



Fact sheet 2 – Inanga and the whitebait fishery

1. Introduction

Fish of a galaxiid family (inanga, banded kokopu, short-jawed kokopu, long-jawed kokopu, giant kokopu, koaro) and common smelt (paraki) are subject to both the Fisheries Act 1996 and Conservation Act 1987.

There is not thought to be any significant fishing of adult inanga and fishing is discouraged by the Department of Conservation (DoC) as several of the species are listed on the threatened species list as being in gradual decline.

However, like any other aquatic life, adult galaxiids (and smelt) may be fished in accordance with the Fisheries Act, Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations and Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations. Although Inanga may not be taken without DoC consent from waterways within public conservation lands (parks and reserves).

To take fish for recreational purposes from other areas you would need to comply with the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) Regulations. No maximum daily catch is specified in these regulations although there will be controls on the fishing methods that may be used. Controls don't specify what method you must use but they do say, for example, that:

- floats used on any set nets must be marked with the owner's name
- nets must not be set so that, by themselves or conjunction with other nets, they extend more than one quarter of the width of a river
- lines used must not have more than 25 hooks.

Subject to conditions, customary fishing is also provided for under the Fisheries (Amateur Fishing) regulations and the Fisheries South Island Customary Fishing) Regulations. These are explained in Fact Sheet 1 – Fishing for Tuna.

None of the galaxiids (or smelt) are within the quota management system (QMS) but you would need a

fishing permit from the Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) if you wanted to fish for these species commercially.

More information on the recreational and commercial fishing regulations can be obtained from your local MFish office. MFish has 18 offices around the country. These locations can be found by looking at the MFish website <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/info/contactus>

The four main regional offices are located in Auckland (09) 820 1990, Wellington (04) 470 2600, Nelson (03) 548 1069 and Dunedin (03) 474 0333.

2. Fishing for whitebait

Most inanga, kokopu and paraki are fished as fry or juveniles - known collectively as whitebait. A separate regulatory regime is in place to control the taking of whitebait.

The whitebait fishery is managed by DoC according to two regulations prepared under the Conservation Act 1986:

- the Whitebait Regulations 1994; and
- the Whitebait (West Coast) Regulations 1994.

Collectively these are referred to as the "Whitebait Regulations". The regulations set out the fishing season, set limits on the size and type of fishing gear and other matters. Outside the West Coast they also set allow for taking of whitebait for some customary purposes.

The whitebait regulations are explained in this fact sheet and further information can be obtained by contacting DoC. DoC's head office is in Wellington ph. (04) 471 0726. There are also regional offices in Hamilton (07) 858 0000 and Christchurch (03) 353 0580 and 13 conservancy offices around the country. Contact details for your closest conservancy office can be found on the DoC website <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/officebyname>

Enquiries can be made by email to enquiries@doc.govt.nz.

3. Taking whitebait for hui and tangi

In areas outside the West Coast the restrictions imposed by the Whitebait Regulations do not apply if whitebait are taken for hui or tangi.

However, those wishing to take the whitebait for hui or tangi must (a) advise a “warranted officer” of the intention to fish before the whitebait are taken.; and (b) comply with whatever conditions (on the quantity, location or method used) imposed by DoC.

A “warranted officer” is simply a person appointed by the Minister for Conservation. To advise a warranted officer, contact your local DoC office.

If you are taking fish outside the West Coast for purposes other than hui or tangi, you will need to comply with the requirements of the Whitebait Regulations.

Key elements of the Whitebait Regulations are summarised below. However, the information provided here is a guide only and is not comprehensive. Further information is available from DoC and a useful summary is available on the DoC website at: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/summary>.

Note: Although the exemption for hui and tangi does not apply on the West Coast, the taking of whitebait for customary purposes may be possible on the West Coast under the Fisheries (South Island Customary Fishing) Regulations. This is an area of law that is presently unclear (See Fact Sheet 1 for explanation of regulations).

4. Fishing season

Whitebait fishing seasons are as follows:

- for all areas except the West Coast and the Chatham Islands - 15 August to 30 November inclusive
- for the West Coast of the South Island – 1 September to 14 February inclusive
- for Chatham Islands – 1 December to 28/29 February inclusive

Within the whitebait season you may only fish between 5:00am and 8:00pm (or between 6:00am and 9:00pm during daylight saving. Nets must be removed outside those times.

5. Fishing gear

“Fishing gear” is described by the Regulations as all nets, screens, lines, devices or things that are used to take whitebait.

Nets are not to have a mouth (inside the frame) larger than 4.5 metres in circumference and are not to be longer than 3.5 metres. Any framing material used must not be wider than 120mm.

No fishing gear can be wider than one-third of the width of the river or stream and screens must not be wider than 3 metres.

If fishing with others, your combined fishing gear cannot exceed one-third of the width of the river or stream.

You may not :

- use more than one whitebait net at anytime
- use more than one net per white stand
- move more than 10 metres from your net at any time

6. Location of fishing

You are not allowed to fish for whitebait from any bridge or from a boat. Nor may you fish for whitebait within 20 metres of a tide gate, floodgate, culvert or confluence (i.e. place where two rivers or streams meet). There are a number of restrictions on where on the *West Coast* you may fish, including:

- areas where fishing is prohibited (set out in Schedule 1)
- rivers where special conditions apply
- rivers on which there are “back pegs” (back pegs are markers placed on the river banks to indicate the upper limit for whitebait fishing)

DoC can provide details of these areas/rivers

7. Use of fish

The whitebait regulations do not limit the quantity of whitebait that may be taken. Nor do they restrict the use of the whitebait caught. Provided you comply with the rules summarised above you can catch as much whitebait as you like and you can sell exchange or trade your catch.