



Designated Waters Licence Summary of Feedback and Response



Introduction

In March 2023, Fish and Game undertook consultation on a proposed approach to managing pressure sensitive fisheries.

The objectives of the proposed management approach were to:

1. Redistribute angling pressure in select locations;
2. Address the displacement of resident anglers from these locations.

In short, Fish and Game proposed the implementation of a new licence category, called a Designated Waters licence which anglers would be required to hold to fish a sensitive fishery. Resident and non-resident anglers would be affected differently by the Designated Waters Licence.

For resident anglers, the Designated Waters Licence would:

- Be available as an annual licence for each Fish and Game region.

- Not restrict the frequency in which anglers can access rivers classified as Designated Waters.

For non-resident anglers the Designated Waters Licence would:

- Be available as a daily licence to whole season licence holders at a cost of \$35.00-50.00.
- Impose some restrictions on how many times anglers could fish rivers that are classified as Designated Waters.

Feedback sought

Fish and Game specifically sought feedback on five points:

1. Whether anglers believed an area they fished was pressure sensitive or required a backcountry licence.
2. Whether anglers agree with targeted restrictions on sensitive fisheries to manage angling pressure.
3. Whether anglers agree with a small fee for an annual resident Designated Waters licence.
4. Whether anglers agree with a fee of between \$35-50 for a non-resident Designated Waters Day licence.
5. Whether anglers agree with a limit of between three to six Designated Waters day licences for non-residents per Fish and Game region.

We further provided opportunity for anglers to provide general feedback.

This feedback was sought via a survey sent to all fishing licence holders that have opted in to receiving content from Fish and Game. The resident angler database was based off the last two years. The non-resident angler database was extended to the 2018/19 season because of the impacts of restrictions on travel to New Zealand. Respondents were asked to either 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree', or 'Strongly disagree' with the questions posed. Respondents also had the opportunity to provide text comment for each question.

We also undertook separate consultation with three key stakeholder groups; the New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association, Department of Conservation Taupō fisheries team and the New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers.

Feedback

Licence Holder feedback

Perceived pressure sensitivity of waters fished

- Resident anglers were relatively evenly split on whether they thought locations they fish were pressure sensitive or required a backcountry licence. Approximately 44% answered yes, 48% no and the remainder were not sure.
- Non-resident anglers, in contrast, showed a strong trend towards perceiving waters they fished as pressure sensitive or requiring a backcountry licence. Approximately 65% answered yes, 29% no and the remainder were not sure.

Targeted restrictions on sensitive fisheries to manage angling pressure

- Resident anglers were extremely supportive of targeted restrictions on sensitive fisheries to manage angling pressure. Greater than 70% either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', with the majority of anglers strongly agreeing.
- Non-resident anglers were more divided on this, although were still supportive of this approach. Approximately 58% strongly agreed or agreed, although in this instance the majority came from agree. 23% strongly disagreed with this approach (compared with 11% for resident anglers).

Fees for annual resident Designated Waters licences

- Resident anglers supported fees for annual Designated Waters licences. Greater than 60% either strongly agreed or agreed. A smaller but significant number strongly disagreed (18%).
- Non-resident anglers supported this proposal with more than 50% strongly agreeing or agreeing, although a significant number (>20%) neither agreed or disagreed. A similar number of non-residents as residents strongly disagreed.

Fees for daily non-resident Designated Waters licences

- Resident anglers supported fees of between \$35-50 for non-resident Designated Waters day licences. 57% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Of the 32% that disagreed or strongly disagreed we know from the comments provided that the majority of these respondents believe these fees should be higher. Only a small number of commenters suggested the fee was inappropriate or too high.
- Non-resident anglers, in contrast, strongly disagreed with these fees. 64% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the majority of this grouping strongly disagreeing.

Limits on number of non-resident Designated Waters day licences per Fish and Game region

- Resident anglers supported limiting the number of Designated Waters day licences a non-resident angler can purchase to between three and six. 57% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this. A large number of commenters believed this should be limited to three or fewer.
- Non-resident anglers were divided on this question with no clear majority shown. The largest group of respondents disagreed (35%), however, the second largest group of respondents agreed (26%). Text comments were comparably divided between supporting the initiative as appropriate and disagreeing with it as excessively restrictive.

