



**Submission to
Department of Conservation
on the
Conservation (Indigenous Freshwater Fish) Amendment Bill**

Date: 25 October 2018

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

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Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Conservation (Indigenous Freshwater Fish) Amendment Bill.

This submission is filed without prejudice to TIA's future position. Our ability to prepare a comprehensive submission responding to the consultation document relied on the provision by Department of Conservation (DOC) of information relevant to the connection between the consultation document and the benefits that would accrue. If any information is provided at a later date, TIA reserve the right to comment further.

This submission represents the views of Tourism Industry Aotearoa as a collective whole and may not necessarily represent the views of individual members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Clause 5(3) of the Bill should be deleted. The concern with this proposed clause is that a Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan (FFMP) could identify the restoration of indigenous freshwater fish as an over-arching priority objective – either nationally or in a particular area. That objective could be implemented by DOC requiring trout and salmon to be removed from particular water bodies in order to give priority to indigenous fisheries.
2. TIA is supportive of increased efforts to protect indigenous freshwater fish. In a worst case scenario some species of indigenous freshwater fish could become extinct if the water environment is not improved. The poor state of our rivers and lakes has been an issue of significant ongoing concern to TIA and a healthy freshwater environment is a key focus to maintaining and growing freshwater fish populations, both indigenous and introduced species. When the environment is well-managed both are able to co-exist and thrive together. A focus on reducing trout and salmon numbers is not the answer.
3. Sports fishing is an important economic activity to the New Zealand tourism industry. Domestic travellers will potentially take over 1.7m trips per annum to participate in freshwater fishing. Guided angling, usually for international visitors, is also significant with New Zealand having an international reputation for trout and salmon fishing. Spend for guided angling ranges from \$1100 to \$3750 per day and includes guiding and other services such as accommodation, dining and travel. Regional dispersal is an ongoing challenge for the tourism industry, getting more visitors both international and domestic to visit outside of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Otago. Freshwater fishing by its very nature often takes fishers into the regions, outside of the main cities.
4. We hold concerns about the consultation process. The process appears to be rushed without no apparent reason for the urgency.

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INTRODUCTION

5. Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) is the peak body for the tourism industry in New Zealand. With around 1,600 members, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including hospitality, accommodation, adventure and other activities, attractions and retail, airports and airlines, transport, as well as related tourism services.
6. The primary role of TIA is to be the voice of the tourism industry. This includes working for members on advocacy, policy, communication, events, membership and business capability. The team is based in Wellington and is led by Chief Executive, Chris Roberts.
7. Any enquiries relating to this paper should in the first instance be referred to Steve Hanrahan, TIA Advocacy Manager, at steve.hanrahan@tia.org.nz or by phone on 027 9122 624.

COMMENT

Tourism 2025

8. Tourism 2025, an industry-led, government supported economic growth framework was launched in New Zealand in 2014 and has set an aspirational goal of reaching \$41 billion in annual tourism revenues by 2025. The industry's focus is on growing value faster than volume.
9. The Tourism 2025 Growth Framework is based around five key themes of Insight, Connectivity, Productivity, Visitor Experience and Target for Value. This growth framework has been reviewed (Tourism 2025-two years on) in 2016. While the five themes of the framework remain unchanged, the emphasis in some focus areas has shifted. This year, TIA is working on a Tourism 2025 reset that includes: integrating sustainable tourism, in particular the Tourism Sustainability Commitment; articulating a longer-term view of tourism in coordination with central government; and identifying new priority actions to be addressed over the next 1-3 years.

Stakeholder Engagement

10. We have engaged with various stakeholders including TIA members, the NZ Professional Fishing Guides Association (NZPFGA), Department of Conservation (DOC), and the Fish & Game Council. We acknowledge their input and support during the development of this submission.

Our understanding of the issue

11. The government is proposing changes to the Conservation Act that will give DOC greater authority and powers over the management of Indigenous Freshwater Fish

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(IFF). There are a number of amendments being proposed within the Bill. The main concern for TIA is that it could allow for the removal of trout and salmon from waterways, even if they are recognised and well regarded trout fisheries. Other amendments could also make it easier for the sale of trout and the sale of trout fishing rights in Treaty settlements.

12. There are two main parties with statutory powers for managing freshwater fish. DOC has statutory powers in respect of freshwater fish, and the NZ Fish & Game Council has statutory powers in respect of 'sports fish', which are mainly the introduced freshwater species of trout and salmon. DOC management is via DOC Freshwater Fisheries Management Plans, and Fish & Game Council manage via Sports Fish and Game Management Plans.
13. The current situation is that the DOC Director-General must have regard to Sports Fish and Game Management Plans in a region when preparing a Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan. However Clause 5 of the Bill provides that the Freshwater Management Plans prevail over Sports Fish & Game Management Plans in the event of any conflict.
14. Clause 5 of the Bill also enables the Minister to adopt a national Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan that applies 'throughout all New Zealand', which increases the potential for conflict with Sports Fish & Game Management Plans, which are adopted on a regional basis.

