



CRA 1 Rock Lobster Industry Association (CRAMAC 1)

Annual Operating Plan (AOP)

2024-2025 Season

Note:

- CRA = spiny reds (*Jasus Edwardsii*)
- PHC = pack horse cray (*Sagamariasus verreauxii*)

Purpose

The purpose of this Annual Operating Plan (AOP) is to document fisheries management practices that have been agreed to by the members of CRAMAC 1 for the CRA 1 & PHC 1 fisheries only. The management practices agreed to in the plan are adopted for the purpose of ensuring a healthy, productive, and sustainable CRA 1 fishery, for now and into the future. The plan will be made available to industry participants to ensure that all have a clear record of what has been agreed to.

The AOP is a living document that will be reviewed at the CRAMAC 1 AGM in November each year. The annual review will allow members the opportunity to ensure the plan remains up-to-date and fit-for-purpose and will allow the plan to be adjusted as required. As there may be times when the duration of closed seasons, extent of closed areas, or operation of any of the other management tools will need to be reviewed and possibly adjusted, the AOP remains a living document to allow for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Introduction

The CRA 1 Rock Lobster Industry Association (CRAMAC 1) was established as the commercial stakeholder organisation representing the interests of the quota share owners, ACE & fishing permit holders, Licenced Fish Receivers and fishing crew in the CRA 1 and PHC 1 rock lobster industry. CRAMAC 1 is also a forum to allow constructive discussion amongst its members, about the development of voluntary management initiatives that the CRAMAC may wish to adopt and implement.

As all the fisheries management initiatives included in this AOP are voluntary, it is important that there is full support and adherence from industry to give these voluntary management tools effect.

Overview of the AOP

The CRA 1 fishery extends from the Kaipara Harbour on the west coast to Te Arai Point, south of Whangarei.

At the start of the 2020-21 fishing year, to reverse the trend of a slightly declining biomass, the CRA 1 TACC was reduced from 131t down to 110t. Unfortunately, bad political decisions over the last two years have seen this trend continue and as of 1 April 2023, the CRA 1 TACC has been reduced to only 89 tonnes.

This loss of revenue for the fishing industry sparked discussion among industry participants regarding any additional fishery management tools the

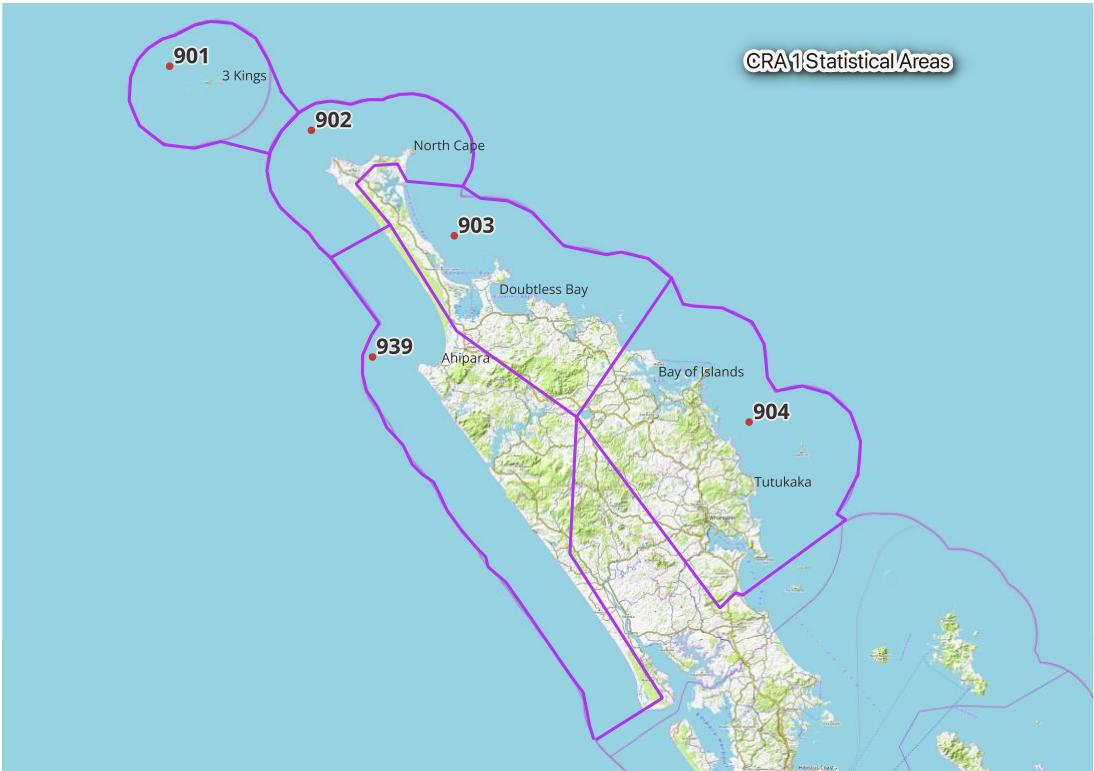
industry could use (over and above the regulatory tools already in place), to ensure the sustainability of our fishery, to further assist the fishery rebuild and to mitigating any further TACC reductions. The development of the AOP arose from these discussions.