Stakeholders feedback

NZPFGA

- NZPFGA expressed a range of views on the proposal, and represented the views of a number of their constituents. Overall they supported the proposal and shared the aspirations of Fish and Game to provide a high quality angling experience for all users of the resource by managing unsustainable angling pressure. Specifically, they requested that a limit for non-resident Designated Waters day licences in the upper range of that consulted on be adopted.

NZFFA

- NZFFA supported the proposal as a whole, although expressed reservations about aspects of the proposal. Specifically they opposed the objective of achieving 50:50 non-resident to resident use of pressure sensitive fisheries, given non-resident anglers are c.15% of licence holders (believing residents should constitute a far higher proportion). They also opposed annual fees for resident anglers, but supported daily fees for non-resident anglers.



Alternative solutions proposed through feedback

Non-resident licence fee increases/changes

- A number of commenters suggested either:
 - » Blanket increases to non-resident whole season licence fees; or
 - » Exclusively selling short term (c. 1 month) licences for non-resident anglers.
- Fish and Game does not support this because it believes that further restrictions over and above the current non-resident licence fee differential should be limited to users of sensitive fisheries and not applied to non-resident users as a whole. Otherwise this inequitably disadvantages casual users seeking to accommodate freshwater angling into their travels.

Restricting guided angling

- The most frequently proposed solution was to limit commercial access to these fisheries in the form of guided angling.
- Fish and Game agrees that guides are a distinct user group that contribute to pressure in sensitive fisheries. We have engaged at length with the New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association on this through the development of the Guide's Licence proposal. Until this proposal is completed it is extremely difficult to regulate guided angling in sensitive fisheries because of the inability to identify someone as a guide – this is particularly true of guides that are not based in NZ and would thus inequitably impact compliant NZ resident guides. As such we do not think that under our current regulatory mechanisms this is an option.

Resident only periods

- A number of respondents, primarily resident but also some non-resident anglers, suggested resident only periods on the weekend.
- This was initially considered as a management option by Fish and Game in formulating this proposal but it was ultimately decided against pursuing during the initial implementation of this proposal for the following reasons:
 - » Unless overall pressure is reduced, precluding the main user group of these fisheries (non-residents) from fishing weekends will concentrate angling pressure into the remaining five weekdays. This has the potential to have negative impacts on the fishery and actually result in a worse angling experience for resident anglers fishing during a resident only weekend.
 - » Not all residents have weekends off, and concentrating non-resident anglers into the weekday period could further displace these resident anglers.
- This remains an option to implement in the future, but it is not intended to be implemented as a part of the initial Designated Waters proposal.

Ban spin/bait fishing

- A number of commenters advocated for banning spin/bait fishing.
- Fish and Game does not agree with this approach as we do not promote limiting access by fishing method restrictions and are working to phase these out of existing regulations.

Exclusively catch and release in sensitive fisheries

- A number of commenters advocated for exclusively catch and release in sensitive fisheries.
- Most sensitive fisheries currently either have very low bag limits or have slot limits (where fish can only be taken between certain measurements) to protect existing breeding stock. However, the purpose of the designated waters proposal is to manage the angling experience, of which the fish are only a portion. In all but rare circumstances Fish and Game do not believe that angler harvest in sensitive fisheries is having a deleterious effect on fish populations and thus do not support exclusively catch and release in sensitive fisheries.

Increase in beat systems and controlled fisheries

- A number of anglers recommended increasing the number of fisheries using beat systems and controlled fisheries.
- Fish and Game supports this approach and envisage an expansion of these systems where appropriate. Although it would not necessarily impact on the proposal as the voluntary beat

system would operate separately (given it is not formally regulated) and controlled fisheries would also operate separately as these may or may not be designated waters.

Education

- It was recommended that Fish & Game educate resident and non-resident anglers about rules and etiquette in sensitive fisheries.
- This is supported by Fish and Game and to an extent is addressed in the angling code of conduct. However, we agree that this could be expanded upon and it will be factored into the roll-out of this proposal.

Proposed solutions outside of Fish and Game's ability to control

- A number of solutions were proposed that, whilst linked to sensitive fisheries, are outside the scope of Fish and Game's operations. These include restricting helicopter access to sensitive fisheries.
- Whilst we agree that these could be mechanisms that might aid in a pressure sensitive fisheries management regime, they are not options that Fish and Game is able to implement other than in cooperation with other entities.



Proposed approach in response to feedback

Targeted restrictions on sensitive fisheries

- There was strong support from all groups canvassed for targeted restrictions on sensitive fisheries to manage angling pressure.
- There will be no change to this underlying approach.

