mortality is also caused by catch-and-release angling (see section 3.2.1), so fishing pressure must also be considered even if a limit of zero is used. Although catch and release fishing is practised by most stream anglers, zero limits are discouraged for ethical reasons as a policy by the NZ Fish & Game Council.

##### 3.1.2 Bag Limits Angler feedback

Anglers were asked what their preferred bag limit was, and the most common response for both streams (Figure 1) and Lakes (Figure 2) was 2 fish (Appendix 2). The mean response for steam limits was 2.6 and 3.5 for lakes, with lakes (Appendix 2).

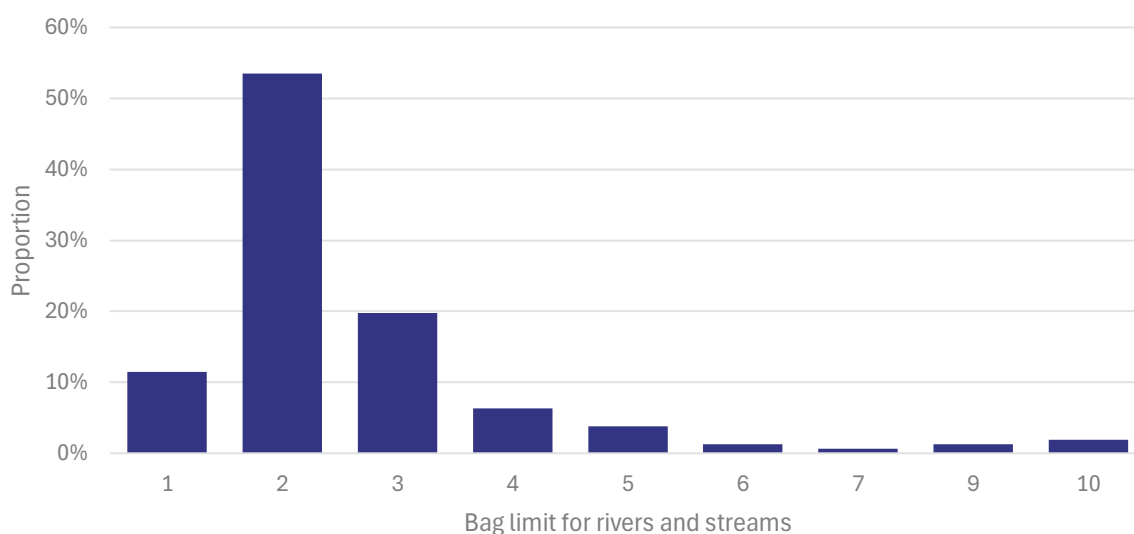


Figure 1: The distribution of responses regarding an appropriate, consistent bag limit on all rivers and streams (n=167; Appendix 2).

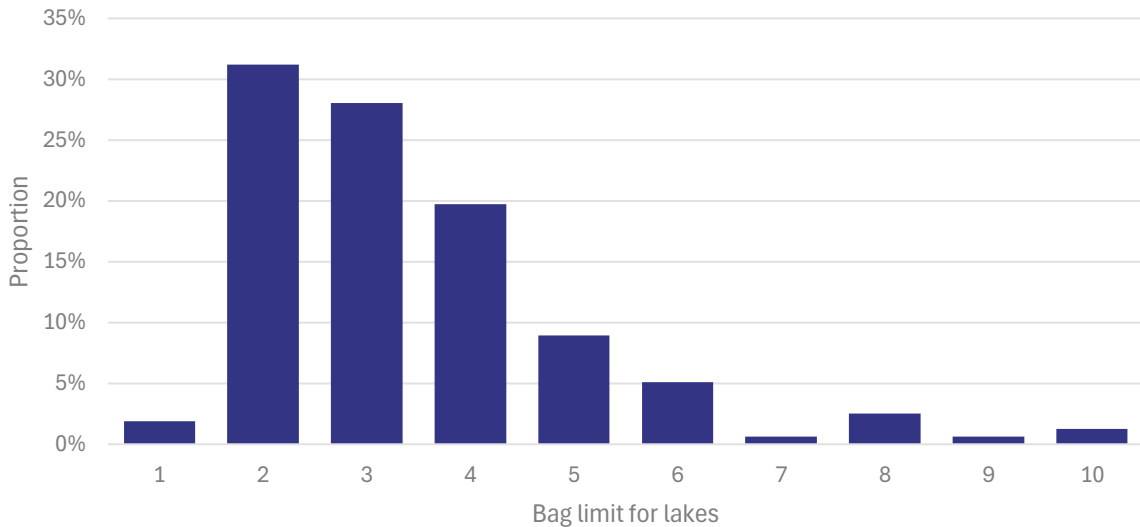


Figure 2: The distribution of responses regarding an appropriate, consistent bag limit on all lakes (n=167; Appendix 2).

### 3.1.3 Bag Limits Staff Recommendations

Considering the response from anglers for a 2 fish limit and a strong response in favour of simplifying regulations (72% in support; Appendix 2) staff recommend a two fish limit for all waterways. Although there are some sensitive fisheries like the Whakapapa that may justify lower limits to protect trophy fisheries, limiting access or fishing pressure are likely better tools considering the high proportion of anglers that practice catch and release in backcountry fisheries. Using a universal limit will greatly simplify the regulations and protect fisheries with only minor limitations on opportunity.

The Lake Arapuni stocking program is under review and staff have recommended a pause to the stocking program that could result in lower fish numbers over the next 3-5 years. Although a three fish limit could be applied to lakes the proposed changes to the Lake Arapuni stocking program have introduced considerable uncertainty that justify a conservative limit.

### 3.1.4 Fishing Methods Background

The primary users of streams and the core angling customers of the Auckland Waikato Fish & Game Council are fly anglers, so it is important to manage the fishery in line with existing policy without alienating our core customers. There are two policies in the Auckland Waikato SF&GMP that support restricting angling activity to protect fish populations in addition to maintaining the backcountry experience:

1. Establish where necessary controlling mechanisms for access to, and use of, fisheries within defined carrying capacities manage and advocate for appropriate social carrying capacities.
2. Protect pressure sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries and to manage within those capacities to preserve high quality recreational experiences.

Neither policy requires limiting access via gear type or to maintain fly fishing only areas. But The intent of the policies is to maintain “high quality recreational experiences” by limiting anglers. Under the participation section of the Auckland Waikato SF&GMP there are two relevant passages:

1. Angling and hunting methods must cater for all including the young and the elderly. Young anglers and hunters, in particular, are an important market and are the future of the sports.

2. Participation levels, user density and methods of angler access are impacting on the quality of recreational experience in some circumstances such as in 'backcountry' and 'remote' fisheries where wilderness values are important. Problems with fisheries at this end of the recreational opportunity spectrum require active management to avoid conflicts between users over user densities or modes of access (e.g. aircraft or jet boats).

Restricting fishing methods is commonly used to reduce angling pressure, reduce mortality and improve angler satisfaction by selecting methods thought to be less harmful with fewer participants. Although excluding spin and bait anglers theoretically reduces angling pressure by a third, one of the core objectives in the Auckland Waikato region is to separate fly anglers as many fly anglers appreciate the exclusive access to some of the region's best streams. Some fly anglers dislike sharing water with non-fly anglers, the following are excerpts from fly angler submission:

- Fly fishing is a "challenging art. As such there is a selection bias as to the types of individual who will choose to do so."
- "Spinning does not mix with fly fishing."
- "I personally see a correlation with littering and damage to vegetation, banks etc caused by people bait fishing."
- "I have talked many bait fishermen/ women here on the Whanganui and Whakapapa they all used Mussels from the supermarket and none of them had a License."
- "Unethical fishing because anyone can do it."
- "The rubbish left by bait fisherman will litter the side and stream eg the wharfs around the country are full of plastic bait bags."
- "Soft plastics and bait (try ganged koura tails) will slaughter the stocks because anyone can do it, no skill or interest in preserving the fishery is required."

Fly fishing has historically been considered less harmful to fish and a good method for reducing angling pressure. However, in the Auckland Waikato region most anglers that fish streams are fly anglers (especially backcountry streams), so angler numbers are not substantially reduced. Catch and release fly angling during the summer may also be more harmful than other methods due to the increased number of fish landed. In terms of protecting fish populations or maintaining trophy fisheries, the use of fly fishing-only areas is questionable. The lower Whakapapa drift dive Monitoring reach is an easily accessible spin/fly fishing area with a two fish limit that holds just as many large fish as the upper Whakapapa monitoring reach (A. Daniel, 2021) that has a zero limit for rainbow trout, is fly fishing only and has very limited access. The high use and easy access of the lower Whakapapa River monitoring reach is likely mitigated by cold water allowing for high survival of released fish. If the Auckland Waikato council intends to use fishing methods to protect sensitive fisheries by reducing use, then spin only areas would be more effective due to the reduced number of anglers participating. However, if poor survival of released fish in warm rivers, like the Mangatutu, is the primary factor limiting the trout population closures, limiting access or landing limits (land two fish and you must stop fishing) are better management tools.

The Controlled Fishery Licence and Designated Waters Licence are both specifically designed to manage the carrying capacity of fisheries. By balloting fishing days or requiring an extra licence fisheries can be managed in a more equitable way with more certainty around angler numbers. The Designated Waters Licence was created to reduce overseas anglers in areas where fisheries were overwhelmed and require at least 50% use by overseas anglers to justify the designation. No Auckland Waikato fishery would currently meet this threshold, and staff have never received a complaint about excessive numbers of overseas anglers. The Controlled Fishery licence is intended to allow a booking

or ballot system to control angler use in overcrowded fisheries and could be used as a mechanism to reduce pressure on high quality streams with high angler use like the Whakapapa (Table 1). But the low angler use of the other fly fishing only areas is very unlikely to justify a controlled fishery designation (Table 1). Both The Controlled Fishery licence and the Designated Waters licence require ministerial approval and consultation managed by the minister’s office as they are new fees that are imposed on anglers. Neither option would be available for the 2025/26 season, but staff could begin preparation for future consideration by the minister.

*Table 1. Angler use (angler days) of current Auckland Waikato fly fishing only waters derived from (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023). The “% change in use” is the change in angler use from the 2014/15 to the 2021/22 national angler survey.*

Stream	Angler days	% change in use
Whakapapa	3772	+29
Mangatutu	989	+60
Kaniwhaniwha	499	+60
Awakino	420	+10
Kakahu	126	+270
Ngakoaohia	90	+250

There has been a significant shift in spin angling over the last decade from spinners and hard lures (generally treble hooks) to soft baits (primarily single hooks). The Lower Waikato Fishing competition has been dominated by soft bait anglers since 2012 (Wilson, 2012). Although there is no indication that treble hooks significantly increase the mortality rate of released fish (A. Daniel, 2022a) the use of treble hooks is often cited as a reason spin fishing should not be allowed in sensitive fisheries. The use of treble hooks was reviewed and approved by the Auckland Waikato Fish & Game Council in 2022. Spin anglers are currently only excluded from the six streams listed in Table 1.

