

Media Release
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EDS calls for stronger action to rebuild Northland rock lobster stocks

The Environmental Defence Society has released its submission on Fisheries New Zealand's proposals for managing the Northland (CRA 1) rock lobster fishery.

"The latest stock assessment shows the Northland fishery to be in a state of persistent depletion with current biomass levels alarmingly low," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

"There is also evidence that cumulative fishing pressure has resulted in the widespread removal of rock lobster from many shallow reefs with resultant loss of kelp forests.

"The Discussion Paper included proposals to either retain the status quo or reduce the Total Allowable Catch by up to 12%, with associated reductions to the commercial and recreational catch limits.

"While we support the need to reduce the catch limits in CRA 1, none of the proposals go far enough to rebuild the stock or other inter-dependent rock lobster stocks.

"The Northland fishery is an important source of recruitment for the Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty rock lobster stock (CRA2), which is in a poor state and under an urgent rebuilding plan, but this has not been factored into the proposals.

"Under the most restrictive Fisheries New Zealand option, a 5% increase in the CRA 1 spawning biomass is expected to occur by 2025. In EDS's view, this is not a sufficiently cautious approach to enable the timely rebuild of the Northland and Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty stocks to a healthy state.

"EDS is also concerned that none of the proposals take into account the important role that rock lobsters play in shallow reef ecosystems along the north-eastern coast.

"Urchin barrens are prolific across shallow rocky reefs in Northland and the Hauraki Gulf and show a disturbing decline in the functional capacity of these ecosystems.

"There is a large body of scientific information that links the loss of kelp forest habitat, and expansion of urchin barrens, to overfishing of large reef predators including rock lobsters and snapper.

“Our submission requests the inclusion of additional protective measures to support recovery of our kelp reef systems including maximum size, minimum depth and area-based harvest restrictions.

“Rock lobsters are vulnerable to fluctuations in environmental conditions and the stocks will come under increasing pressure in the future.

“Stronger measures need to be urgently implemented to rebuild of our Northland rock lobster stocks and restore of our degraded kelp forests,” concluded Ms Peart

Read the EDS submission [here](#).