CRA 1 & PHC 1 (2024-25 fishing year) Key statistics

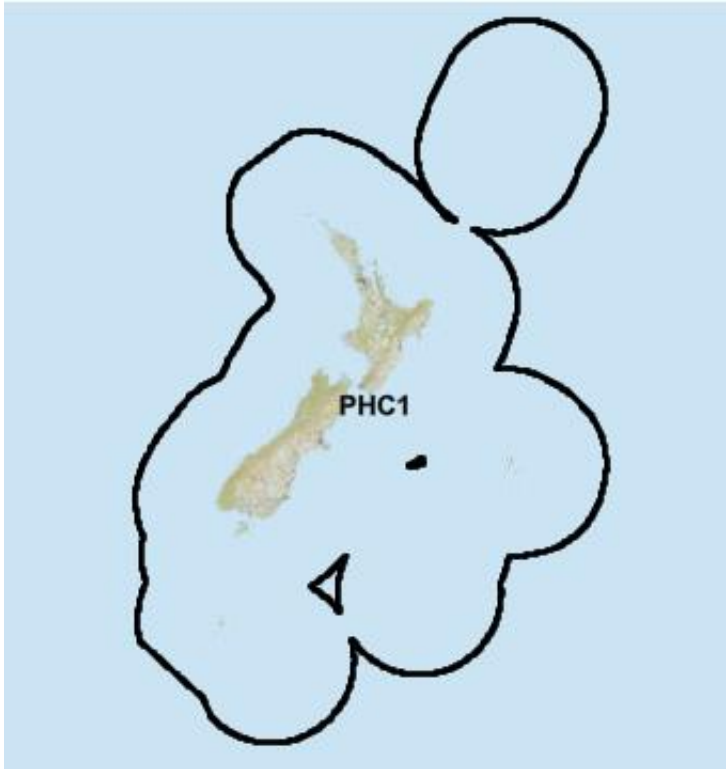
CRA 1	TAC	172 t
	TACC	89 t
	Number of Quota share owners	34
	Number of ACE holders	27
	Number of Vessels	11
PHC 1	TAC	79.3 t
	TACC	49.3 t
	Number of Quota share owners	58
	Number of ACE holders	34
	Number of Vessels	28

This Annual Operating Plan details the management plan that CRAMAC 1 members have agreed to for the **2024_25 fishing season** that starts 1 April 2024.

CRA 1 STATISTICAL AREAS



PHC 1 STATISTICAL AREA



VOLUNTARY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS for CRA 1 & PHC 1 2024-25 FISHING SEASON

Statistical areas CRA 1	901	939	902	903	904
CRA 1 catch 2023-24 ¹ (tonnes)	30	23.3	29.3	3.9	
Voluntary Harvest caps (t) FOR CRA only	NONE	NONE	NONE	5 tonnes	
Voluntary closed areas for CRA only	3 Kings (see below)	Hokianga to Herekino Harbours	NONE	NONE	Tutukaka Harbour to Bay of Islands
Voluntary Closed Season for CRA only	1 st December to 28 th February		15 th May to 31 st July ^φ	20 th December to 20 th February	
Voluntary Data Collection Programme	Data collected from all areas where fishing vessels operate from all CRA 1 industry vessels				
Statistical areas PHC 1	1				
PHC 1 catch 2023-24 (tonnes)	49.3 tonnes				
PHC 1 Horn Tagging Programme	All PHC sold on the domestic market				

φ Statistical area 902 currently requires the flexibility, if needed, to remain open to commercial fishing during the months December to February. Historically there is no commercial fishing in this area from mid-May to end of July and this will remain in place. However, the industry is working towards aligning the timing of the voluntary closure of 902 with the closure dates for areas 903 & 904.

