

## Survey of rock lobster fishing interests in CRA 2

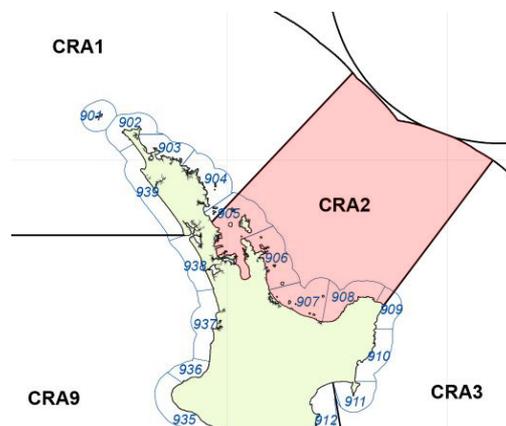
New Zealand Sport Fishing Council – LegaSea



April 2018

Over seven weeks in February and March 2018 LegaSea conducted a survey to measure people's perceptions of the state of CRA 2, the crayfish stock between Te Arai Point, Northland, and East Cape. Over 4000 responses were received from both fishers and non-fishers, reflecting wide public interest in the management of New Zealand's crayfish stocks, particularly CRA 2.

In the survey a table of five potential CRA 2 management options was provided, four from a Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) discussion paper, and an additional option of Closure. The Closure option was a valid alternative offered by LegaSea, based on the available data. Initial rebuild rates for each option were provided to survey participants. Survey responses received by February 7<sup>th</sup> informed a joint recreational submission made to MPI on February 9<sup>th</sup>.



Stuart Nash, the Minister of Fisheries, has considered the submissions and available information. On March 26<sup>th</sup> he announced his decision to reduce catch limits in CRA 2 & 7 and increase commercial catch limits in CRA 4 & 8. For CRA 2, the Minister agreed to a variation of MPI's Option 4, with a 800 tonne Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), and a 34 tonne recreational allowance (down from the proposed 50 t). These decisions apply from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. MPI has signalled a regulation review later in 2018 and these survey responses will be used to inform our input into that discussion.

### Major findings from the CRA 2 survey

Not all respondents answered the six survey questions, and the invalid or duplicate responses were removed prior to analysis. People were able to identify their interests; 93% of respondents identified themselves as recreational fishers, 67% said they are concerned about the environment, and 73% support restoring marine abundance. People want conservative management of crayfish stocks.

1. All respondents were able to choose a management option, 39% supported MPI's Option 4, and 42% supported Closure of CRA 2 to all fishing for a time.
2. Respondents who had caught crayfish in CRA 2 rated the size and availability of crayfish as –
  - a. Poor (48%) or decimated (41%);
  - b. 9% said average;
  - c. Less than 3% consider it good or plentiful.
3. Option 4, MPI's most conservative option, was most popular amongst respondents with up to 30 years' cray fishing experience in CRA 2.
4. Percentage wise and compared with Option 4, there is more support for Closure amongst those with more than 46 years' cray fishing experience in CRA 2.

## Context

CRA 2 was last reviewed in 2014. Those management changes failed to rebuild the fishery and CRA 2 is now at an all-time low. The public are calling for immediate, effective action to restore abundance.

On 12 January 2018 MPI issued a discussion document proposing potential options for the future management of four crayfish stocks, CRA 2, 4, 7 & 8. Submissions were due within 18 working days.

An alliance of the largest representative recreational fishing organisations in New Zealand responded to the proposals by the February 9<sup>th</sup> deadline. Recreational fishers consider closure is a valid management option for CRA 2 due to the collapsed state of the fishery and uncertainty around its potential to rebuild.