Bait anglers only represent about 9% (A. Daniel, 2018) of stream angling pressure in the Auckland Waikato region. It is assumed that bait anglers retain more fish and have higher hooking mortality of landed fish (compared to spin and fly fishing in the same temperature water) but the limited data available suggests bait anglers catch trout at less than half the rate of fly anglers (Lake Arapuni Fishing Competition unpublished data). Currently, bait anglers are restricted to lowland waters and can only fish 10 of the 87 listed streams or stream reaches in the Auckland Waikato region despite paying the same licence fee as all other anglers. Although concerns of elevated fish mortality when bait fishing are valid the low number of bait anglers would significantly reduce the impact of the method. The implementation of a low daily bag limit (two fish) would further mitigate the potential impact of bait angling.

### 3.1.5 Fishing Methods Angler feedback

The majority of respondents to the online survey and email were fly anglers who oppose opening fly only fisheries to other methods. Just over 60% of respondents opposed all methods on all rivers and there was a direct relationship between the proportion of time a respondent spent fly fishing and their opposition to the proposal (Figure 3).

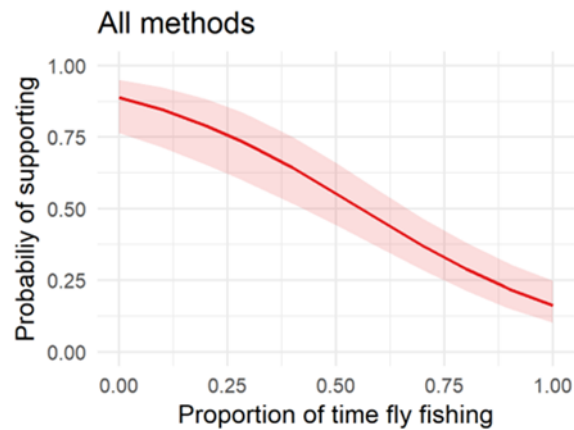


Figure 3: The estimated relationship between supporting fly, spin and bait fishing being allowed in all waterways and the amount of time spent fly fishing compared to other methods (Appendix 2).

Fly fishing guides that submitted remits strongly believed that if their clients see bait anglers, it will reduce their enjoyment and push anglers away from the Auckland Waikato region, reducing their income. Some fly anglers were so passionate they threatened to stop trout fishing altogether if they were forced to fish with bait anglers. Many fly anglers believe that fly-only waters are essential for preserving fishing quality, reducing overcrowding, and minimising the disturbance caused by other fishing methods in addition to reducing the impact of angling on fragile fisheries (Appendix 2 & Appendix 3). There is little evidence to backing most of the claims made in support of fly fishing only areas aside from reducing fishing activity that could be lowered by a third by excluding spin and bait anglers. However, the majority of backcountry stream anglers are fly fishers, so the restriction is not that effective for limiting angler use or reducing catch and release related mortality.

Fly anglers had several reasons for excluding other anglers and the following are quotes from remits:

- “To stop meat hunters from overfishing rivers with fragile eco systems.”
- “I consider fly fishing the ultimate and that anglers progress to this. Therefore, it is something to aim for.”
- “Spin fishing is inhumane and ruins fisheries. There are enough spin fishing opportunities already.”
- “Fly fishing in New Zealand has a legacy that should be protected, not just for international, but among local residents.”
- “It's a sports fish, not a meat fishery.”
- “I think it's important to have access to a few reaches of fly only water as this makes it more enjoyable.”
- “Increasing the variety of angling methods, will increase angling pressure.”
- “Spin fishers have no etiquette.”
- “The advancement of lures and soft bait methods which include products containing high amounts of HDPE, micro plastics and rubber.”
- “As a landowner with private water I get frustrated walking down to see the mess spin fishermen leave.”

Anglers were asked to specifically list the streams that they would like to be designated as fly fishing only. The existing fly fishing only streams were specifically listed in angler submissions aside from the Kakahu that was covered in a request to retain all existing designations. The waterbodies that were specifically requested as fly fishing only water are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Anglers' submissions on streams that should be fly fishing only. Streams in yellow are currently fly-fishing-only waters or have sections that are fly-fishing only.

<b>Suggested fly fishing only waters</b>
All existing fly-only areas
All headwater streams
Awakino (above Mahoenui)
Hunua Reservoirs
Kaniwhaniwha
Mangatutu
Moakurarua
Ngakoaohia
Pirongia Mountain Streams
Puniu above Bayley Bridge
Waihou
Waipapa above the falls
Waipa above Otorohanga
Waitawheta (Above Franklin Road)
Whakapapa
Whanganui above Taumarunui

Spin and bait anglers were generally supportive of opening more rivers to all methods and staff have received several complaints from anglers with families that there are very limited opportunities to fish in quality streams with kids in the Auckland Waikato region due to gear restrictions that prohibit bait. Due to high temperatures in lowland streams where bait is legal, it is very difficult to catch trout with bait in the Auckland Waikato region during the summer, including the summer school holidays. The lack of quality fishing areas for beginners often leads to unsuccessful attempts to teach kids to fish. Submitters also expressed their concern that elderly anglers were excluded as some could no longer fly fish. Staff have been assisting one such angler who is in a wheelchair and unable to spin or fly fish. The angler has purchased a full-season licence for over 40 years but does not have any accessible bait fishing water available near his home and has been asking for help to find a location where he can fish legally. Anglers in support of opening more water to spin and bait fishing submitted the following comments:

- “It means the nicest rivers are only available to be fished by a specific group and particularly affects junior anglers. For example, I cannot take my children fishing to my two favourite rivers as they don’t yet have the skill to fly fish. At the least make it legal to fish with a bubble and fly in fly only rivers. “
- “Having fly only waters could also discriminate against those with less money, as in general fly gear is more expensive.”
- “Fly fishing only proposals smack of elitism.”
- “I fish for trout with all methods and I find it quite frustrating not being able to bait fish in most waters. It's a great way to get kids involved but I can only do this in a few places that are generally not that scenic or enjoyable for the kids. So, more bait fishing waters please. “
- “All rivers should be available for fishing to all anglers, such as those that can't fly fish”
- “Fly fishing is difficult physically for smaller folk especially a lot of women, and those not confident wading. Soft bait fishing makes it more accessible to all.”

- “I would say that allowing spin and fly together is good, but keep bait fishing separate for the lower areas.”
- “With a reduced limit there is no need to restrict fishing method.”
- “As we get older (pensioners) it becomes very difficult to fly-fish. Spin-fishing is a lot easier on the old joints. Also, access without overhanging trees and bushes can often make fly-fishing almost impossible. Please change the rules from fly-fishing only as we oldies also enjoy trout fishing.”
- “Absolutely No (i.e. we need to get rid of this exclusive approach) - comment as to why. While the reason in the article was touted as a way of reducing fishing pressure, I believe retaining flyfishing only waters continues to encourage an elitist attitude among some. I also think it creates a lack of opportunities in some areas due to lack of readily accessible waters (i.e. close to home) for non-fly fishers.”

### 3.1.6 Staff Recommendations Methods

There is justification for imposing restrictions on the Whakapapa River to control angler use in an effort to “ensure a high-quality recreational experience”. The continually increasing angler use (Stoffels & Unwin, 2023) and added pressure from guides pose a threat to the region’s top fishery. Unfortunately, a controlled fishery designation is not immediately available but preparing for a controlled fishery to be considered by the minister is prudent. In the meantime, it is recommended that the upper whakapapa (1 km above the Ohinetonga Road) be designated for fly fishing only, and the lower river remains for fly and spin fishing.

There is also justification to protect fisheries from heat related mortality (catch and release in addition to population level impacts). These sensitive fisheries (Table 3) would ideally have heat related restrictions due to increased probability of high angler related mortality during warm periods between December and April. The stream reaches are also considered important spawning sites so winter closures are also justified. Although the Auckland Waikato Council was the first in the county to ban fishing competitions above 19°C an educational approach was adopted for recreational anglers. There is limited monitoring of stream temperature with real-time monitoring only available for two of the sensitive fisheries currently making compliance difficult. Heat related restrictions would also be unpredictable with some stream temperatures rising by 4°C during a hot day. Ramping up heat related mortality education amongst anglers and consulting on practical solutions to manage heat stressed fisheries with anglers is highly recommended.

Considering the lack of other tools to manage heat related stresses and the strong desire amongst fly anglers to maintain fly fishing only areas it is recommended that the listed streams are designated fly fishing only in their upper reaches with winter closures. The upper Waipa is notably missing from the list and is heat sensitive in addition to being a critical spawning stream. The lack of access on the upper Waipa has resulted in low fishing pressure that will adequately protect the fishery. The Kakahu has also been dropped from the Fly fishing only waters due to low angler use.

*Table 3. Backcountry and pressure sensitive fisheries recommended to be fly fishing only in the Auckland Waikato region.*

Stream	Section	Season
Awakino	upstream of Mahoenui Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun
Kaniwhaniwha	upstream of Quarry Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun
Mangatutu	upstream of Lethbridge Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun
Ngakoaohia	upstream of Pirongia/Kawhia Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun
Whakapapa	upstream of 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Rd	1 Oct - 30 Jun

The designation of streams currently listed as fly fishing and spin fishing (controlled fisheries; Table 4) is primarily a political rather than a species management decision. If we assume that heat related stress will be managed via an educational approach and a conservative limit is in place, adding bait fishing onto the remaining waters would likely have a minimal impact. In terms of additional fishing pressure, bait anglers are a small proportion (<10%) of the overall angler use, and southland staff indicated there was no significant shift in gear type when their regulations were liberalised. The increased opportunity would be welcomed by parents of young anglers, the elderly and beginners. However, there is a risk that some fly anglers would be upset.

*Table 4. Controlled fisheries requiring additional consideration in the Auckland Waikato region.*

Stream	Section
Kakahu	
Kaniwhaniwha	downstream of Quarry Road
Little Waipa Stream	(Horahora Road Bridge deemed to be the mouth)
Mangaohae	
Mangatepopo	
Mangatutu	downstream of Lethbridge Road
Mangawhio Stream	
Maramataha	
Moakurua	upstream of Honikiwi Road
Okauaka	
Ongarue	upstream of Waimiha Stream confluence
Piopiotea	
Pokaiwhenua Stream	
Puniu	upstream of Seafund Road Bridge
Tawarau	Above power station intake
Tumai Stream	
Waione	
Waipa	upstream of State Highway 3 Bridge
Waipapa River	above lower falls
Waitawheta	upstream of end of Franklin Road
Whakapapa	downstream from 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Rd
Whakapapa-iti	
Whakapapa-nui	
Whanganui	upstream of Whakapapa River confluence

Considering the political nature of the decision two options have been prepared for council A) Controlled fisheries are Fly and Spin only, and B) All other lakes and rivers open to fly, spin and bait. Option A is largely based on social considerations with a slightly more conservative approach in terms of protecting fish stocks and a far more socially acceptable approach for fly anglers. Option B is just

the opposite as it is far more likely to upset fly anglers than damage fisheries. Fish can recover quickly from dramatic declines in population and eradication of a population is only possible with poison or a significant natural disaster so even a catastrophic error in setting regulations can be reviewed the following year and rectified without long term damage to a fishery. Table 5 gives an example of “Option A” and “Option B” as they would appear in the regulations.

