

How and when we move to the new regime for sharks

Due to reduced demand and ongoing negative publicity around shark finning, most LFRs have stopped receiving shark fins in 'fin-only' state. With a lack of demand for fins in Asia, fin buyers are indicating they will not take on new suppliers and some are even going out of business.

As this year progresses this will put surface-longline / HMS fishers in a predicament. Under schedule 6 of the Fisheries Act, blue sharks can be returned to the sea alive but for the estimated 10% that are landed dead some part of the fish must be retained to be worked back to greenweight (being a QMS species).

Industry will be meeting with MPI next week to discuss the new regime when bringing only the fin back will cease. Industry will need to consider the best way to undertake fishing under this new regime for each inshore and HMS surface longline fishery that catch sharks.

FINZ would like to hear from fishers, quota owners and LFRs about how best to deal with this for all shark species and the timing for each.

Bluenose

The Minister for Primary Industries agreed that for the 2013-14 year he would hold the TACCs for all BNS fisheries at the 2012-13 levels. He noted that he made this decision in part because FINZ with the backing of all bluenose quota owners stated that if he did, industry would carry out a programme of work that included analysis, assessment and catch sampling of the fisheries.



FINZ has contracted Trident working with fisheries specialists, and LFRs to undertake this work.

Trident took the outline of the work proposed to the Ministry's Northern Inshore fisheries assessment working group (NINS) in December and will be reporting its results on updating the CPUE analysis next week at the next meeting of NINS on 12 March. The updated CPUE analysis through to the end of the 2012-13 fishing year confirms the preliminary analysis undertaken by FINZ to 31 March 2013 that the CPUE for the fishery improved in 2012-2013, cautiously suggesting that the abundance of Bluenose was beginning to increase. The meeting next week will also look at whether using regularly collected industry data could be used to responsively set the TACCs for the following years. Choice of an appropriate management procedure will require quota owners and fishers to provide input on the industry's goals for the fishery and FINZ will be in touch soon about how this input will be gathered.

In the meantime, FINZ would like to hear from skippers and LFRs as to whether compared with the 2012-13 fishing year, the 2013-14 fishing year bluenose catch rates are

- better; or
- about the same; or
- not as good.

Training additional LFR staff required to adequately sample catches from the fishery is also ramping up over the next few weeks. If you have been contacted about participating, but have not yet arranged training, you should expect to hear from Oliver Wilson in the very near future! The catch sampling materials have been overhauled with the aim of collecting robust data in a way that integrates well with fishing and processing operations.