## Crayfish Crisis campaign

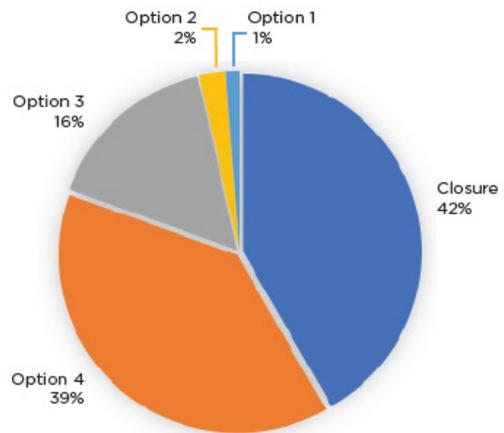
In February LegaSea initiated the Crayfish Crisis public awareness campaign. Elements of the campaign included the CRA 2 survey, a detailed webinar, and video.

The Campaign was promoted through the LegaSea and New Zealand Sport Fishing Council databases, shared online and through social media. LegaSea has access to over 50,000 on their own subscriber database and other organisations shared the survey through their channels.

The CRA 2 video was shared on social media 219 times and attracted 36,000 views. Eight crayfish-specific Facebook posts were created reaching more than 129,000 people during the campaign. The Crayfish Crisis featured on television, in print and social media, receiving the broadest coverage for LegaSea since the 2013 Save Our Snapper campaign.

Potential management options for CRA 2 from 1 April 2018. In tonnes (t).					
Option	Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC)	Allowances			Estimated time to double current stock size
		Customary Maori	Recreational	Other mortality	
Status quo	200	16.5	140	65	N/A
Option 1	140	16.5	50	45	9 years
Option 2	120				7 years
Option 3	100				5 years
Option 4	80				4 years
Closure	0	0	0	0	2 years

Support for potential management action in CRA 2



## Survey participation

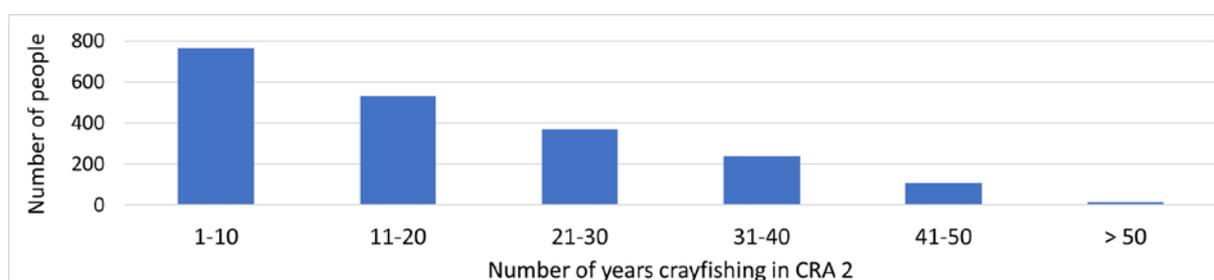
Respondents were asked if they were a recreational or commercial fisher, whether they had caught crayfish in CRA 2, and if so, for how many years, and the general area they most commonly fished.

4008 responses were received. Some respondents did not answer all the questions.

## Participant experience

Of all respondents, 2305 (59%) said they had caught crayfish in CRA 2, and 41% said they had not.

2027 people gave a valid answer to the number of years fished (dived or potted) in CRA 2. There was a good spread of experience, with 37% of respondents having fished for one to 10 years, and 17% having fished for more than 30 years.



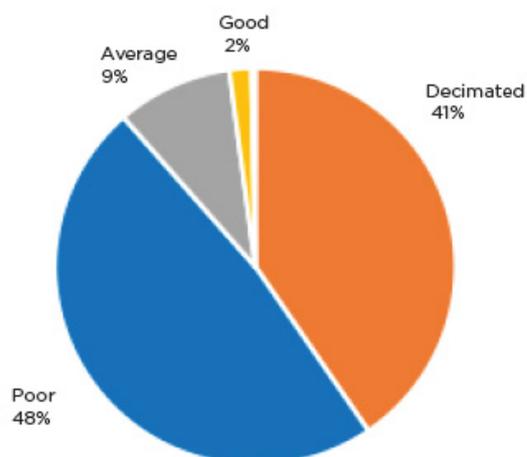
## State of CRA 2 fishery

2287 respondents rated the size and availability of crayfish in CRA 2 as –

- Poor (48%) or decimated (41%).
- Average 9%.
- Less than 3% consider it is good or plentiful.

