

**Orange roughy / nihorota****ORH 7A – Challenger Plateau**

Setting	TAC	TACC	Allowances		
			Customary Māori	Recreational	All other mortality caused by fishing
Previous	2,163	2,058	2	0	103
New	942 (↓ 1,221)	885 (↓ 1,173)	2	0	55 (↓ 48)

The best available information for ORH 7A comes from the 2024 stock assessment, which estimates current biomass to be at 35 percent  $B_0$  (unfished biomass), within the management target range of 30-50 percent  $B_0$ .

I note that projections of ORH 7A stock status at current catch levels indicated the stock is expected to decline. This is driven by historic overfishing that reduced the spawning stock biomass to a very low level, with fewer fish now recruiting into the fishery as a result. There is considerable uncertainty in the estimate of stock status (and future projections of stocks status) as the most recent abundance information (from acoustic surveys of spawning aggregations of fish) included in the model is from 2013. Other assessment models that considered more recent acoustic survey information were much more pessimistic, indicating stock status below the soft limit.

The more recent survey information from 2023, while excluded from the final model by the Fisheries Assessment Plenary, indicates the absence of spawning aggregations in some areas. Recent catch trends and feedback provided from submissions indicates there is a broad concern with the recent performance of the ORH 7A fishery, consistent with the observations from this survey.

Considering this information, the uncertainty in the assessment information, and the vulnerability of orange roughy to fishing pressure, there is a strong need for caution when managing this fishery. A significant reduction to the TACC is warranted, and I have therefore decided on a 57 percent TACC reduction to 885 tonnes, which is the largest reduction that was consulted on.