¹ Total catch for CRA 1 2023-24 fishing year = 88.68t with 2.3t coming from CRA 1 QMA, but statistical area 905.

1. VOLUNTARY CLOSED SEASON for COMMERCIAL FISHING OF CRA²

The effects of increasing sea temperatures on the health, spatial distribution and/or behaviour of fish populations are being seen all around the globe and NZ is no exception. The rock lobster industry is noticing increased sea temperatures compared to previous decades and these observations are supported by the temperature data being collected by the fishing industry as part of the Moana project <https://www.moanaproject.org/> and as part of the CRA 1 Voluntary Logbook Programme. CRAMAC 8 down the Fiordland coast, are collaborating with Otago University and the Moana project team to determine if the extreme heat wave experienced in CRA 8 over the 2022-23 summer is correlated with weak male lobsters, that seem to be taking an extraordinary amount of time to recover from their moult. To date the work is supporting a good correlation between the increased ocean temperature and the less-than-optimal health of the lobster.

Similar concerns exist in the CRA 1 fishery where the mortality rate (both on the boat and at the LFR) of lobster, caught over December to February, is unacceptably high. This observed increase in mortality raises real concerns among the industry participants that mortality rates of all lobster returned to the sea during the summer months are also unacceptably high and could be negatively impacting on the sustainability of our CRA 1 fishery.

To avoid fishing over the summer period when increasing water temperatures are causing increased mortality in lobsters either landed or returned to the sea, the CRA 1 industry require all fishers to follow the seasonal harvesting plan below:

Statistical Areas 901 & 939 are closed to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) from:

- 1st Dec 2024 to 28th Feb 2025

Statistical Areas 903 and 904 are closed to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) from:

- 20th Dec 2024 to 20 Feb 2025

Not commercially fishing over the summer months also helps to avoid conflict with recreational fishers at a time of the year when recreational fishing activity is high.

² The voluntary closed season applies to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) and does not include pack horse crays (*Sagmariasus verreauxii*)

Statistical Area 902 will be closed to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) from:

15th May 2025 to 15th July 2025

Statistical area 902 currently requires the flexibility, if needed, to remain open to commercial fishing during the months December to February. Historically there is no commercial fishing in this area from mid-May to mid-July and this will remain in place. However, the industry is working towards aligning the timing of the voluntary closure of 902 with the closure dates in place for areas 903 & 904.

2. VOLUNTARY CLOSED AREAS for COMMERCIAL FISHING OF CRA³

- a. Three Kings: North West Bay and South East Bay are voluntarily closed to commercial fishing but not to anchorage and holding pots as per agreement of 2016.
- b. Tutukaka Harbour (North Side) to Bay of Islands is voluntarily closed to commercial fishing but not to anchorage and holding pots
- c. Hokianga Harbour mouth to Herekino Harbour mouth is voluntarily closed to commercial fishing but not to anchorage and holding pots

In an act of good faith to help mitigate conflict between recreational and industry fishers and to leave areas available for recreational and customary fishing only, the industry have voluntarily chosen to not fish in the areas of productive fishing grounds listed above.

3. CAPPING CATCH IN STATISTICAL AREAS 903 & 904 for COMMERCIAL FISHING OF CRA⁴

Over the last few years industry have taken little catch from statistical areas 903 & 904. So, to further assist in halting the decline in rock lobster abundance in these areas, the CRA 1 industry agree to cap the commercial harvest of rock lobster (*Jasus edwardsii*) to no more than 5 tonnes for any fishing year from across these two statistical areas combined.

