

Further information about blue cod rule changes from 1 July 2020

Why have these changes been made?

Blue cod are the third most popular recreational fish in New Zealand and are an iconic South Island species. Fisheries New Zealand, and the Blue Cod Expert Working Group, want to ensure this iconic fish species remains sustainable so it can continue to be enjoyed by future generations of New Zealanders.

The changes have been made to address localised depletion of blue cod in some areas, to make the fishing rules adaptive and responsive as abundance of blue cod changes, and to support the sustainability of this important fishery.

How were the changes decided?

These regulation changes were publically consulted on from January to March 2019, with over 900 submissions received. They are a direct outcome of the National Blue Cod Strategy, which was developed through extensive engagement with recreational fishers, community and iwi, including 18 public information sessions attended by 480 people. Overall, more than 3,000 people directly contributed to the strategy and regulation proposals through submissions, online surveys and/or face to face discussions.

There was general agreement from submitters that the current bag limits of up to 30 blue cod per person were too high. Overall, most submitters supported the more significant reductions proposed in the consultation document. However, the majority of stakeholders in areas with healthier blue cod stocks (rated orange and green in the traffic light system) did not support this restrictive approach.

Taking this feedback into account, the Minister of Fisheries chose the more restrictive bag limit for areas with sustainability concerns (red areas) and applied the less restrictive bag limits to areas with healthier stock (orange and green areas).

What will happen if people are caught breaking the new rules?

We all have a responsibility to ensure the sustainability of this important shared fishery.

New infringements, penalties and offences will come in to force with the amendments to these regulations (such as the two-day accumulation limit, measurable state, and pot mesh size for recreational fishers).

We will not hesitate to take action against anyone caught breaking the rules. Penalties could range from fines through to prosecution through the court system depending on the nature of offending.

What is an accumulation limit – is it the same as a daily bag limit?

An accumulation limit is the total amount of fish that can be taken across a multi-day trip.

What should I do if I see someone taking more than the daily limit of blue cod or undersized fish?

Do not approach them – your personal safety is the first priority. Instead, report any suspicious, or illegal activity to 0800 4 POACHER (0800 47 62 24) or email poacher@mpi.govt.nz.

You can help us by providing:

- the location

- vehicle/trailer registration number
- boat name
- description of the person

All calls and personal details are treated as confidential.

How will the traffic light system work and how will know what the rules are in my area?

The boundaries for the traffic light system are based on common recognisable landmarks (eg, rivers). The rules for each area can be found on the NZ Fishing rules app on [Android](#) or [iPhone](#), our [website](#), or brochures in your local fisheries office.

Why are we requiring fishers to land blue cod in a measurable state?

Scientific studies suggest the minimum legal size is particularly important for the productivity of blue cod. Unfortunately we can't monitor whether the minimum legal size is being adhered to if fishers cut the fish while still at sea and keep only the fillets. We ask that fishers work with us on this new measure given its importance. We have tried to build in flexibility where this can be done without compromising the effectiveness of the rule. For example, blue cod can be gutted at sea and in some areas also headed, and the rule doesn't apply to blue cod eaten on-board a boat. As for the other measures in the blue cod strategy we will closely monitor its effectiveness and adapt it if required in future.

How do I measure the different measurable states (whole or gutted, or headed and gutted)

All blue will be required to be landed in a measurable state from 1 July 2020. In red and orange blue cod management areas blue cod must be whole or gutted. However, in green areas blue cod can also be headed and gutted. Every fish caught should be measured in the whole state as soon as it is brought on-board the boat to ensure the fish is the correct minimum legal size. Whole and gutted blue cod must be a minimum legal size of 33cm as measured from the tip of the nose to the posterior end of the middle ray of the tail fin.



Headed and gutted blue cod must be a minimum legal size of 24cm as measured from the rear of the base of the pectoral fin to the posterior end of the middle ray of the tail fin.



What do I do with frames and offal now that I have to land all blue cod in a measurable state?

