



Pressure sensitive fisheries monitoring interim report for the 2023-24 season.

Background:

In June 2023, the West Coast Fish and Game Council proposed that the Waitahu River, Larry's Creek, the Rough River - upstream of Mirfin Creek and Upper Grey – upstream of Clarke River be included as designated waters but withdrew them pending collection of more robust data.

This fishing season staff have undertaken additional compliance and angler monitoring in the Reefton Area to establish trends in activity on the proposed addition of the Reefton rivers to the Designated Waters list for the West Coast.

When time permitted and anglers consented, a short bankside survey was conducted. The survey addressed the following:

- Anglers' intentions to fish on designated waters
- The fisheries anglers intended to visit while in New Zealand
- Perceptions on the designated waters licence and how it influenced/did not influence their fishing behaviour.
- Perceptions of overcrowding

Results

Over the period of November to March, 33 individual anglers were encountered at the Reefton locations during varying times of day and days of the week. Of these anglers, 14 (42%) were non-resident licence holders.

Summary of Angler feedback from surveys conducted:

- Most frequent responses for dissatisfaction on the Reefton Rivers when fishing was due to pressure on the area from other anglers, conditions on the rivers: gravel movement, algae growth and water levels have all impacted angler satisfaction,
- Larry's Creek was mentioned the most of all the West Coast fisheries that Anglers plan to avoid due to angling pressure,
- On average non-resident anglers planned to spend 7 days fishing the Reefton area this season,
- The Designated Waters Licence on other rivers held no influence on choosing to fish in Reefton,
- Average angler satisfaction out of 10 for the Reefton rivers are: Larrys Creek 7, Rough River 8, Waitahu 7, Upper Grey 7,
- When Anglers were asked how often they encountered other anglers in the Reefton area three of the 25 respondents had over 25% encounter rate with other anglers.

Occupancy rates have been considered by way of checking access points on the listed waterways.

- Rough River: End of Mirfin Road 4/13 = 30% occupancy, Above old Mill 1/13 = 8% occupancy, Old Mill Site 1/12 =8% and Road Bridge 2/14 =14% occupancy.
- Waitahu River: Gannons Bridge Road 9/14 =64%, SH6 Bridge 0/14 =0%.
- Larry's Creek: Caledonian Mine 7/14 = 50%, Drift Dive get out 6/14 =42%, Hubcap Corner 0/14=0%, Larry's Creek lower reaches 9/14 =64%.

- Upper Grey: Blue Grey 9/11 = 81%, Slatey Creek 3/11 =27%, Hospital Flat 4/11 =36%, Road end 9/11 =81%.

Classifying a fishery as a Designated Water

To classify a fishery as a Designated Water Fish & Game regions must satisfy two requirements:

1) Evidence and rationale

There must be clear rationale and supporting evidence that (1) the angling experience is being negatively affected by excessive non-resident angling pressure and (2) other management mechanisms (voluntary beats, booking/ballot systems etc.) are not a suitable or sufficient for the fishery in question.

2) Angler consultation

Any decision to classify a fishery as a Designated Water requires demonstration of thorough consultation with licence holders.

Staff Recommendation:

- That angler consultation begins on the proposed designated waters; the Waitahu River, Larry's Creek, the Rough River, and the Upper Grey Catchment.