³ The voluntary closed areas apply to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) and does not include pack horse crays (*Sagmariasus verreauxii*)

⁴ The harvest caps in section 3 apply to commercial fishing of spiny red rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) and does not include pack horse crays (*Sagmariasus verreauxii*)

4. PHC HORN TAGGING PROGRAMME

To mitigate the illegal sale of pack horse cray on the domestic market in New Zealand, Licensed Fish Receivers who process pack horse cray for sale on the domestic market must participate in the PHC horn tagging programme.

5. CRA 1 & PHC 1 LOGBOOK PROGRAMME

To ensure data collected for the CRA and PHC fisheries is of suitable quality for use in CRA 1 and PHC 1 stock assessments, and for the development of future management procedures, CRAMAC 1 require that all vessels fishing for rock lobster (*jasus edwardsii* & *Sagarmiasus verreauxi*) in the CRA 1 QMA participate in the logbook programme. Fishers are required to collect data on all fishing trips, unless the safety of the crew and vessel would be compromised due to weather or other mitigating circumstances.

6. GROWTH TAGGING PROGRAMME (CRA & PHC)

To ensure data collected for the CRA and PHC fisheries is of suitable quality for use in CRA 1 and PHC 1 stock assessments, CRAMAC 1 ask that any vessel required to do so, will participate in the tag-recapture programme for red rock lobsters and/or pack horse crays.

7. BIOTOXIN SAMPLING

If Paralytic Shellfish Toxin (PST) levels are reported to be increasing towards threshold levels in any fished areas of CRA 1, CRAMAC 1 require that any vessel fishing for rock lobster in the area of concern will, if required to do so, collect lobsters for biotoxin testing.

8. BIOTOXIN EVENT

If PST levels meet or exceed the threshold level of 0.8mg/kg, CRAMAC 1 agree that all vessels fishing for rock lobster (CRA or PHC) in the affected area will immediately stop fishing and will not recommence fishing until biotoxin tests show the PST levels to have fallen below 0.65mg/kg for another two tests, taken at least 3-5 days apart.

9. BEST FISHING PRACTICE

In reflection of changing attitudes and times, it is imperative that the CRA and PHC fishing industry appreciate the importance of building and maintaining good relationships with the coastal communities that the industry work in. To achieve this CRAMAC 1 require all fishers to follow the industry code of "Best Fishing Practice" (detailed below).

Industry Code of Best Fishing Practice

- Never leave lobsters exposed to wind, sun or rain, even for brief periods
- Measure all lobster as each pot is hauled. Return undersize, berried, soft, and/or

damaged lobster to the sea immediately and onto suitable habitat. Every effort should be made to reduce sub-legal handling and predation mortalities. **The lobster you return today is your catch for the future.**

- Ensure your pots are designed to ensure you can handle lobster in a manner that reduces damage to them.
- Maximise the efficiency of your harvest and handling routines. For example, if your vessel allows – place legal size rock lobster in holding tanks, or use spray systems, to avoid stress and subsequent mortality. Wind and sun will dramatically stress the lobsters which will lead to further mortalities in the exporting process.
- While lobsters may show no outward signs of stress and may appear healthy, we now know that they are susceptible to any further stress placed on them while grading, packing, and exporting.

Research has shown that:

- *stress to lobster from bad handling cannot be undone it is cumulative and will eventually kill them.*
 - *no matter the quality of the tanking system it cannot undo previous stress from bad handling*
 - *So, treat your catch with care to maximise their value.*
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- All pots must be fitted with Regulation escape gaps and marked with the vessel name and number to enable easy identification.
 - All floats must be clearly marked with the vessel name and number.
 - Do not leave excessive amounts of loose rope lying on the surface. Shorten up potlines when moving gear into the shallower water. Loose rope is a hazard to other vessels and to whales, dolphins and seals.
 - Do not throw **any** waste into the sea. All bait cartons, plastic liners, strapping, frayed ropes, cans, food wrappings and engine waste should be retained onboard to be disposed of at land-based facilities.
 - Do not litter the beach with the leftovers from your days catch. Never leave any waste onboard your vessel that can blow away and litter the beach. Dispose of all rubbish appropriately
 - Be aware of pollution regulations. It is illegal to pump oil into the marine environment in concentrations greater than 15 parts per million.
 - Do not leave unused bait onboard or stacked on the beach trailers. If you need to load the next days bait ensure that it is in an insulated leakproof container or fish hold. Avoid all leakage onto beach and never leave bait onboard long enough to start to

smell.