Table 5. “Option A” (upper) showing potential Auckland Waikato regulations with sensitive fisheries, controlled fisheries and all other waters. “Option B” (lower) is an example of potential Auckland Waikato regulations with only sensitive fisheries and all other waters with the exception of the Whakapapa.

Option A				
Stream	Reach	Open	Method	Limit
Awakino	upstream of Mahoenui Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Kaniwhaniwha	upstream of Quarry Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Mangatutu	upstream of Lethbridge Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Ngakoaohia	upstream of Pirongia/Kawhia Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Whakapapa	upstream of 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Whakapapa	downstream of 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	FS	2
Kakahu		All year	FS	2
Kaniwhaniwha	Downstream of Quarry Road	All year	FS	2
Little Waipa Stream	Upstream of Horahora Road Bridge	All year	FS	2
Mangaohae		All year	FS	2
Mangatepopo		All year	FS	2
Mangatutu	downstream of Lethbridge Road	All year	FS	2
Mangawhio Stream		All year	FS	2
Maramataha		All year	FS	2
Moakurarua	upstream of Honikiwi Road	All year	FS	2
Okauaka		All year	FS	2
Ongarue	upstream of Waimiha Stream confluence	All year	FS	2
Piopiotea		All year	FS	2
Pokaiwhenua Stream		All year	FS	2
Puniu	upstream of Seafund Road Bridge	All year	FS	2
Tawarau	Above power station intake	All year	FS	2
Tumai Stream		All year	FS	2
Waione		All year	FS	2
Waipa	upstream of State Highway 3 Bridge	All year	FS	2
Waipapa River	above lower falls	All year	FS	2
Waitawheta	upstream of end of Franklin Road	All year	FS	2
Whakapapa-iti		All year	FS	2
Whakapapa-nui		All year	FS	2
Whanganui	upstream of Whakapapa River confluence	All year	FS	2
All other rivers & lakes		All year	FSB	2

Option B				
Stream	Reach	Open	Method	Limit
Awakino	upstream of Mahoenui Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Kaniwhaniwha	upstream of Quarry Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Mangatutu	upstream of Lethbridge Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Ngakoahia	upstream of Pirongia/Kawhia Bridge	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Whakapapa	upstream of 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	F	2
Whakapapa	downstream of 1 km upstream of Ohinetonga Road	1 Oct - 30 Jun	FS	2
All other lakes & rivers		All year	FSB	2

## 3.2 SEASON LENGTH

### 3.2.1 Season Length Background

The intention of a closed season is to protect spawning fish and to allow fish to remain undisturbed and increase catch rates on opening day. Opening day has also been used as a marketing tool to increase hype for the new season with the aim of increasing licence sales. Most Auckland Waikato streams fish better in the summer when fish are concentrated in the upper reaches of streams so fishing pressure is low during the opening. Rangers rarely see large numbers of anglers on opening day aside from the Whakapapa.

Trout spawning season in the Auckland Waikato region is from May to September, with peak spawning in June and July for brown and rainbow trout, respectively. Protecting trout spawning is critical, but most spawning occurs in small tributaries or the very upper reaches of catchments that are not always fished by anglers. The Mangatutu is an exception where groundwater upwelling attracts significant mainstem spawning. It is unlikely that extending the fishing season would have a significant impact on spawning but monitoring potentially impacted spawning sites would be prudent if the fishing season is extended. If small spawning tributaries are identified in the future closures similar to the hydro lake spawning tributaries would be prudent.

### 3.2.2 Season Length Angler feedback

Angler feedback about year-round fishing season included concerns about overharvesting, increased pressure, and making trout wary. Overall, 55% of anglers supported year-round seasons. Overharvesting and increased pressure are unlikely to be a factor during the New Zealand winter due to reduced fishing activity, high water and the dispersal of fish. Trout spread out to take advantage of cool water temperatures after spawning dramatically reducing fish densities with rainbow trout moving downstream and most large brown trout migrating to more productive feeding areas in big systems. Fish do bite more frequently and are less likely to spook when they encounter fewer anglers (Young & Hayes, 2004) but due to the low turnout for opening day this is not a significant concern for Auckland Waikato fisheries.

### 3.2.3 Season Length Staff Recommendations

The Sensitive fisheries listed in Table 3 include the major Auckland Waikato spawning streams that justify a closed season. However, a closed season is difficult to justify for other open streams as the hydro lake spawning streams are permanently closed to fishing, and most other spawning areas are inaccessible. The increased opportunity of year-round fishing outweighs the potential impacts on streams as it is unlikely to significantly affect fish recruitment due to the nature and timing of trout

spawning. Many brown trout spawn during the open season now without any apparent disruption to the species. There is potential for unforeseen exploitation of spawning sites, so monitoring for unforeseen disruption of significant spawning sites is prudent.

### **3.3 SIZE RESTRICTIONS**

#### **3.3.1 Size Restrictions Background**

Minimum size restrictions are generally used to ensure some trout grow large enough to spawn. However, from a population perspective, it is far better to remove small trout (<300 mm) than large fish in terms of reproduction and angler satisfaction. Requiring anglers to remove large fish can be detrimental because fecundity is positively linked to fish size and weight (Asim Bazaz et al., 2022). Although there is a valid argument that retaining trout less than 300 mm is pointless in terms of consumption it would be far better for anglers to take small fish in terms of preserving the population.

Several spring creeks currently have no limit on trout under 300 mm to increase opportunity for anglers, but drift dive data has shown boom and bust cycles in the Waihou River, indicating that at times, the spring creeks experience low recruitment (A. Daniel, 2022b). It is also extremely uncommon for anglers to take multiple small fish in areas with no limits.

#### **3.3.2 Size Restrictions Angler feedback**

Of the anglers that completed the online survey, only 40% agreed with removing size restrictions and there were a handful of comments relating to ethical concerns about taking undersized fish in addition to a suggestion to create a slot limit to protect trophy fish. The two primary concerns from angler feedback are captured in the following comments from anglers:

- “I would not support removing the size limit. Anglers often self regulate when they see people poaching tiny trout. I have experience on south Waikato streams with people taking dozens of 10cm fish, what meat do you get from this?”
- “I propose that a maximum size limit be imposed as well. This will protect our trophy fish.”

#### **3.3.3 Size Restrictions Staff Recommendations**

Size Restrictions, in addition to a conservative limit, are not necessary to manage Auckland Waikato fisheries and may be counterproductive when most anglers would prefer to catch large fish. Considering fecundity is around 3 eggs per gram of fish, it would take approximately 8 fish under 300 mm to equal the fecundity of one 2 kg fish, so from a management perspective, allowing anglers to take smaller fish as part of their limit is better for the fishery. A slot limit to protect large fish is a good suggestion but our only trophy fishery (Whakapapa River) has no shortage of large fish. If drift dive monitoring detected a change in the density of large fish or the council designated new trophy fisheries, that lacked large fish, slot limits would be a good management tool.

## 4 APPENDIX 1: SPORTS FISH AND GAME MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Sections of the Sports Fish & Game Management Plan for Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Region 2021 – 2031 relevant to setting regulations.

### 4.1 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

- (Species management (8.0)) Regulations need to take a precautionary approach to avoid over harvest.
- **(Outcome (8.1))** To maintain sustainable populations of harvestable sports fish and game bird species. Throughout the region, publicly owned and managed fish and game resources are thriving within natural habitats and areas. Wild fish and game resources maintain a population which produces sufficient numbers for a self-sustaining annual harvest in the long term.
- **(Issues (8.2.1))** There is a statutory requirement to manage sports fish and game to ensure species and population sustainability. There is an ongoing need for information on sports fish and game populations dynamics and factors affecting their abundance, including harvest, as well as a precautionary approach to their management. Declines in habitat quality and quantity may also lead to declines in fish and game habitat values and productivity. As such, there is a need to demonstrate a cautious management approach in light of any perceived decline to the fish and game resource.
- **(Issues (8.2.4))** It is difficult to monitor all sports fish and game species and habitats to a desirable level of precision and therefore we must prioritise resourcing into areas and species where the populations are under greatest stress and where regulations are likely to influence population levels.
- **(Objectives (8.3.1))** To manage sports fisheries and game resources having regard to sustainability to meet the interests and recreational needs of present and future generations of anglers and hunters.
- **(Objectives (8.3.3))** To optimise angling and hunting opportunity and maintain or improve the recreational fishing and hunting opportunities available in Auckland/Waikato.
- **(Policy (8.4.1))** Achieve sustainability through the following approach:
  - A. ensure that the sustainability of the resource has priority over utilisation (i.e., utilisation will be dependent on sustainability)
  - B. in the absence of reliable information or in the face of uncertain information, a precautionary approach will be adopted in managing fish and game populations
  - C. management decisions will be based on the best available information
  - D. the absence of information will not be used as a reason for failing to adopt management measures.

### 4.2 ANGLER AND HUNTER PARTICIPATION

- **(Angler and Hunter Participation (10))** Protection of the quality of the angling experience, which in some areas includes feelings of solitude, remoteness and appreciation of natural surroundings and high-water quality, must remain a priority for the Council. Too much angling pressure can diminish the perceived value of the backcountry fishery. Similar pressures also impact on hunting.

- **(Outcomes (10.1))** To encourage maximum angler and hunter participation while maintaining the quality of the recreational experience.
- **(Issues (10.2.1))** There is a demand for clear and simple angling and hunting regulations and some anglers and hunters want liberalisation of methods and season restrictions when sports fish and game populations allow for additional harvest. Angling and hunting methods must cater for all including the young and the elderly. Young anglers and hunters in particular are an important market and are the future of the sports. They may need assistance to learn about sports fishing and game bird hunting.
- **(Issues (10.2.2))** Participation levels, user density and methods of angler access are impacting on the quality of recreational experience in some circumstances such as in 'backcountry' and 'remote' fisheries where wilderness values are important. Problems with fisheries at this end of the recreational opportunity spectrum require active management to avoid conflicts between users over user densities or modes of access (e.g. aircraft or jet boats).
- **(Objectives (10.3.1))** To minimise and simplify regulations controlling angling and hunting so that they do not become an impediment to participation, but not at the expense of precautionary management.
- **(Objectives (10.3.6))** To manage potential conflicts between recreational users over modes of access and methods.
- **(Objectives (10.3.7))** To provide opportunities for new anglers and hunters to participate in sports fishing and game bird hunting.
- **(Objectives (10.3.11))** To set limits on angler or hunter use of fisheries and hunting areas where pressure of use threatens or adversely affects the quality of recreational experience and to actively manage those areas for their key characteristics.
- **(Policies (10.4.1))** Review tri-annually angling and hunting conditions and assess them for their relevance, clarity and simplicity.
- **(Policies (10.4.))** Liaise with other regions over the annual review of angling and hunting conditions and to seek consistency between regions.
- **(Policies (10.4.10))** Establish where necessary controlling mechanisms for access to, and use of, fisheries within defined carrying capacities.
- **(Policies (10.4.1))** Monitor, manage and advocate for appropriate social carrying capacities to protect pressure sensitive remote or backcountry fisheries and to manage within those capacities to preserve high quality recreational experiences and the spectrum of fishing and hunting opportunity in Auckland/Waikato.