Fees for annual resident Designated Waters licences

- There was strong support from all groups canvassed for a small fee of c\$5 for annual resident Designated Waters licences per Fish and Game region. Initially the proposal was for residents' home regions to be free, however factoring in feedback, particularly from non-resident anglers on the need for residents to contribute financially too, and analysis on the potential for unintended impacts on locations of licence sales, it is proposed that all annual Designated Waters licences will be \$5 per region.
- In response to feedback, all annual resident Designated Waters licences will be \$5 per Fish and Game region.

Fees for daily non-resident Designated Waters licences

- There was a clear division of views between resident and non-resident anglers on this point. Resident anglers favoured fees either in the range consulted on or higher, whereas non-resident anglers did not support daily fees for non-resident Designated Waters licences.
- The range consulted on appears to represent a balance between the opposing views of resident and non-resident anglers and also aligns with comparable international examples.
- In response to feedback non-resident Designated Waters will be set at \$40 per day.

Limits on number of non-resident Designated Waters day licences per Fish and Game region

- As above, there was a division of views between resident and non-resident anglers on the imposition of limits on the number of Designated Waters day licences a non-resident angler can purchase per Fish and Game region. Residents were in strong support, in many instances advocating for limits lower than those proposed by Fish and Game. Non-resident anglers opposed the limits, instead advocating for either no limits or higher limits than those proposed by Fish and Game. The NZPFGA supported the concept but suggested that the higher end of the range consulted on would be preferable.
- The starting point for Fish and Game had been a limit of four non-resident Designated Waters day licences per region, as data showed that the average non-resident angler fishing backcountry waters fished these for four or fewer days per season. As such a limit of four Designated Waters day licences would not impact the average user in any way. However, in light of the feedback received, particularly from non-resident anglers, Fish and Game recommend increasing this to five to balance both the strong support from resident anglers for limits against the opposition from non-resident anglers.
- In response to feedback non-resident Designated Waters day licences will be increased to five per Fish and Game region.

Use of licence fees

- There was a strong view expressed in written submissions from resident and non-resident anglers that Designated Waters licence fees should be used exclusively for the management of these fisheries.
- It is recommended that Designated Waters licence fees will accrue in a dedicated reserve in the Fish and Game region that the licences are sold in to be used on the management of sensitive fisheries.

Other non-regulatory responses

- In response to feedback received Fish and Game intends to:
 - » Increase compliance work on Designated Waters, funded by Designated Waters licence fees.
 - » Prepare an education and communications campaign aimed at angling etiquette in sensitive fisheries to be released alongside the Designated Waters licences.
 - » Review fisheries where beat systems are not currently utilised but which may be suitable (feedback from resident and non-resident anglers suggested these are very well received).
 - » Engage with stakeholders such as transport providers and professional fishing guides to ensure that all parties that are contributing or facilitating pressure in sensitive fisheries are aware of any new requirements as well as the need to only use these fisheries selectively.



Overview of how Designated Waters and Controlled Fisheries work

RESIDENT ANGLERS



NON RESIDENT ANGLERS

<p>NZ RESIDENT LICENCE TYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional licences required. • Standard regulations apply. • No additional restrictions to access. 	<p>OPEN WATERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional licences required. • Standard regulations apply. • No additional restrictions to access. 	<p>NR SEASON OR 24 HOUR</p>
<p>WHOLE SEASON LICENCE TYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Waters licence required. • Annual Designated Waters licence purchased per region. 	<p>DESIGNATED WATERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per diem (daily) designated waters licence required. • Limit of five Designated Waters licences per Fish & Game region. 	<p>NR SEASON</p>
<p>WHOLE SEASON LICENCE TYPES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Controlled Fisheries during the controlled period may be actively managed to limit the number of anglers who can access a fishery. • Booking and ballot systems to allocate access. • Controlled fisheries would typically operate outside of the Designated Waters system, and as such anglers would usually not require a Designated Waters licence to fish in a Controlled Fishery. 	<p>CONTROLLED FISHERIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Controlled Fisheries during the controlled period may be actively managed to limit the number of anglers who can access a fishery. • Booking and ballot systems to allocate access for controlled periods. • Controlled fisheries would typically operate outside of the Designated Waters system, and as such anglers would usually not require a Designated Waters licence to fish in a Controlled Fishery. 	<p>NR SEASON</p>

This table sets out the recommended restrictions for different categories of water and different licence types.