- Never let diesel or oil spill onto the beach. Check fuel tanks, (and bulldozers or tractors if used for launching) regularly to ensure that there are no leaks.
- Don't have any gear laying around on the beach that is not essential to your daily fishing operation. Keep the beach tidy - the access you enjoy is unique and the opportunity must be respected.
- Respect other coastal users by giving them space on and off the water, help them enjoy their time in the area. Promote positive relationships with other users that may help in the successful future management of all coastal resources.
- Lobster fishers that also engage in charter fishing need to be mindful of leaving their commercial pots unattended which may be predated by Octopus. These mortalities are unnecessary and costly to the fishery and should be discouraged.
- Remove all pots from the water when you are not fishing.

HOLDING POTS

- **Use purpose built holding pots**

Where possible, pots should incorporate shelves or partitions to increase the surface area available to the lobsters within the pot. Or use more holding pots with less fish in each.

- **Pots to be clearly marked**

Pots must be marked in accordance with regulations.

- **Pots should be sited in sheltered areas to prevent harm to the animals.**

- **Don't overcrowd**

Lobsters should have room to move freely within the pot without causing harm to themselves or other lobsters.

- **Check your pots regularly**

Check for damage to the pots and the health of the lobsters.

- **Store only similar sized lobsters together**

This minimises conflict and therefore damage or mortalities.

- **Feed regularly**

Lobsters should be fed regularly to maintain condition and health, otherwise their health can rapidly deteriorate.

- **Maximum holding period**

Lobsters should not be held for more than 14 days.

- **Records should be kept and correct**

Information required for recordkeeping and reporting purposes should be as accurate as possible relating to lobsters held in holding pots. Reporting must show the final destination of all lobsters through using all of the appropriate destination codes.

Biotoxin Events

Biotoxin events are now part of our lives in the world of commercial fishing. Toxic algal blooms are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity. As an industry we need to be vigilant.

- Regular Paralytic Shellfish Toxins (PSTs) events are occurring throughout our coastline and recent experience has taught us they can last for extended periods of time.
- PSTs can constitute a major public health risk from the consumption of the gut content of rock lobsters. Lobster meat is generally safe however, the gut content most definitely is not. Cooking or freezing do not reduce the risk in any way
- **If a biotoxin event occurs your CRAMAC response coordinator will:**
 - Arrange for lobster samples to be collected and sent to the laboratory for analysis.
 - **You may be asked to collect a sample of 5 lobster. These lobster can be coded to the BS code on your mandatory Electronic Reporting Platform which means the lobster are not taken off any ACE. If you are asked to collect samples you will be provided with an authorisation form that you will be required to have on your vessel to show by an MPI Fisheries Officer if asked.**
 - Advise all Licenced Fish Receivers (LFRs) to have fishermen, refrain from fishing in the affected area until “ALL CLEAR” results are received from the laboratory.
- **No fishing is to occur from the time a lobster sample is taken until the results are received** and will only recommence if the sample is below the regulatory limit.
- Lobsters from potentially affected areas already landed to holding tanks or depots, should be sampled and tested before being packed for export.

WHY OUR CONCERN - Live rock lobsters with dangerous levels of toxins could find their way into the Chinese market. If that did happen and

subsequent illness was linked back to a shipment of lobsters from New Zealand, the Chinese response would be to shut down all imports of New Zealand rock lobsters. The consequences of this would be financially devastating to many within the rock lobster industry.

Protecting the fishery from theft

If you observe something suspicious phone **0800 4 POACHER** (0800 476 224). It is a free call that puts you through to an operator who is in contact with MPI Compliance. The 0800 4 POACHER phone number is staffed 7am to 9pm in the summer with slightly less hours in the winter.

If you see or hear of fishing activity that you think might be illegal either ring the 0800 4 POACHER number, contact your local compliance office.

MPI compliance like getting information about fish thieves as and when it's happening so don't leave it until a week later to mention it to them. They are not concerned if several people tell them the same thing – it's all good. Don't assume MPI know everything that's happening out there – they are often the last to find out things just because everyone presumes, they would have already heard. CRAMAC 1's policy is to support MPI in their compliance work.

DON'T SLEEP ON IT – DO IT IMMEDIATELY.