General

15. New Zealand has 77 species of freshwater fish. 53 of them are indigenous and most of those are endemic (found nowhere else in the world). DOC notes that a large proportion of the native fish species are endangered, generally as a result of:
 - habitat loss or degradation,
 - loss of spawning sites,
 - barriers to fish passage, or
 - impacts of introduced fish.

This list of threats may not be comprehensive. It has been suggested to TIA that birds and whitebaiters are also significant threats and there may be others.

16. Eels (tuna), lamprey (piharau/kanakana), mullet, estuarine flounder, and migratory galaxiids (whitebait) are the only freshwater fish species that are regularly fished. Koura (freshwater crayfish) and freshwater mussels (kakahi) have also been important fisheries species. Eels (tuna) are an important commercial fishery, as well as being subject to customary and recreational fishing.

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Clause 5(3) of the Bill should be deleted

17. Clause 5(3) proposes to insert a clause that provides for freshwater fisheries management plans to prevail in the event of conflict between a freshwater fisheries plan and sports fish and game management plan. The departmental disclosure statement prepared by DOC that accompanies the Bill notes that the proposed reforms are necessary to 'ensure that the fisheries management toolbox is adequate to address all fisheries management needs for the indigenous freshwater fishery'.
18. The concern with this proposed clause is that a Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan (FFMP) could identify the restoration of indigenous freshwater fish as an over-arching priority objective – either nationally or in a particular area. That objective could be implemented by DOC requiring trout and salmon to be removed from particular water bodies in order to give priority to indigenous fisheries. The FFMP would prevail even if the water body has previously been identified as a significant trout and salmon habitat in a Sports Fish and Game Management Plan.
19. We agree with advice given to the Fish & Game Council that there is benefit for a cooperative relationship between DOC and Fish and Game to be placed on a clear statutory footing so they can operate consistently with each other. Whether the current structure of Freshwater Fisheries Management Plans and Sports Fish and Game Management Plans can work effectively needs further debate. However the proposal to give priority to FFMPs is not the solution. We were surprised to learn in our discovery work that DOC do not currently have any Freshwater Fishery Management Plans in place, instead managing the indigenous freshwater fishery via other conservation efforts.

TIA is supportive of increased efforts to protect indigenous freshwater fish

20. In a worst case scenario some species of indigenous freshwater fish could become extinct if the water environment is not improved. The poor state of our rivers and lakes has been an issue of significant ongoing concern to TIA. Over the past three years TIA has made a range of submissions to central and local government supporting efforts to improve NZ's biodiversity. These include DOC's draft Threatened Species Strategy, MfE's Clean Water consultation, and the proposed Water Conservation Order on the Ngaruroro and Clive rivers. TIA has also been an active member of the Land & Water Forum for many years.
21. Our view is consistent with those of the vast majority of New Zealanders. The decline of freshwater quality across many catchments throughout New Zealand must stop and there needs to be improvements in the water quality thereby supporting improved and healthier freshwater eco-systems, including those for indigenous and introduced sports fish.
22. TIA supports increased investment in conservation efforts by DOC to improve the environment for indigenous freshwater fish. We understand that good progress has already been made with improving the environment through practices such as

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enhancing the environment along river banks for indigenous fish to flourish e.g. log habitats or pipes coming off the river which these fish are likely to inhabit, and at the same time being environments where sports-fish species such as salmon and trout are less likely to be attracted to, preferring areas where water is flowing.

23. A recent 2018 Marine & Freshwater Research Report¹ into the effects of land use on freshwater fish noted "The number of New Zealand's freshwater fish listed as threatened has increased since 1992 when the first New Zealand threat classification system list was compiled. In this study, temporal and land cover-related trends were analysed for data on freshwater fish distribution, comprising more than 20,000 records for the 47 years from January 1970 to January 2017 from the New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database'. The report went on to say that of the 20 native species analysed for the proportion of sites occupied over time, 75% had negative trends; 65% of these were significant declines and more species were in decline at pasture sites than natural cover sites.
24. The feedback we receive from stakeholders is that a healthy freshwater environment is a key focus to maintaining and growing freshwater fish populations, both indigenous and introduced species. When the environment is well-managed both are able to co-exist and thrive together. A focus on reducing trout and salmon numbers is not the answer.