### **4.3 ADMINISTRATION AND STATUTORY SERVICING**

- **(Policy (12.4.3))** Invite anglers and hunters, and iwi to participate in Anglers Notice and Game Gazette reviews.

## 5 APPENDIX 2 ANGLER RULE CHANGE SURVEY REPORT

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### Angler Rule-change Survey 2024

By Beau Jarvis-child

#### 5.1 METHODS

##### 5.1.1 Questionnaire

There were two avenues for licence holders to provide feedback on the proposed rule change. They could either email Adam Daniel or complete an online questionnaire hosted by SurveyMonkey. Licence holders were informed of these two options via the Spring Flyer (email) and a separate specific email. The questionnaire was structured to present information on the rule change (summarised from the broader write-up in the spring flyer) and included information about each rule. Participants were asked if they supported each component (yes/no) and whether they supported the wider goal of simplifying the rules. There were also opportunities for open-ended feedback. This report primarily focuses on the responses to the survey.

##### 5.1.2 Analysis

Support for each rule change was estimated based on the proportion of time spent fly fishing compared to other methods. We hypothesise that people would feel differently about some regulation changes depending on their preferred fishing method. Here, we combined spin and bait partly because we had little data on people who spent a lot of time bait fishing compared to other methods and partially because it is the spin and bait regulations proposed to be liberalised. A logistic regression model was used to estimate the levels of support against time spent fly fishing, and Poisson regression was used when modelling suggested bag limits. Content analysis was used to analyse the open-ended responses. Each response was coded based on the key themes/sentiment, allowing key themes to be identified along with their frequency.

#### 5.2 RESULTS

##### 5.2.1 Respondents

We received 168 responses to the survey. Of these, 157 respondents provided complete data (e.g., also indicated their preferred fishing method).

We cannot assume that this collection of respondents is a random sample of the licence-holder population. Given the nature of the rule change proposal, it is likely that dedicated fly-only-fishers may hold stronger feelings and, therefore, be more vocal. To try to account for this, we collected information on respondents' fishing preferences and, where possible, described the results with respect to these preferences.

For those who responded to the survey, fly fishing was the most preferred method – with about half of respondents spending 90% or more of their time on this method. In comparison, only 11% of respondents spend 90% or more of their time spin fishing. Bait fishing was the least preferred method, with 83% never bait fishing. While people have their preferences, most (60%) enjoy a combination of methods (Figure 1).

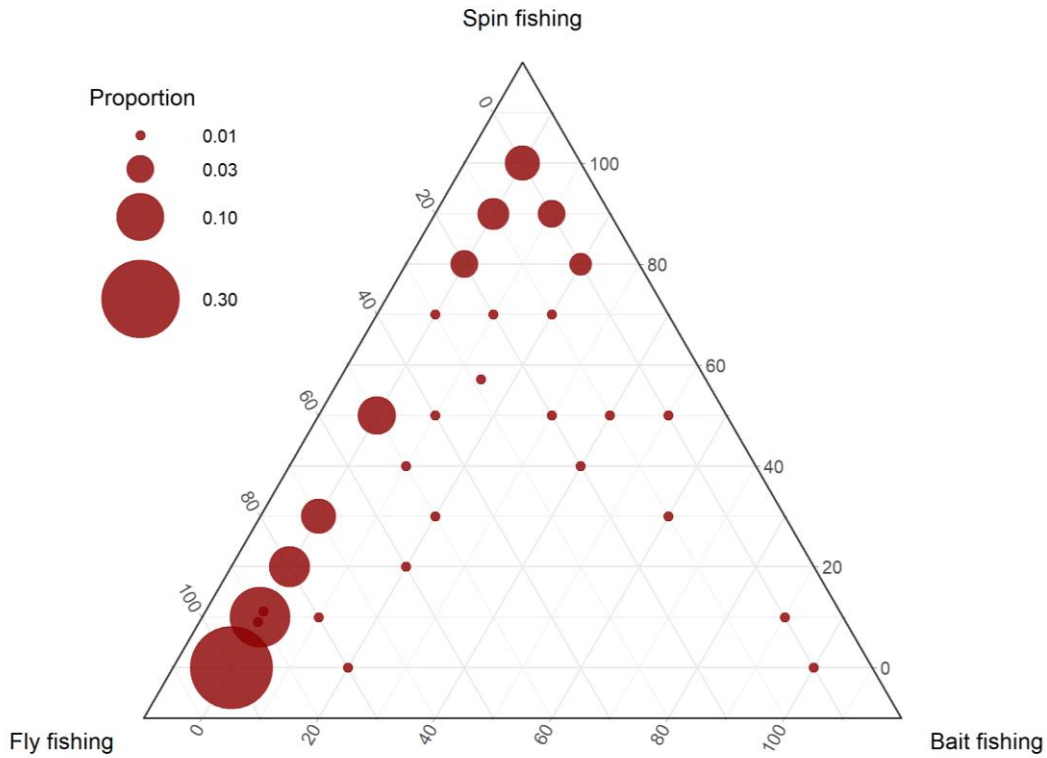


Figure 1: The distribution of preferences in fishing methods of the survey respondents (n=157). The position of the points indicates how much time individuals spend either fly, spin or bait fishing, while the size of the points indicates the proportion of the sample this was associated with.

### 5.2.2 Quantitative Survey Results

Across the board, most survey respondents supported simplifying the regulations to make the sport more accessible (72% on average). While support for this did lessen for those who spent more time fly fishing, it was still in the majority (Figure 1). In addition, there was widespread support for reduced bag limits across all waterways as a primary method of restricting harvest, which increased slightly for those who spent more time fly fishing (Figure 2).

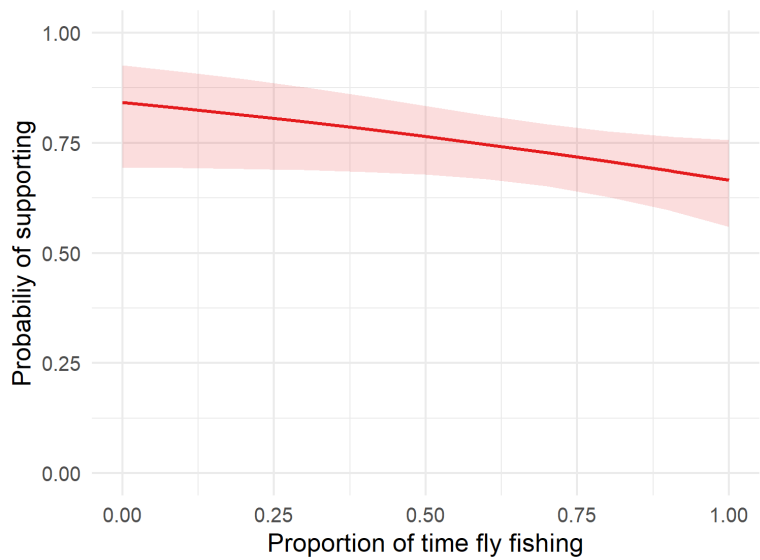


Figure 2: The predicted proportion of individuals that supported simplifying the rules to make the sport more accessible based on how much time they spent fly fishing compared to other methods.

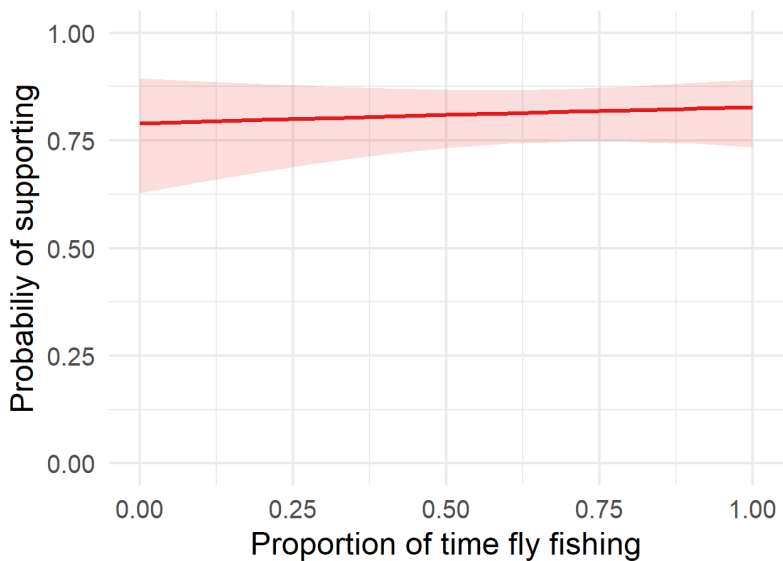
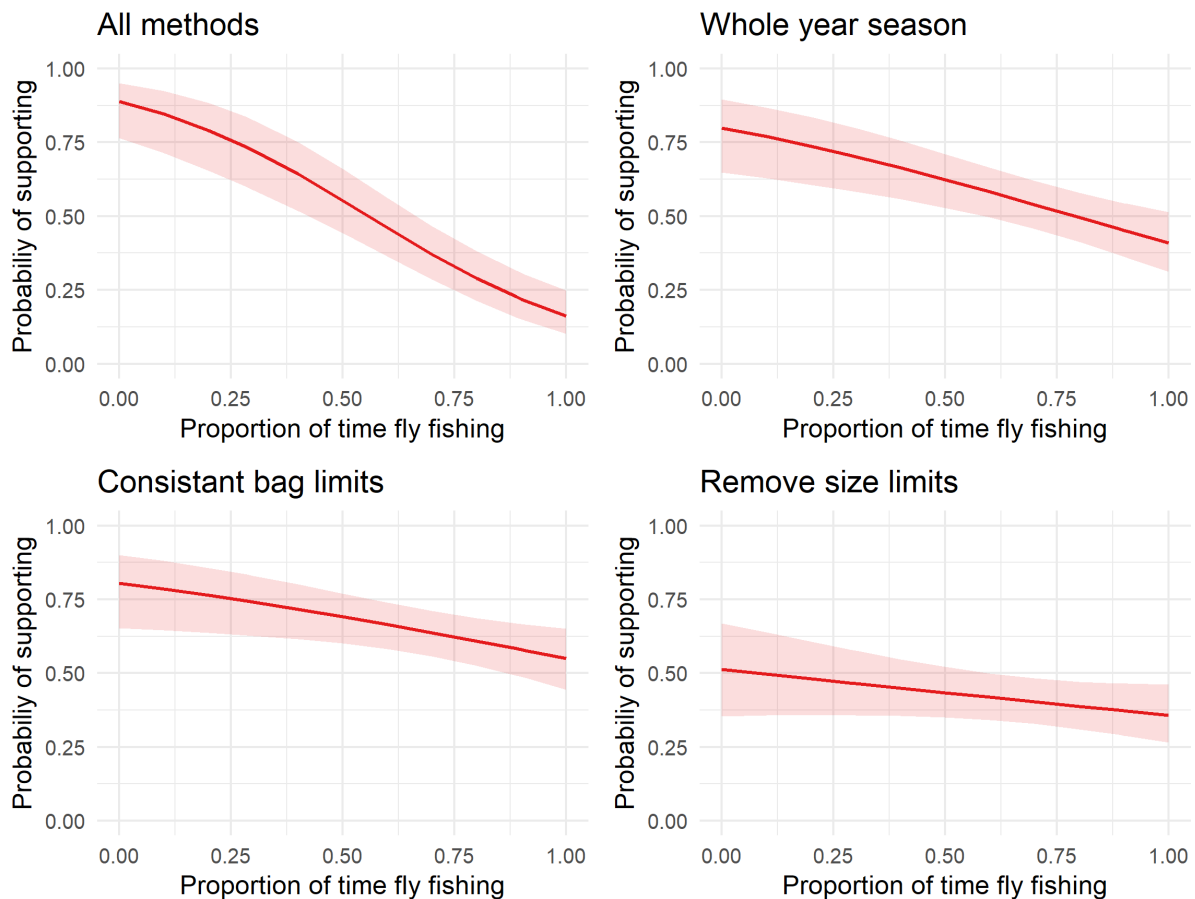


