

MEMORANDUM

To: North Canterbury Fish and Game Council

From: Chief Executive

Date: April 2020

Subject: Back Country Fishery Licence

Background

It has been recommended the North Canterbury Fish & Game (NCFG) Council consider establishing a trial Backcountry Fisheries (BCF) Management regime on four of the region's most popular trout rivers during the 2020/21 angling season¹. The aim of that proposal is to better manage and understand our backcountry fisheries, and the values they hold.

Process for creating a Backcountry Licence

Backcountry licence means an endorsement on a specified licence that adds an entitlement to fish for sports fish in named back country rivers in the Sports Fish Licences, Fees, and Forms Notice. This is a separate process from changing regulations through the Anglers Notice. This process also runs on a different timeline.

If NCFG Council elect to carry out a BCFs management regime trial the New Zealand Council staff will require a resolution from the North Canterbury Fish and Game Council by the 8th of May 2020. This timeframe does not leave much time for NCFG Council to consult with the public before a decision needs to be made. However, licence holders can still be informed of the decision to implement a trial regime when during the normal angling consultation process in May 2020 on proposed regulation changes for the 2020/21 fishing season.

It should be noted that if a decision to implement a trial BCFs is made after 8 May 2020 the Council and regions anglers will need to wait until 1 October 2021 before such a trial could be implemented.

Backcountry / Pressure Sensitive Fisheries of the Lewis Pass area 2019-20 season

Staff are still formulating a full report from this season BCFs survey. Key results indicate that:

- 42% of the surveyed anglers in the Lewis Pass area were resident anglers.
- 58 % of the surveyed anglers in the Lewis Pass area were non-resident anglers

¹ For details see the Chief Executive Memo RE Angling Regulations Review for 2020/21 fishing season.

- 35% of resident anglers wanted some sort of management of angler use on on backcountry fisheries in the Lewis Pass area.
- 50% of non-residents anglers wanted some sort of management of anglers use on backcountry fisheries in the Lewis Pass area.

Summary

Many of North Canterbury backcountry fisheries have come under increasing angling pressure in recent years. There are many factors leading to this, including the increased popularity and use of social media over the last few years. There are now many social media platforms where the fishing in these backcountry fisheries is heavily promoted, sometimes unintentionally and other times by commercial operators such as reputable angling guides and fly-fishing companies.

It is clear the backcountry rivers of North Canterbury have gained a large reputation as some of the best trophy brown trout fisheries in New Zealand. Hence the reported increase in angling use and impacts to angling quality and satisfaction rates certainly makes them qualify as pressure sensitive fisheries. This increase is partly due to these rivers regularly producing and offering anglers a chance of catching a fish in the 10-15lb weight range. In mouse plague years such as the one we have just had; drift dive survey observations show the number of these trophy sized trout can increase dramatically. This has also been well publicised on social media platforms and on film and tv series.

Recommendation

That the Council before 8 May 2020 resolve to as a trial create a BCFs management regime by designating four of the region's most popular and reputable trophy trout fisheries as Pressure Sensitive Fisheries during the 2020/21 angling season.

If accepted the following rivers in the North Canterbury region to be appointed as Pressure Sensitive Fisheries that require anglers to get a Backcountry Licence Endorsement.

1. Hurunui River South Branch (upstream of the North Esk River confluence).
2. Hurunui River North Branch (from signpost approximately 500 metres upstream of Lake Sumner).
3. Upper Hope River (upstream of the confluence with the Boyle River).
4. Upper Waiau River (upstream of the confluence with the Hope River).