Sports fishing is an important economic activity to the NZ tourism industry

25. In 2015 TIA in conjunction with the Domestic Tourism Working Group undertook segmentation research into the domestic travel behaviour of New Zealanders. Respondents were asked to identify a list of their preferred activities when travelling domestically. The research² identified that domestic travellers will potentially take over 1.7m trips per annum to participate in freshwater fishing. 1.1m of these are day trips, the other 700,000 trips being overnight. While this figure may not indicate the actual number of freshwater fishing trips (as it is potential rather than actual) it does demonstrate the attractiveness of freshwater fishing to stimulating domestic travel and getting New Zealanders into the outdoors.
26. Regional dispersal is an ongoing challenge for the tourism industry, getting more visitors both international and domestic to visit outside of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Otago. 64% of visitor spend in 2017 occurred in these four gateway centres. Freshwater fishing by its very nature often takes fishers into the regions, outside of the main cities. Therefore it is an activity that should be encouraged and supported as these sportspeople will also spend money locally on accommodation, food, beverage, petrol and retail.

¹ Joy Michael K., Foote Kyleisha J., McNie Pierce, Piria Marina (2018) Decline in New Zealand's freshwater fish fauna: effect of land use. *Marine and Freshwater Research*

² www.dqit.nz

27. Professor Kenneth Whelan³ writes that “I’m struck by the parallel between the issues faced in New Zealand, with regard to the protection and restoration of native fish species and similar issues in Chile, where I’ve worked in recent years. It has been agreed that the protection of native fish species in Chile, with a very similar natural fauna to that of New Zealand, will be focused on ensuring that waters without salmonids are preserved and protected. It has also been agreed that waters where salmonids are present, but do not form an important part of the tourist angling resource, are prioritised for native species restoration and enhancement programmes...I strongly urge you to amend the Bill to ensure that native fish species are provided with the protection they so richly deserve but that this protection is not to the detriment of trout populations or the unique brand that is *New Zealand Trout Fishing*.”
28. NZPFGA notes that guided angling for sports fish makes a significant economic contribution to the New Zealand economy. New Zealand has a strong international reputation for trout and salmon fishing. Spend for guided angling ranges from \$1100 to \$3750 per day and includes guiding and other services such as accommodation, dining and travel.
29. Of great concern to us is the comment by NZPFGA in their submission that the Bill as it is currently drafted directly affects the viability of 161 businesses, members of the NZPFGA. Outside of their organisation they have identified an additional 1,025 businesses directly financially impacted by freshwater fishing in NZ. The indirect impact on the economy will be much higher.
30. NZPFGA research estimates that the economic contribution of guided freshwater fishing to NZ ranges from \$28.9m to \$96.6m p.a. The figures are regarded as conservative, with unrecognised and unregulated sources making the figures likely to be much higher than stated. The NZPFGA submission also notes that a 2014 study estimated the value of freshwater fishing to the NZ economy in Otago alone (one of 12 Fish and Game regions) to be between \$63.7m and \$189m p.a. (Jiang 2014)

We hold concerns about the consultation process

31. The consultation process appears to be rushed without no apparent reason for the urgency. The Regulatory Impact Statement prepared by DOC notes ‘the key constraint, which has been acknowledged in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, is that the time frame did not allow consultation with iwi and stakeholders’.
32. Additionally the Cabinet Paper relating to the Bill is not being made available until after the submission period has closed, if at all. As the fact sheet states, this is a technical

³ Professor Whelan is a biologist specialising in the conservation and development of recreational fisheries, with a particular interest in migratory salmonids. He has over 40 years of experience in Ireland, UK, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Chile, Russia, USA, Canada and New Zealand. www.kenwhelan.info

bill and “The Bill was not intended to have any material effects on the sports fisheries regime.” So why the rush, and lack of consultation and disclosure?

Follow up process

33. TIA wishes to participate further in any follow-up process, including any formal meetings, to ensure that the potential impacts on tourism are adequately represented.

BACKGROUND

34. Tourism for New Zealand is big business as the country’s largest export sector. It is a major contributor to the New Zealand economy that will always be here and won’t easily go offshore. Tourism takes the lead in promoting New Zealand to the world. The brand positioning built by a vibrant tourism industry has become an important source of national confidence and identity and a front window for “Brand New Zealand”. Indeed, the clean and pure offer that is synonymous with New Zealand tourism has been widely adopted and used to promote New Zealand exports in a range of other industries as well.

35. The tourism industry delivers the following value to New Zealand’s economy:

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$99 million per day and \$36 billion a year industry. Tourism delivers around \$40 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$59 million in economic activity every day.
- The tourism industry directly and indirectly supports 14.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand. That means 399,150 people are working in the visitor economy.
- Tourism is New Zealand’s biggest export industry, earning \$14.5 billion or 20.7% of New Zealand’s foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2017).

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