Figure 3: The predicted proportion of individuals that supported reduced bag limits across all waterways as a primary method of restricting harvest, based on how much time they spent fly fishing compared to other methods.

However, regarding the specific rules, the responses were less consistent (Figure 4). Support for allowing all methods in all waterways varied significantly depending on people's preferred method of fishing. Those who spent more time spin or bait fishing were highly supportive, whereas those who spent more time fly fishing were much more likely to be unsupportive (Figure 4). Overall, given the higher presence of fly anglers in the responses, just under 40% of anglers supported this rule change on average.

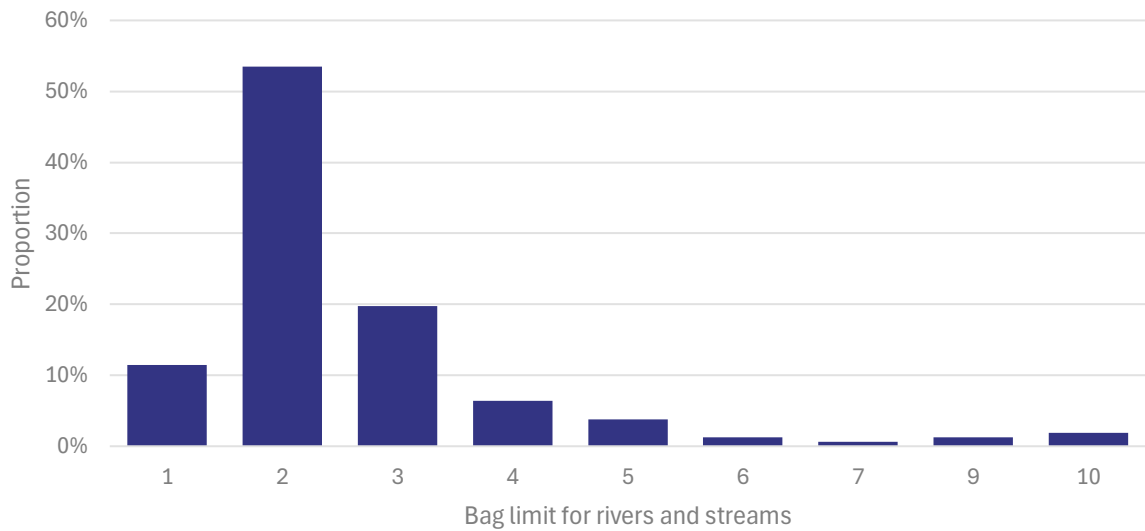
Overall support for a year-round season for all waterways (albeit with a few exceptions) and support for consistent bag limits across all waterways was similar. While people, on average, the majority supported these changes (54% for year-round season and 64% for consistent bag limits), those who spin or bait fish were slightly more likely to support these changes, while those who spent more time fly fishing were slightly less likely to be supportive.

Support was generally weaker for removing size restrictions across all waterways, and there was less of a difference based on fishing methods. On average, only 40% supported this. Again, spin and bait fishers had slightly more support than fly fishers (Figure 4).

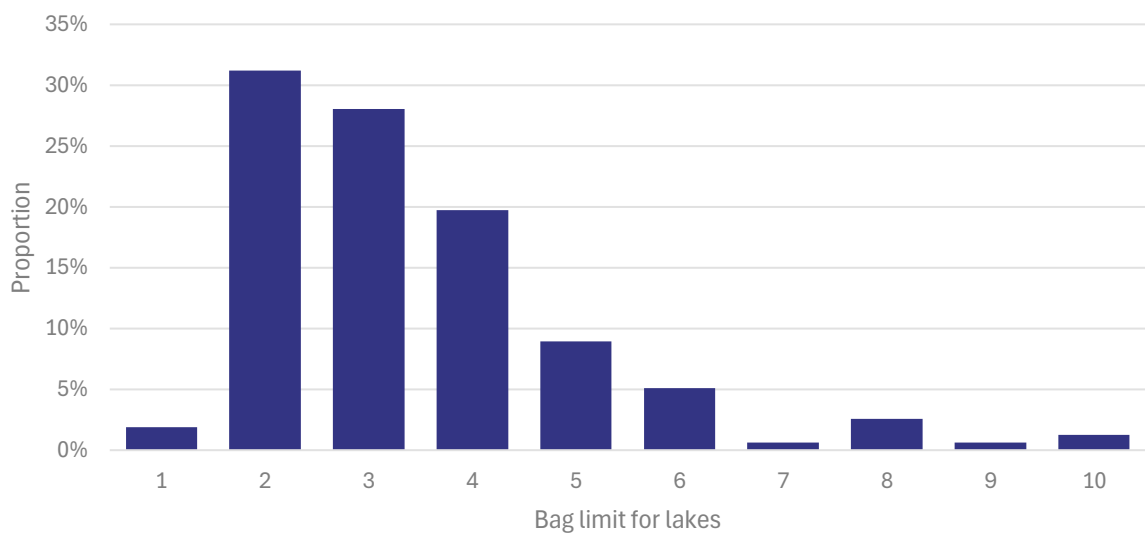


*Figure 4: The estimated relationship between supporting a rule change and the amount of time spent fly fishing compared to other methods. All methods = “support fly, spin and bait fishing being allowed in all waterways”. Whole year season = “support a year-round season for all waterways (albeit with a few exceptions)”. Consistent bag limits = “support consistent bag limits across all waterways”. Remove size restrictions = “support removing size restrictions across all waterways”.*

The average response regarding an appropriate limit across all waterways was 2.6 for rivers/streams and 3.5 for lakes. The most common response for both was 2. The distribution of responses is shown in Figures 5 and 6. For lakes, responses did not change significantly between fly fishers and bait/spin fishers. However, for rivers and streams, those who spent more time fly fishing had, on average, slightly lower proposed limits ( $p=0.036$ ).



*Figure 5: The distribution of responses regarding an appropriate, consistent bag limit on all rivers and streams (n=167).*



*Figure 6: The distribution of responses regarding an appropriate, consistent bag limit on all lakes (n=167).*

### 5.2.3 Qualitative Survey Results

#### 5.2.3.1 Fly only – where?

Many respondents suggested that fly-fishing-only regulations should be enforced in all headwaters (n=40), smaller streams and backcountry areas (n=11). In addition, some responses highlighted specific waters, namely:

<b>Suggested fly-only waters</b>
Mangatutu
Waitawheta
Moakurarua
Kaniwhaniwha
Awakino (above Mahoenui)
Whakapapa
Upper Whanganui
Waipapa above the falls
Waipa below Otorohanga
Puniu below Bayley Bridge
Whanganui below Taumarunui
Pirongia Mountain Streams
Waihou
Hunua Reservoirs
Manganui o te Ao
Ngakoahia
Tawarua River Headwaters

*Table 1: Suggested fly-only waters.*

#### 5.2.3.2 Fly only – why?

In the open-ended responses, those supporting fly-only waters perceived them as both favourable for the environment and fisheries and necessary for the sport's legacy. Those who were against fly-only waters cited elitism and unequal opportunities. More specifically:

For those that support fly-only waters, fly fishing is widely perceived as a more sustainable method, as it puts less pressure on fisheries and the environment (n=26). Many respondents highlighted the inhumane aspects of spin and bait fishing, such as the use of treble, which they perceive results in higher mortality rates for fish (n=13). Fly fishing is also seen as less invasive, avoiding introducing foreign food and pollution into ecosystems (n=3), and is better suited for sensitive or backcountry rivers (n=8). The emphasis on catch-and-release practices further reduces the harvest and supports sustainable fishing (n=5). In addition, fly fishing is regarded as a prestigious and challenging sport, with many respondents emphasising the need for fly-only waters to protect its legacy and heritage (n=18). With respect to tourism, some believe it is necessary to promote New Zealand's iconic natural areas and trophy fisheries to overseas anglers (n=5) who desire an enjoyable and exclusive experience with few crowds (n=7). Respondents also expressed concerns about methods not overlapping well, with spin fishing disturbing the experience of fly anglers and creating conflicts (n=6). This is in part because of the perception that fly fishing fosters respect for the environment and other anglers (n=4) and is seen as a pursuit of skill and sport, contrasting with spin fishing's association with harvesting for food (n=4).

Many responses expressed concerns that fly-only regulations create inequalities by favouring specific groups while discriminating against others. Several respondents (n=7) argued that fly-only waters disadvantage children, juniors, and beginners, for whom spin fishing is often more accessible and easier to learn. Others mentioned that fly-only areas discriminate against lower-income anglers, as fly fishing is perceived as more expensive (n=5). Additionally, some respondents (n=3) noted that spin fishing is easier for older individuals and women, who may find fly fishing more physically demanding. Several individuals (n=4) criticised the elitist nature of fly-only waters, calling for the dissolution of this attitude and the need for more inclusive opportunities. A few respondents (n=4) agreed that bag limits would be a more equitable way to manage harvests rather than restricting specific methods, arguing that this approach would ensure fair opportunities while protecting fisheries.

