

Fishing

Environment Bay of Plenty has a responsibility to consider commercial, customary and recreational fishing when preparing AMAs. Also, before an AMA is finalised, it has to be assessed by the Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) to determine whether the AMA would have an Undue Adverse Effect (UAE) on commercial, customary or recreational fishing.

Commercial fishing in the Bay of Plenty

The Bay of Plenty is one of the most productive regions in the Auckland Fisheries Management Area and there are significant commercial fisheries within the bay. Most of the finfish catch in the Bay of Plenty is taken by the bottom trawl method. Important species include snapper, skipjack tuna, mackerel and kahawai. A small commercial scallop and crayfish fishery also exists in the bay.

Commercial fishing maps

MFish provided the council with commercial fishing data for the Bay of Plenty. The data is of where and how much fishing effort takes place, for the following fishing methods:

- Purse seine
- Danish seine
- Bottom trawl
- Bottom pair trawl

There are some limitations with this data:

- The data is for the top ten species (by weight) only.
- The data is for fishing effort that occurred between 1 October 1999 to 30 September 2004.

- The data used in the maps only includes vessels that have reported where fishing occurs in lat/long. Some vessels are not required to keep lat/long data.
- The accuracy of the location co-ordinates is approximately +/- 300m (WGS84 lat/long at two decimal places – to meet the Guidelines for the Release of Information from the MFish Databases).

Maps have been produced for the purse seine, danish seine, and bottom trawl methods. A bottom pair trawl map has not been produced because there is very little data. The maps show the location and intensity of fishing per 1 km².

Customary fishing sites in the Bay of Plenty

It is important to understand where customary fishing grounds are located so they can be avoided when planning the location of AMAs.

Bay of Plenty coastal iwi were consulted in November and December 2002, to talk specifically about aquaculture and sites of significance to iwi where aquaculture developments should not be allowed. During the consultation iwi were provided with maps on which they could draw their sites of cultural significance. The resulting areas consist mainly of cultural fishing and shellfish gathering areas. These areas are included in Map 3 as "Areas of Cultural Significance".

Map 3 also shows other customary fishing management areas including Taiapure, Mataitai and Tangata Kaitiaki/Tiaki Fisheries Rohe.

Recreational fishing in the Bay of Plenty

Snapper and kahawai are the two main finfish species targeted by amateur recreational line fishers in the Bay of Plenty.

Offshore rocky reef areas are often targeted and become high use areas for a number of fishing methods. The most common fishing method is line fishing with some areas also popular for crayfish diving. It is assumed that all rocky reefs mapped for ecological purposes are important for recreational fishing (Map 4: Ecological Values). There are also some popular fishing spots over soft-bottom (sand or mud) areas. An indication of key fishing sites with relative use levels has been obtained from coastguard records (Map 11: Charter and Recreational Boating).

Map 7: Commercial fishers – Bottom trawl

Bottom trawling is by far the most popular commercial fishing method in the Bay of Plenty. The bottom trawl fishing method uses a net towed along the seafloor to catch fish either on or near the bottom. The net is held open by two large boards which sit on either side of the net entrance. Bottom trawl runs can often be up to 5 km or more. Bottom trawling takes place over much of the Bay of Plenty continental shelf that is free of reef or rock.

Map 8: Commercial fishers – Danish seine

The Danish seine fishing method uses a vessel to tow a long warp along the bottom of the seabed to herd fish into a net at the end. Once the fish have been herded into the net it is closed around the fish and hauled on board. There is little Danish seine fishing in the Bay of Plenty. The area most heavily fished by this method is between Matakana and Mayor Islands.

Map 9: Commercial fishers – Purse seine

This is a surface fishing method, which in coastal waters is generally used to target schools of pelagic fish that remain near the surface. Within the Bay of Plenty the target species are usually skipjack tuna, kahawai and mackerel.

A net/warp is towed around a school of fish and once encircled the bottom of the net is drawn closed and the catch then hauled on board. Purse seine fishing effort is scattered throughout the Bay of Plenty. However, most of the fishing occurs near the Tauranga Harbour, in a strip running approximately from Mayor Island down to about 20 km off Matata.