Fisheries New Zealand has advised local and regional councils of the new rules and potential for greater waste management requirements and facilities at boat ramps. However, there is a number of other options for you to reduce the pressure on these facilities:

- Use the whole fish (eg, make soup with the frames and heads, or smoke the wings and frames);
- Freeze the waste and use as burley on your next fishing trip;
- Compost fish waste, it is a great soil conditioner.

Why is the majority of changes for recreational fishers, what about commercial fishers?

Like recreational fishers, commercial fishers are subject to the new pot mesh size rule and are required to use minimum pot mesh size of 54mm from 1 July 2020.

Recreational catch of blue cod is significant, particularly in South Island. Localised overfishing due to recreational fishing was identified by fishers, tangata whenua, and the community as a particular concern during development of the National Blue Cod Strategy.

Sustainability measures for the largest commercial blue cod fishery - BCO 5 (Southland) are currently being reviewed this year through the October sustainability round process. Proposed sustainability measures include significant reductions to the commercial catch limit. You can find out more about this review from our consultation pages <https://www.fisheries.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/review-of-sustainability-measures-for-1-october-2020/>.

Can I add up my bag limits from the different areas around Kaikōura?

No, the bag limit in the taiāpure is 2 per fisher per day, the bag limit for the Kaikōura Marine Area (from the Clarence River to the Conway River) is 6 per fisher per day, and the limit outside these areas is 10 per fisher per day. You can't fish in one area, catch your limit, then move on to another area and catch another limit there.

If I'm fishing south of the Conway River, can I carry my 10 blue cod through the Kaikōura Marine Area where there's a lower limit of 6?

No. You cannot take, or be in possession of, more than 6 blue cod in the Kaikōura Marine Area. If you are fishing outside of the Kaikōura Marine Area and have to come back through the Area to a boat ramp you have to limit your catch to 6.

Is this also the case for the taiāpure around the Kaikōura Peninsula, the Te Taumanu o Te Waka a Maui taiāpure?

No. While you can only take 2 blue cod from inside this taiāpure, you can fish outside this area, catch 6 cod and travel back to the boat ramps of the Kaikōura peninsula. However, the onus is on the fisher to prove these fish were taken outside the taiāpure (a plotter or GPS is perfect for this). Remember that you cannot add up your blue cod bag limit from different areas.

This exception only applies for taiāpure, which means you cannot fish south of the Conway River catch 10 fish, take your 10 fish through the Kaikōura Marine Area (where the limit is 6) to reach the boat ramps on the Kaikōura coast.

Can I travel back through the East Otago Taiāpure with more than 2 blue cod, to get to the boat ramp?

Yes. You can fish outside of the East Otago Taiāpure and catch a bag limit of 10 then travel back to the boat ramp at Karitane. Remember this exception only applies for taiāpure, which means you cannot fish in a green area (where you can take 15 fish), take your 15 fish through an orange area (where the limit is 10) to reach a boat ramp in the taiāpure.

What if my blue cod hot spot is near the boundary of two areas?

That's great! However, remember while you are fishing that you can only possess the daily bag limit for the blue cod management area you are in. If you have to travel through an area with a lower bag limit (green to orange or orange to red), you will have to limit your catch to the area with the lesser bag limit. The exception to this is for travel through a taiāpure.

But you said I could have more than the daily bag limit in the taiāpure.

Taiāpure are very sensitive areas where special limits have been applied in consultation with local community representatives. Lower bag limits have been created in these areas to help the local fishery recover to sustainable levels. As long as you can prove you have taken your fish outside of the taiāpure (a plotter or GPS is perfect for this) you can bring back the catch limit for the blue cod management area immediately surrounding the taiāpure.

What if my blue cod spot is out past 12 nautical miles and therefore outside of the blue cod management areas?

Even though you are outside the blue cod management areas you will have to transit through one of these areas on the way back to where you launched your boat from. Whatever area you transit through to get to back to the boat ramp or launch area will be the limit you will be restricted to even if the blue cod was taken outside of that management area. So if you launched your vessel from an orange area you will only be entitled to 10 fish per fisher on the vessel and they must remain whole or gutted.