#### 5.2.3.3 Additional Restrictions.

Here, licence holders were asked what additional restrictions they would recommend. Many respondents supported designating certain rivers or sections as fly-only, notably trophy or spawning rivers, with some naming specific examples like the Whakapapa and Mangatutu Rivers (n=18). Of those, several emphasised that fly-only rivers should also be catch-and-release (n=7). Bag limits were another frequently mentioned topic, with many advocating for limits tailored to specific rivers or conditions (n=8) and others suggesting a general two-fish limit (n=7). Reducing bag limits during spawning seasons was also a common suggestion (n=5), while some supported increasing limits in overpopulated fisheries (n=2) or lowering them to protect trophy fisheries (n=3). There was strong support for catch-and-release policies in sensitive or spawning areas (n=10), with some advocating for a complete catch-and-release approach in these zones (n=6). A few respondents called for a ban on treble hooks (n=3) and the mandatory use of barbless hooks (n=2). Protecting spawning streams through stricter regulations or closures also featured prominently (n=9).

Several participants highlighted the need for region- or river-specific regulations, arguing against a “one-size-fits-all” approach (n=12). Some preferred to leave current rules unchanged (n=5), while others trusted Fish & Game to make decisions informed by scientific research (n=4). Size restrictions to protect breeding fish were also suggested (n=4). Across the responses, there was strong overall support for conservation measures based on sustainable harvest and scientific evidence (n=8).

#### 5.2.3.4 Open-ended feedback

The opportunity for open-ended feedback garnered a wide range of responses, some more relevant to the rule change than others. Often, respondents restated their perspectives from previous questions. The responses are summarised as follows:

##### Access Issues:

- Many respondents emphasised the need for improved access to rivers, streams, and public fishing areas. Overgrown vegetation, restricted access, and privatised land crossings were mentioned. Suggestions include clearing scrub, building tracks, and adding stiles for fence crossings.

##### Regulation Complexity:

- While some support simplifying fishing regulations, others feel the current system works well and is not confusing for experienced anglers. Concerns exist that blanket rules fail to account for the unique characteristics of individual rivers and lakes.

##### Fishing Methods:

- Divisive opinions on expanding bait and spin fishing:
  - Supporters believe it encourages younger and new anglers.

- Opponents argue bait fishing leads to overharvesting, unethical practices, and gut-hooked fish, particularly in sensitive waterways.

Treble Hooks and Barbless Rules:

- Many advocate for banning treble hooks due to the damage they cause, especially to fish released back into the water. Some propose expanding "barbless hook-only" waters.

Seasonality and Bag Limits:

- Concerns about opening waters year-round include fish overharvesting, increased pressure, and making trout wary.
- Others favour maintaining seasonal closures to give fish a recovery period.

Fly Fishing Perception:

- Some respondents view fly-fishing-only regulations as elitist, while others advocate for preserving fly fishing as a high-skill tradition.

Cost and Licensing:

- Suggestions include pro-rata license fees, better license enforcement, and simpler renewal processes.
- High costs were cited as a barrier to participation, especially for families and retirees.

Youth and Future Anglers:

- Encouraging younger generations is a recurring theme, with ideas like more bait-fishing areas for kids and accessible urban fishing locations.

Environmental Concerns:

- Pollution in lakes and rivers (e.g., agricultural runoff) is seen as reducing fish quality and size.
- Calls for sustainable fisheries management, such as catch-and-release rules in headwaters and limiting fish harvest during spawning.

Tourism and Behaviour:

- Concerns about overfishing and bad etiquette were linked to bait fishing practices, with comparisons made to popular areas like the Twizel canals.

## 6 APPENDIX 3 EMAIL REMITS

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Adam

My Name Is John Dickson and I am a fisherman in the Hamilton area

I would like to give my thoughts to the proposed changes to the fish and game regulations

It is actually the first time I have made a formal submission on any topic, But I feel obliged to do so given the interest in the fishing community

I have had some conversation with Nigel Juby and hence have some understanding of the rationale behind the proposed changes

As a medical practitioner, who works in a field of constant change, I am aware of some principles that are relevant here

Firstly, it is our natural inclination to dislike change. When offered an alternative way of doing things, even though they may prove better, we are often at first reluctant to take them on.

Secondly, very often if a change is made to solve a particular problem, it is often replaced by other problems, some of them unintended and unexpected

This leads to the third principle "If it isn't broken, don't fix it"

I note the comment regarding the hundred regulations that apply in this region. Looking on your website, they mostly relate to closed season details and the regulations relating to how we fish are relatively few.

In that regard, I don't I don't think they are unnecessarily complicated

The proposed changes regarding the opening or closing of seasons seem reasonable. Having said that in this area, there is reasonable access to winter fishing. Furthermore, we have the blessing of the proximity to the Taupo region with some of the best winter fishing in the world

I myself like the seasonality of fishing where there is a place in time for things

Therefore, I do not have any particular objection to that change, but in my heart would prefer to leave things as they are

I take the point that a possibly significant cause of fish mortality is fishing in hot conditions with the metabolic cost of a fish being caught is often unsurvivable. Particularly as this is the period where brown trout are more likely to spawn. In that regard, it would make more sense to close some fisheries in late summer. Doing so as likely to result in a march on parliament by fisherman and hence this is probably an issue best dealt with by education rather than regulation.

I feel differently about the proposed changes to open all fisheries to all styles of fishing. Flyfishing, even though perhaps the most effective way to catch fish, is a challenging art. As such there is a selection bias as to the types of individual who will choose to do so. I suspect that opening all fisheries to spin and bait fishing will see more fisherman who fish primarily to provide for the table and rather than the art of fishing or the wilderness experience. Therefore, I think you will find there will be more fisherman who are less respectful of fish health or indeed, the fish and game regulations. I can see scenarios where local bait or spin fisherman pop down to a rivers best pools once a week or so to extract the bigger fish , with potential conflict over access.

The Southland experience, where I gather similar changes have proved not to be problematical, may be different from here where we have a larger population base.

Perhaps that is an unkind social judgment reflective of my own biases. Furthermore you might say it is not our place to judge on such variables. Nevertheless this change has the potential to possibly reshape the fishing experience.

It seems to me that there is ample opportunity for fisherman who prefer those methods and Fish primarily for the table to do so under the current regulations. And keeping the concept of the third principal above (Not changing things in a way that may have unexpected and unintentional consequences, unless there is a clear advantage to doing so), I think that I would oppose this change and would prefer things to be left as they are

Finally thank you, and your team for the many hours of unpaid work that you perform on our behalf in the interest of the fishery and fishermen.

John

---

Hi Adam,

I think it is great to simplify the rules for rivers. I assume the rules for lakes will remain as they are?

My view on the proposed rules:

**Year-round season on most rivers (excluding spawning areas)**

Agree, I think fish should be left to spawn in peace so identifying the spawning areas is critical.

**No restrictions on gear (spin, bait and fly on all streams)**

Totally agree.

I don't see a reason for one method to be favoured over the others. I personally own fly gear for the purpose of fishing the "fly only" waters and that happens very very rarely.

All these rules here and there put parents and children off freshwater fishing in my view. Kids can't try what they want and is easy - have to be guided all the time - this is allowed, this is not.

**2 fish daily limits for all rivers**

Neutral on this one - maybe make it 3 or 4 fish if the 5 fish limit is an issue.

Small limit favours locals and they have the opportunity to go often anyways.

The reality for me:

I live in South/East Auckland.

A fishing trip is minimum \$100 in petrol driving south and I would like to bring something home after such expense.

I can't afford to go often, majority of my trips are blanks anyways just to reinforce the above.

When I go, I spent a lot of time trying to find access to the river, searching for a farmer to ask for permission, etc...

As a result I go to the lakes more often than rivers.

Thanks again!

Regards,

Klim

---

I am in favour of bait fishing on all waters, it will bring more people to the sport who will probably become fly fishers.

Kind regards,

Stuart Buchanan

---

Hello Adam.

I have just, through a third party, read the basic framework of possible or proposed changes to the AKL/ WAIKATO chapter of F & G.

Whilst I totally agree with your comment regarding a multitude of conflicting regulations I feel a blanket opening of everything including bait fishing is just pushing the parcel way too far. We are so fortunate in this country to have such magnificent waterways and part of that pleasure is to have seasonal and fly only restrictions in some areas. To kill off spawning fish in sensitive back country rivers where there are no releases makes little sense. When it becomes a financially driven decision to perhaps just sell more licences it probably strikes a nerve with passionate fly fishermen who I'm sure represent a high percentage of ongoing annual licence sales.

By all means simplify the regulations in some of the less significant non-trophy waters but do stand firm on closed seasons for rivers like the Whakapapa, Whanganui above the confluence, and other important waterways and some tributaries. How would duck shooters react without an opening day to look forward to. Fly fishermen probably feel the same.

I have purchased a licence every year for almost sixty years and I guided professionally out of Rotorua for 20 years. I am still an associate member of the NZPFGA. During this time we operated a lodge with an exclusively high end US fishing clientele. NZ arguably offers one of the world's finest wild fisheries. I would even argue for "catch and release" only in some of our rivers, an extremely common compliance in other countries. We need to look after our wild fisheries for the next generation. Let's not change for change sake.

At 80 years of age I still look forward to opening day. With the Taupo winter fishing option for North Islanders we are well catered for during the closed season. As for bait fishing.....probably best kept for eels and coarse fish!

Just my thoughts.

Tight lines

Simon..... <\*)>><

Simon Robertson

Rotorua Trout Safaris Ltd.

3a/38 James Cook Crescent

Remuera 1050

T: 027 2896442

Associate member : NZPFGA

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Couple of points. I agree re changes to catch limits, fish size limits etc. Such changes are part of ongoing fisheries management and would likely need to continue to change in response to fish population changes.

I don't agree with allowing all fishing methods in all places. I don't think there is any groundswell of demand for changes to allow bait fishing or spinning in fly-only water. Maybe there are some tweaks that could be done on some streams but I am fully in favour of retaining the status quo. I believe that the argument that the system needs simplifying is coming from the top and not from the anglers.

Closing streams in winter is a management issue again so I would fully respect Fish and Game making the call on streams that should be closed.

Regards

Steve Davis

ps I couldn't find the survey!

---

Having read through the proposed rule changes I wish to comment.

Having fished for many years I do not support the removal of fly fishing only areas. Apart from being easier to take trout, spinning does not mix with fly fishing. The method disturbs the water more and covers water more quickly putting flyfishers at a disadvantage with respect to enjoying their sport. All the fly fishers I know release their fish when fishing in the Auckland area streams. My experience of spin fishers is that they kill their catch. I note your argument about survival of released fish but do have some scepticism of how real this is.

