

# Give crayfish a helping hand



Photo: Sam Wild

Crayfish abundance in the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty is at an all-time low and public access to crayfish has suffered.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Crayfish are in a depleted state in CRA2 - now at %17 of its original unfished biomass. Commercial catch limits have been cut, but a review of amateur bag limits will not be finished until 2019.

## WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Everyone does something to help the rebuild. If you could take 4 or more crayfish when you go fishing, consider taking 3 instead to help crayfish stocks recover more quickly. LegaSea, the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, the New Zealand Underwater Association and Spearfishing New Zealand are urging their members and you to voluntarily reduce the individual daily limit from six to three crayfish in the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty over the coming summer.

Crayfish abundance in the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty is at an all-time low and public access to crayfish has suffered. Many divers and fishers have told us they want to give crayfish stocks a helping hand.

A lower daily bag limit of three will allow more recreational fishers to share the benefits of a rebuild, while supporting a rapid recovery of the stock.

LegaSea initiated a public survey in February 2018. It received an unprecedented response, with over 1100 responses in the first 24 hours.

The survey showed there is wide public interest in the management of New Zealand's crayfish stocks, particularly in the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty (area CRA 2).

LegaSea conducted a campaign and engaged with the minister on the state of crayfish stocks. After a management review the Minister reduced the commercial catch limit from 200 to 80 tonnes per annum, from April 1st 2018. Now is a good time to reduce recreational take because it will assist with the early stages of the rebuild leading up to the 2019 spawning season.

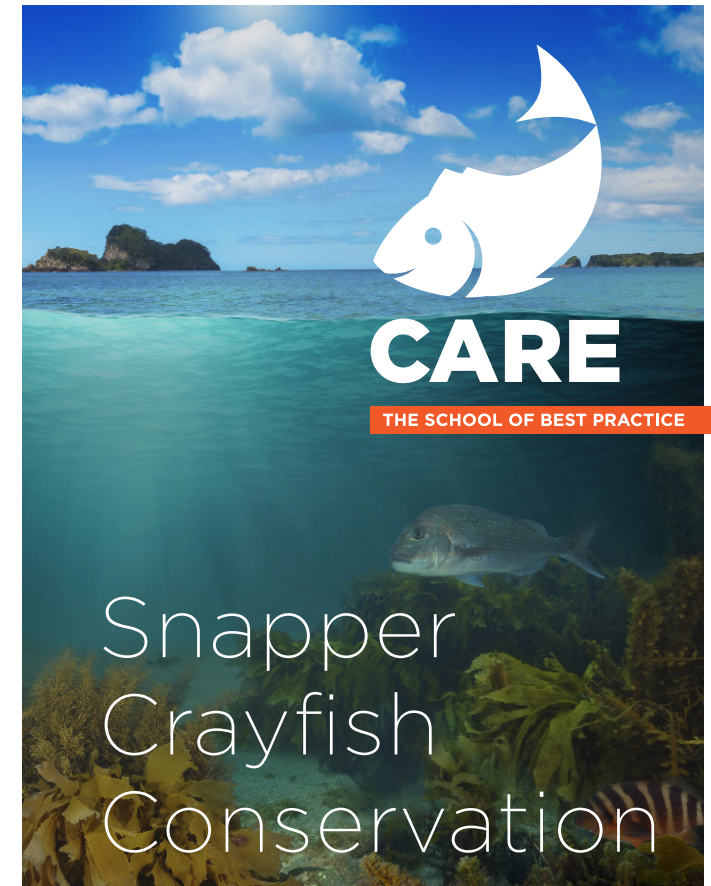
LegaSea is encouraging all recreational crayfishers to join the movement to voluntarily reduce the crayfish daily limit to three in CRA 2. Let's commit to help restoring crayfish abundance in the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty.



Photo: Sam Wild

Only 12% of fishers who responded to our survey in the CRA2 area rated the crayfish fishery as average or better.

For more information on the FishCare programme go to [www.fishcare.org.nz](http://www.fishcare.org.nz)



# Snapper



Photo: Digital Fish

Limiting the harvest of large snapper all year round and not just spawning time is a good conservation measure. Large snapper genes are valuable to the overall population.

## WHY DO WE STILL FISH FOR SNAPPER IN SPAWNING SEASON?

Because environmental factors (eg warmer than usual spring temperatures) have a far more profound effect on stocks than changes to recreational fishing practices in spring time. The willingness of people to stop fishing during spawning season is often based on conservation concerns. However, the research data for snapper does not show that spawning season closures would have a meaningful benefit over and above the natural variation in environmental conditions. That is because snapper have developed a clever breeding strategy to take advantage of favourable environmental conditions.

Snapper release far more eggs into the water column than necessary, over an extended period, to ensure some juveniles find just the right environmental and forage conditions. Spawning success depends on factors such as weather

conditions, water temperature, food, and shelter availability at critical life stages. These factors can hugely influence spawning success. Research indicates a season with warmer waters may help increase the number of juvenile snapper that survive their first year by 10 to 20 times, and that this is not directly reliant on the number of eggs produced from the population.



Photo: Digital Fish

The research for snapper does not show that spawning season closures would have a meaningful benefit over and above the natural variation in environmental conditions.

## SNAPPER CONSERVATION - WHAT YOU CAN DO

So, environmental factors play a significant role in successful breeding. Limiting the harvest of large fish whose genes have successfully navigated it to a significant size and status in the population means its genes are valuable. If we can help those genes endure by releasing the fish successfully rather than killing it, that can only do good for our fishery.

There are numerous principles that can help our snapper and can be practiced all year round:

- Crush the barbs on your hooks so releasing any fish can be done quickly whilst in the water without handling, improving their chances of survival.
- Use rubber mesh nets instead of nylon mesh nets to reduce the amount of protective slime that may be removed for fish selected for release.
- Learn techniques to help fish suffering from barotrauma – set up your own descender rig or carefully puncture the fish's swim bladder if protruding from the mouth (go to [www.fishcare.org.nz/handling-and-releasing/](http://www.fishcare.org.nz/handling-and-releasing/) for more info)

## CONSERVATION

FishCare – The school of best practice teaches fishing techniques and handling practices to help you improve the survival rates of fish caught and released. Help us restore abundance and ensure there are fish for future generations, go to [www.fishcare.org.nz](http://www.fishcare.org.nz) to find out how.



Photo: Digital Fish

There will still be some snapper mortality if fishers have to release all snapper while fishing for other species during the snapper spawning season, negating perceived benefits to the fishery.