Fishers with 6 to 10 years' experience in CRA 2 rated the size and availability of crayfish as the worst, followed closely by those with 1 to 5 years' experience, and respondents with 16 to 20 years' experience.

Size and availability of crayfish in CRA 2



## Location of fishing activity in CRA 2

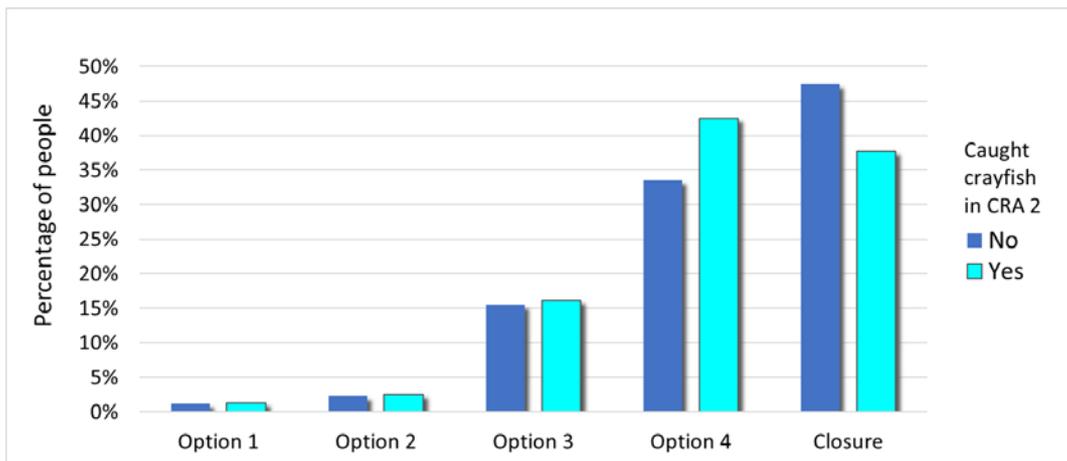
The survey asked fishers their most common crayfish harvest area within CRA 2. There were 2288 respondents that identified the general area between Te Arai and East Cape where they most commonly fished for crayfish. Of these respondents –

- 39% mostly fished for crayfish in the northern area (Hauraki Gulf and Barrier Islands)
- 38% mostly fished the central area (eastern Coromandel to Mayor Island).
- 23% most commonly fished the western Bay of Plenty (BOP) to East Cape area.

Northern fishers rated the fishery worst, with 89% rating the fishery as decimated (44%) or poor (45%). A higher proportion of central and western BOP-East Cape fishers rated their fishery as poor rather than decimated. Less than 3% rated any of the areas as good or plentiful.

### Future management action

Of the respondents who answered the Options question, 58% said they had caught crayfish in CRA 2. Those who had fished in CRA 2 gave more support to the most conservative MPI Option 4 (42%), while a majority of respondents who had not fished in CRA 2 supported the option proposed by LegaSea, Closure to all cray fishing for a time (48%).



### CRA 2 Survey outcomes

The CRA 2 Crisis survey attracted 4008 responses, almost five times as many as the 2017 LegaSea survey. This represents the largest ever survey of crayfish and recreational fishing-diving interests in New Zealand. This growth in engagement is a reflection of the strong support for the campaign from the dive fraternity, many individuals, tackle and dive outlets, and organisations.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea thanks all survey respondents and acknowledges the New Zealand Angling and Casting Association and Spearfishing New Zealand for their input and support for the joint recreational submission. NZSFC and LegaSea also acknowledge the strong support for the CRA 2 submission from the New Zealand Underwater Association, representing recreational divers. This support is most welcome and LegaSea intends to maintain and build on the relationships with the dive community as we work towards the crayfish regulation review later in 2018.

LegaSea team  
April 2018