If the rules are changed I would be keen that this is for a trial period to see how it does work in practise

Thanks for this and your other great work

Jonathan Cross

---

Hi Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Council, I have no problem with the move to simplify the fishing regulations in our area.

I am comfortable with liberalisation of fishing methods but would prefer the upper reaches to be fly-fishing only.

I am happy with a consistent bag limit [ 2 fish ] but am concerned that some of the back-country rivers will not be able to tolerate this level of harvest [ e.g. upper reaches of Whakapapa River ], while others such as Waihou will remain overcrowded with fish.

I am not comfortable with the known spawning streams being fished all year long.

My concern with the proposed changes is that the fishing pressure is very different in different parts of the country and the proposed changes do not reflect the different demographics and fishing pressures.

Tom Watson

---

Hi Adam,

I trust you are well. I was looking for the survey but could not find it in relation to a submission.

Only comment my end is and it might sound exclusive. But I think the Whakapapa should be fly fishing only not bait or spin. I've seen recent pics from anglers using soft plastics and due to the nature of the equipment would say the fish will be damaged or not survive. I promote barbless where I can. I'd hope such a good fishery could be preserved for the future.

Thanks.

Rob Vaz

---

Please find my feedback on the proposed changes/survey questions found on your website. I think it is very positive creating more consistent rules which also helps the self-regulating nature that the Waikato needs when fish and game do not have the capacity to monitor our vast range of waterways. I am concerned with the introduction of bait to streams but I think the rest seems sensible and well thought out.

Thanks for giving members the chance to participate.

#### Q1 Methods of take

Your evidence on the catch rate comparable to other methods seems valid. I would comment that the main concern I would have with limiting the restrictions to allowing for bait fishing is largely due the way these fishermen fish which does not align with other methods of fishing. Bait fishing parking up on a river restricts others ability to use the waterway and compared to a fly or spin fishermen who moves frequently allowing more fishermen per area the fishing methods are not comparable allowing people to fish next to each other. I personally see a correlation with littering and damage to vegetation, banks etc caused by people bait fishing compared to other types.

Talking with local Iwi suggest they have concern with tuna being likely to be caught with bait which is of concern to me as we need to protect, prioritise actions to improve our native species.

I also have concerns with foul fishing (foul hooking fish on purpose during spawning) in shallow spawning streams with spin fishing methods which may create Canadian like issues.

#### Recommendation for trout

1. For fishing on lakes all methods accepted, experienced fishermen generally move onto more untouched areas so the easiest access or most common to be fished should be the least restricted to get people started.
2. fishing on main rivers all but bait
3. fishing on small shallow streams fly fishing only, protects the amenity value for dedicated experienced anglers who show these areas a lot of respect.

#### Q2 Closed season

Trout are introduced species and reduce the ability for native species to thrive. As a farmer I see what the trout eat in my waterway during spawning so more than happy to allow people to remove a few extra from the population in these small farm streams. It does not seem right to restrict fishing on small waterways which hold hundreds of trout in 50m spacings during spawning.

### Q3 Consistent bag limits

Agree, 2 fish per person seems sensible. Allows boat fishermen to catch a good feed per boat for the family and a solo angler is not commonly taking more than 2.

Recommendation - Increase the size limit and allow 3 per person

### Q4 Size restrictions

If the principle of sustainable fishing means holding other anglers to account and having a clear standard of acceptance I would not support removing the size limit. Anglers often self regulate when they see people poaching tiny trout. I have experience on south Waikato streams with people taking dozens of 10cm fish, what meat do you get from this?

Thanks For the information , Comparing Southland with Auckland for a survey is looking for something that suits your needs the population numbers are so vastly different .

And yes the Spin anglers are a concern in the use of treble hooks should be banded and if you looked at Wellington with a slot limit introduced they are banning triple hooks so they can be released . This is down to you to educate that fisherpersons will catch more fish with a single hook or spinning with a fly .

I agree about the fishing to hot a water , in Slovenia they close all smaller streams if the reach 20c not just com people . Is very hard if we have organised a comp people have booked acom travelled , marked beats and cannot move venues because we need permission .

Please let my know when you stop duck shooters because they are to good a shoot

Thanks Adam Peter Scott will be sending out letters to councils impacted

Thank you Adam and yes I have talked to you on the River did not consider you a ranger sorry . what about the whakapapa / Whanganui bait/ no closed session . Peter

---

Peter Scott <[peter@hanak.co.nz](mailto:peter@hanak.co.nz)>

**Subject:** Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game - Proposed changes to fishing regulations .

1/ To many Regulations there may be to many but if you do not police any what does it matter weather you have 2 or 100 , last time I saw a Ranger was at least 12 year ago and he was a volunteer ranger on the Ohinemuri

2 / only one significant spawning stream the Mangatutu does someone your board like this stream , Unfortunately you control what may be the best combine river in the world the Whakapapa / Whanganui and you treat it like it is not significant . This may be your only real Trophy water .

3/ Bait fishing I have talked many bait fishermen/ women here on the Whanganui and Whakapapa they all used Mussels from the supermarket and none of them had a License , but of course your rangers would know that .

4/significant spawning stream , looking after the Ohinemuri is very important with this river being closest to the biggest population in NZ the upper Waipa ,there are many streams as important as the Mangatutu and I really like that stream

5/ simplifying regulation and opening river up year round why not do that with hunting , duck shooting let me know when you drop opening day for duck shooting

I will be writing a letter to your board and to the Fish and Game council spent the weekend fishing/ Teaching with you new Chairwomen

6/ like the picture is it the Mangatutu

---

Hi Adam, good to talk to you today although the fact that I had to call you to understand what is actually proposed illustrates the central problem with this proposal.

This proposal lacks an explicit rationale. What is the problem which Fish and Game is trying to resolve and why do they believe that this proposal will resolve that problem?

Simplifying the regulations implies that the existing regulations are a problem. How are they a problem? How do you know they are a problem?

To say that Southland made these changes and nothing bad happened there is hardly a rationale. What problem was Southland trying to solve? Why did they believe that simplifying the regulations would solve that problem? What has been the positive impact of these changes in Southland - were angler numbers dropping and have license sales in Southland increased as a result of the simplified regulatory environment?

I understand that Fish and Game commissioned a report which is the driver behind these changes. Why haven't members been told about this report? Why is this report not available to members?

The level of detail provided is dismal. There is an implication that all the fly only zones with the exception of the Mangatutu will disappear. That's a very significant change for fly fishermen but I only managed to get into the detail of that by talking to you. If you are consulting about change then your members deserve something more detailed than the few paragraphs provided.

For fly fisherman a reduction in fly only water is a very significant change which needs a carefully thought through and explicit rationale.

There should be a consultation document which outlines the perceived problem, the proposed changes and why Fish and Game believe these changes will impact positively on the problem. This is a minimal requirement for any competent organisation consulting about change today.

Towards the end of our call, I asked you for an update on the organisational changes that Fish and Game have been talking about in recent years. I asked because it has been clear for a long time that Fish and Game needs a much more professional approach. The poor quality of this consultation effort illustrates the urgent need for an organisational refresh.

Please don't take this personally Adam. I have always found you easy to approach, very knowledgeable and helpful. Unfortunately, I don't feel the same way about Fish and Game as an organisation.

As a fly fisherman I feel that this proposal signals a significant shift in the alignment of my interests with the direction of travel within Fish and Game. I am struggling to understand why I should continue to be a subscribing member.

Concerns.

1. Transfer of disease and pest species via contaminated baits.
2. Fish rendered nonviable to release due to deeper hooking with use of bait.
3. Devaluation of the trout fishing sport.
4. A limit reduction to 2 per day is too lean, unfair for many who cant fish often and seems unnecessary. I question my own participation in the future if the limit is only 2. I am not greedy, but there will be times depending on effort and related expenses where 2 is insufficient and unfair.
5. Policing. Unlicensed people can just say that they are eeling.

Possible solutions to the above in order.

1. With simplification of regulations, make it blinding clear and very strict that baits used must be from the same waterway or heavy penalties.
2. No solution if bait is used.
3. Reduce the cost of license accordingly. By 50% in my opinion, especially with a daily catch limit of only 2.
4. Make the daily catch limit 4 fish per day.
5. Running lines only, but, why can't someone use a rod for eels if they desire to?

Positives.

1. Revitalizing trout fishing.
2. Simplification of regulations.
3. Am presuming the cost of licenses will be reduced

Good luck.

Erin Hampson-tindale

Hey Adam.

Sorry mate. Just lastly, but I must add

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I was sitting here having my coffee this morning and another feeling that came over me around the idea of allowing bait fishing for trout after having more time to process my thoughts.

I think broad bait fishing will devalue the sport. Trout fishing has a certain sophistication and class to it, which gives it value and in turn creates revenue based on the fact that it is a privilege to undertake in the sport and thus, we buy our licenses.

The fact that trout are actually an introduced pest that gorges on all that's native and indigenous is irrelevant given that in reality, money rules.

I think normalizing bait fishing for trout will seriously degrade and devalue the sport.

Cheers mate.

Erin

---

Hello Daniel and thanks for the opportunity to comment on proposed changes to fishing regulations in the Auckland/Waikato region. I am an obsessed fresh water angler having fished NZ waters over the last fifty plus years beginning my adventure in the Wellington Fish and Game region on the Otaki river. I believe there is opportunity for all methods, fly, spin and bait to apply on our New Zealand lakes and rivers having progressed as a young angler from spin fishing to fly fishing which has been my preferred method over the last 40 or so years. I say preferred method as not to sound elitest, as I love promoting our great outdoors to our younger anglers, the voices of our future sport. I have been involved with childrens fly fishing events at the Tongariro National Trout Centre over the last 30 years. Fishing the pond advocates for fly fishing providing a quality experience for the children involved.

What concerns me with the overall feeling of these proposed Fish and Game regulation changes is the open door policy of these changes and the effect this may or may not have on our National Angling Jewels our unique and unspoilt rivers and lakes of NZ. If simplifying the regulations for the Auckland /Waikato regions is aimed at making it simple for anglers to understand the regulations and simply get more anglers on the water and increase licence sales, it will probably achieve its aim but at what expense to the future wellbeing of our present great fisheries. The past great work and dedication of Fish and Game management will I believe largely have been ignored at the prospect of a quick fix and fingers crossed approach. Managers in the past would have thought of this if it was that simple but they had a clear vision ( I believe ) of Fish and Games future and most importantly of the future wellbeing of our rivers and lakes, their environmental outcomes, their habitat protection and kaitiakitunga for future anglers.

