

Fish & Game New Zealand is updating its family fishing licence



The Minister for Hunting and Fishing has approved updates to the family licence, with key changes being that both adult spouses/partners on family licences now have equal fishing and voting rights and can fish independently.

Here's what's new:

- **Both adult spouses/partners will receive their own named licence card, have equal fishing rights, and can fish independently**
- **Both adults have voting rights and can stand in Fish & Game elections**
- **Both adults will receive Fish & Game communications (from 2026/27)**
- **Removes restrictions that previously limited participation for secondary licence holders, most of whom were women**
- **Makes it easier for families to enjoy fishing together or separately**
- **Both adults will receive a plastic licence card and need to carry it with them. Or they can use a PDF licence either printed or on a phone but they must carry photo ID as well**

How does this help increase participation in fishing?

Women represent a huge opportunity to grow fishing participation. Our data shows that 13% of individual licence holders are women, but this figure increases to around 30% when we consider the number included under the previous secondary family licence holder category.

These changes make it easier for women to get involved by removing barriers and making fishing more accessible to all family members. Increasing women's participation to the same rate as men would see 40,000 to 60,000 additional women anglers.

What if current family licence holders do not have children?

Under the new regulations, at least one child or grandchild must be named on the licence. If there are no children or grandchildren to include, they will need to purchase individual adult licences.

The child must be aged under 18 as of October 1st, live with them ordinarily or periodically, or are their grandchildren. A maximum of four children/grandchildren can be covered.

Children or grandchildren over the age of 18 on October 1 cannot be included on the family licence and will need to purchase their own adult licence.

This ensures the family licence remains focused on its core purpose of introducing young people to fishing.

Key facts

- Both adults can fish independently (previously the secondary holder could only fish with the primary holder or children)
- Family participants (children/grandchildren) may only fish when accompanied by either Adult Licence Holder
- Voting rights and eligibility to stand in elections are extended to both adults
- Communications will go to both adults (from 2026/27)
- Spouse or partners aged 65 or older, who were secondary licence holders on the Family Licence in the past, can claim continuous history based on the primary licence to be eligible for the Loyal Senior Licence. Please contact your regional Fish & Game office to assist with this transition

When do these changes take effect?

The changes are being implemented in two phases:

- **2025/26 season (starting 1 October 2025):** Equal fishing rights for both adults listed on the family licence
- **2026/27 season:** Full system updates including individual communications and data capture

Cost

- There is no price increase.