The fact that some changes have already been implemented by Southland Fish and Game and so far have had no adverse effect means nothing, yet! I am not against change here but I am against blanket, as mentioned quick fix change. Anglers in general are passionate about their sport and the environment, they return year after year to their favourite lake or river because of a number of authentic, positive reasons not just fish numbers. International anglers visiting our waters will judge us for sure, like why are

they now charged more to fish in what has become an anything goes unprotected river. A blanket change may create a tide we can't turn. I would be most interested to be involved in any future discussions,  
Thanks for your time and Tight Line

Peter Wilton, Taupo.

Adam

---

Whoever could have anticipated Fish & Game would ever encourage trout roe and hooked cicadas and soft plastics being used on prime back-country streams instead of prosecuting that activity

Not even a proposal to preserve any streams for ethical fishing. Wow.

'For the children'?....I'm left speechless.

The fix for this is political, inside and outside Fish & Game.

You might get away with this for a little while but not forever.

Regards

Tim Blanch

---

Hi Adam

Just did the survey and wrote in it that I would be happy to join a discussion group if there were any, but I don't think the survey can get back to its participants? Anyway, I would like current (there are hardly any: 5 river sections out of 80!!) fly-only waters to remain and I would like a potential universal bag to be higher than 2; in the survey I said 4 but perhaps I could live with 3.

Cheers

J

---

Hello Adam

Any long term hard stats on the " impact on fish stocks" or just loose observation by people in favour of unethical fishing because anyone can do it?

The legalisation of jigging in Lake Taupo and the Rotorua lakes has been a disaster. Tourist operation party boats love it, 'we all get to kill a fish'. I see the same deep holes fished daily, 365 days a year, weather permitting.

When they have bait, release will be impossible with deeply swallowed hook ups.

I'm a foreigner who has made 60+ fly fishing trips to NZ.

If this stupidity becomes actuality I see that ending in a couple of years, there's always Alaska.

You might like to look at sophisticated Nth American trout management. Try your approach with the premium trout streams there and there will be a revolt.

Why would you want to push the resource?

"You won't know what you got til it's gone".

Regards

Tim Blanch

---

This proposal will destroy the fishery

allowing bait on almost all streams will disincentivize people to take up fly fishing

catch and release will become redundant as bait is usually taken down into the gut

the rubbish left by bait fisherman will litter the side and stream eg the wharfs around the country are full of plastic bait bags

regards steve besley

---

Good morning

I am a trout fisher in the Waikato and King Country area and licence holder for 50 years. Over this time I have seen many changes in both the fish populations in various streams as well as the fishing pressure. For example, 30-50 years ago there was an abundant population of brown trout in the upper Waipa catchment, with many fish migrating into the head waters as summer advanced. These days the Morakurarua and upper Waipa are predominantly rainbow fisheries with a smaller population of brown trout. Similarly the ratio of browns to rainbows has shifted to a lesser degree in the Mangatutu and Puniu rivers. There is generally a reduction in mayfly hatches on these and other streams and even lace fly numbers are greatly diminished compared to decades ago. Younger fishers will not be aware of the wonderful fishing we enjoyed through the 70's and 80's in particular, although the fishing can still be excellent.

I am keen to see younger folk get into the sport, and to this end it's great that there are opportunities for spin and bait fishing throughout the district. However some fisheries are quite susceptible to over fishing and also the experience in the headwater fisheries can be destroyed by indiscriminate and uncontrolled fishing pressure. I am very aware that with the increase in catch and release philosophy, the fish in some of our smaller streams become increasingly shy and difficult to catch as summer progresses. In fact it's almost possible to "label" some of the fish as having been caught before, judging from their behaviour. This is especially true in areas that are fished almost on a daily basis.

On a number of occasions I have had a day's fishing destroyed by spin anglers marching along the river banks in full view and covering great distances of river with a few casts into each pool before rapidly walking on up river, leaving long stretches of river disturbed - effectively for the rest of the day. On smaller rivers, spin fishers and fly fishers do not often share the same approach to leaving the river as undisturbed as possible.

I believe that sensitive smaller streams in the headwaters should be designated as fly only. Making all fisheries open to all methods runs the risk of destroying a special experience for everyone. Fly only fisheries are not "exclusive" in fact the opposite, as their very existence encourages younger people to take up fly fishing in order to enjoy the very special surroundings and quiet enjoyment of these pristine places. There are lots of opportunities for "all method" fishing in the larger rivers and lakes, but the small streams in particular need to be protected for the unique experience available in those areas. There is a significant risk in relaxing rules to a level of all methods, everywhere. All sports and recreations by and large have self imposed rules to make sure participants can enjoy themselves but within certain boundaries of behaviour etc.

There are very few fly only waters in the district currently. When these were designated in the past, it was for good reason. In particular, I would encourage a fly only rule upstream of Toa's bridge on the Waipa, for the upper Mangatutu above the quarry, and for the Moakurarua above Honikiwi. The very nature of these small streams means that they can only tolerate limited fishing effort. An attempt to increase numbers of

people fishing such areas will spoil the experience for everyone. Nobody wants to spend the day fly fishing up a small stream behind a group of spin fishers.

Close seasons are essential to allow rivers to have a "rest" especially during spawning times. Catching slabby fish post spawning is easy and inexperienced fishers may find this rewarding without realising the damage that can be done. Some rivers are more vulnerable to fishing pressure than others, so catch limits should be tailored to suit, and indeed should be varied regularly to reflect fish populations etc.

I would be worried if a "any method" and "no close seasons" philosophy was then adopted for game birds and whitebait, just to increase availability for everyone ! How about "all methods" on the Taupo rivers, say the Tongariro for example.....

The intention to increase angler access to rivers is great and I applaud Fish and Game's work regarding this. The relaxation of rules and regulations however may well prove to be detrimental. We are all custodians of our very special fishery and need to preserve a good experience for everyone in the future.

I will also complete the on-line survey

Mike Goold

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Hi Adam

Thanks for the opportunity to make a submission on the rule changes.

The points I would like to make are these:

Bait fishing would create a static fishing environment in a number of our waterways more suited to a mobile fishing approach, this then denies other anglers opportunity.

Bait fishing could increase a higher mortality in small fish with the hook causing internal damage and the inability to remove the barbed hook to avoid this.

Bait fishing will increase angler pressure on waterways, a sort of dumbing down the approach and impacting on other more sporting approaches, we see it on US waterways.

Bait fishing would increase fish take in rivers that during higher flows and turbidity currently fish have some degree of protection with the current approaches being much less effective during this time.

The baits available today must have a greater impact on fish numbers than when the bait was a worm on a hook approach, this could mean more fish caught and an angler upsizing while on the water with smaller fish discarded as they sought to achieve this. Again younger fish becoming victims of this approach.

Some cultures here will welcome this with groups descending on waterways currently protected by the current legislation. Bringing a take all they can approach. We see this consistently in the saltwater fisheries.

Some rivers such as the Arapuni and Mangatutu need rules to protect not just the fish numbers but the experience of fishing such waters. Two that I believe should be totally catch and release with flyfishing only.

Large groups taking over a fishery already occurs with the NZ Sport flyfishing organisation virtually ticketing waters for their competitions excluding others from such waters this would only get worse with allowing bait fishing.

I would like to see the winter spawning rules brought forward a month to end of May in sensitive fisheries especially giving those fish that have already moved into these environments added protection especially with the possible threat of bait fishing occurring.

A two fish limit should be applied to ALL sports fishing in the region in all waterways as a stand alone rule change not as a means to allow the other changes to occur unless a no keep catch and release approach,

many if not all waterways are in a poorer environmental state than twenty years ago the Waikato Regional Council water quality testing reflects this and a change to a two fish limit is overdue already with habitat degradation and ongoing concern and reality.

I feel we need to bring in changes to better protect fisheries rather than add to the fishing pressure waterways that have high water temperatures where fish experience stress should be closed during key times ok it might deny holiday makers their access but that should be seen as a privilege not a right.

The current regulations are not that difficult to understand what could be rather the issue is anglers ignorance of the rules a simple willingness to understand that they cannot just do what they want rather as with all other environments people enter that comes with responsibilities.

I was in Hawkes Bay when similar rivers which were once flyfishing only were opened to spinning and the numbers of spinning sets sold in retail rapidly increased as families with recently occupied lifestyle blocks descended on waterways,

removing the quality experience from those who had previously enjoyed a better quality experience.

If this is driven to increase license sales I would rather pay more for a license rather than allowing more pressure on waterways by dumbing down the approach our decreasing wild fisheries need more protection rather than pressure.

I would like instead the focus of F and G to be on access to waterways with a better fishing experience for those who value what such an experience brings. I feel a bait fishing rule would mean much of this (including access would be lost) as angling pressure increases especially those where there is currently a delicate balance between access and angler numbers.

Thanks for taking the time to read through my views.

Regards

Mark

Good afternoon

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I am a keen fly fisher, but I try to avoid eating fish; not for ethical reasons: but I just do not enjoy the taste.

The result is that the proposed changes to the bag limits have no effect on me. I suppose that makes me a trophy fisher.

Most of our fisheries have a lower size limit. I propose that a maximum size limit be imposed as well. This will protect our trophy fish. The survival rate should be high as most fly fishers have a high ethical standard and will take great care to return fish to the water in a healthy state to give someone else a chance to experience the thrill of a trophy fish.

Two big attractions for overseas fishers are the size and ease of access to our trout. Killing a large trout is removing genetic growth potential out of the gene pool. The remaining pool is poorer for this. In any event, I understand that smaller (just size) fish taste far better than the bigger fish.

As a last point, I believe that the current bag limits for both fresh and salt species should be reviewed to truly sustainable levels.

Kind regards

Chris Glass

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Hi Adam,

I trust you are doing well.

A lot of food for thought great newsletter.

Notes: losing access lower Waipapa this is also a safety issues if people can't access the boat ramp to save a life?

Whakapapa still noticeable pressure early season

This should be a fly fishing only river or designated waters so Europeans can't stay there for weeks.

Thanks,

Rob Vaz

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I think u should keep the ngakohia as it is the fish need a rest after spawning people sneak in there and spin fish it's fly only water it's sad that stream has gone down hill over the last few years Johnny

Replying to the changed does it mean the pirongia streams

With be open year round? Personally I think that's a terrible idea they hardly have many fish in them if people take 2 out each time there will be none left the fish numbers have dropped considerably in the last 5 years I think this change will ruin the little pirongia stream

Thanks johnny

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You do understand this proposal will rapidly destroy premier trout fishing in NZ ?

Regardless of the food available the gene for 'bigness' must survive in numbers or silly little fish prevail.

Soft plastics and bait (try ganged koura tails) will slaughter the stocks because anyone can do it, no skill or interest in preserving the fishery is required.

"You know not what you do". A trout fishing tragedy will result.

Regards

Tim Blanch

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The new changes sound great.maybe frustrating for seasoned anglers,no one likes change but this change may benefit all anglers higher population in numbers and higher catch rates if the limit is two fish per person.

Kind regards,

Shane Michael.

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