



**Fisheries New Zealand**

Tini a Tangaroa

## Recreational Fishing Rules

# FIORDLAND

## (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area



Effective from: September 2024 (subject to change without notice).



Shared Sustainable **Fisheries** for the **Future**

# Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area



Map 1: Fiordland Marine Area, the Fiords and Internal Waters

The Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area is a special marine management area that is contained within the wider Southland Fishery Management Area. This brochure is a summary of the main recreational fishing regulations pertaining to sea fishing in Fiordland.

## Know and observe the limits

- Only those physically involved in taking finfish, rock lobster, or shellfish can claim a catch within the daily limit.
- All fish taken and consumed during any trip must be counted within the daily limit entitlement.
- Do not exceed the daily limits or take undersized or unlawful state fish.

- Unlawful catch in excess of daily limit, or undersized or illegal state must be immediately returned to the water, dead or alive.

## **Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area**

The Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area includes the waters commencing from Awarua Point on the West Coast and extending 12 nautical miles seaward of the high tide mark along the Fiordland coast to its south-eastern boundary at Sandhill Point.

The Fiordland Marine Area includes defined waters that have different rules. The main defined waters are:

- the Fiords
- the Internal Waters of Fiordland (Internal Waters)
- the Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) blue cod closure area.

### **The Fiords**

The Fiords is all the waters inshore of the line between the headlands of the 14 named fiords, including the Internal Waters within each Fiord. For Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) this is the waters lying east of a straight line between Saint Anne Point and Stripe Point.

### **Internal Waters of Fiordland (Internal Waters)**

The Internal Waters of Fiordland are defined inner fiord areas within the Fiords. All commercial fishing is prohibited within the Internal Waters, conservative recreational fishing catch limits, method restrictions and species take prohibitions can apply, due to the inner fiord habitat being less productive and fish stocks far less abundant.

Since April 2024 new daily limits for fish species and combined species bag limits apply within the Fiordland Marine Area, with lower limits set for the Fiords waters and the Internal Waters.

## Accumulating fish catch is unlawful

Accumulating catch is when any person is in possession of more than one day's legal daily limit. Within the Fiordland Marine Area accumulating catch is not allowed for finfish and shellfish, apart from rock lobster. In the case of rock lobster, there is a 3-day accumulation maximum limit of 15 rock lobsters, conditional on each individual fisher's daily catch separation and container labelling provisions being complied with (refer to **Rock lobster** section).

## Finfish

### Daily limits and size restrictions

There is a combined maximum bag limit of 20 finfish for the Fiordland Marine Area. This can include a maximum of 10 finfish caught inside the Fiords and the Internal Waters. No accumulation of finfish beyond the daily bag limit is allowed anywhere in the Fiordland Marine Area.

When fishing exclusively inside the Fiords, including the Internal Waters, there is a combined daily bag limit of 10 finfish per fisher with no accumulation beyond one day's limit. Individual species limits within the respective combined daily bag limits must not be exceeded. It is prohibited to possess and accumulate finfish beyond one day's species limit or combined bag limits, even if you are fishing across multiple days.

The combined finfish bag limit applies to all finfish\* species, including any finfish species not listed in the following tables.

\*Finfish includes all species of finfish of the classes Agnatha, Chondrichthyes, and Osteichthyes, at any stage of their life history, whether living or dead.

Individual finfish species daily limits within the combined daily limits

Finfish species	Fiordland Marine Area (outside the Fiords) Max daily limit per active fisher	The Fiords Max daily limit per active fisher	Min fish length (cm)
Albacore tuna	10	3	–
Barracouta	20	3	–
Blue cod – <b>no blue cod take allowed in Milford Sound blue cod closure area</b>	10	1	33
Blue moki	5	1	40
Bluenose	3	1	–
Blue shark	1		–
Bronze whaler shark	1		–
Butterfish (Greenbone)	4	2	35
Elephant fish	5		–
Flatfish (except Sand flounder)	5	2	25
Groper (Hāpuku)/Bass – <b>no groper (hāpuku)/bass take allowed in Internal Waters of all Fiords</b>	3	1	–
Hammerhead shark	1		–
Hoki	5	1	–
Kahawai	5	1	–
Kingfish	3		75
Ling	5	1	–
Mako shark	1		–
Marblefish	5	1	–
Marlin	1		–
Porbeagle shark	1		–
Quinnat salmon	1		–

Finfish species	Fiordland Marine Area (outside the Fiords) Max daily limit per active fisher	The Fiords Max daily limit per active fisher	Min fish length (cm)
Red cod	5	2	25
Red gurnard	5	2	25
Red moki	5		40
Rig	2		–
Sand flounder	5	2	23
School shark	2		–
Sea perch (Jock Stewart)	10	1	–
Seven-gilled shark	1		–
Skate/ Ray	1		–
Snapper	5		25
Southern bluefin tuna	1		–
Spiny dogfish	2		–
Stargazer	5	2	–
Tarakihi	10	1	25
Thresher shark	1		–
Trevally	5	1	25
Trumpeter	5	1	35
Warehou	5	1	–
Wrasse	10	4	–
Any other finfish (excluding baitfish species)	10	4	–

The respective daily species limits for finfish taken within the Fiords must be counted and included as part of the respective maximum species daily limits and combined finfish bag limit for the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area and are not additional. It is recommended that fishers spread their fishing effort inside the Fiords to avoid localised depletion.

**In addition, you may also take the following baitfish species**

Baitfish species	Max daily limit per active fisher
Anchovy	Daily limit of 50 for any combination of these species
Jack/Horse/Chilean mackerel	
Koheru/Scad	
Pilchard	
Piper/Garfish	
Slender/Stout sprat	
Yellow-eyed mullet	

**Finfish restrictions**  
**Measuring finfish**

Measure from the tip of the nose to the middle ray or “V” in the tail.



**Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) blue cod closure area**

It is prohibited to take or possess blue cod taken from within the Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) blue cod closure area/Internal Waters due to low abundance and poor habitat productivity.

**Blue cod measurable state**

Measure and immediately return undersize blue cod less than 33cm length to the water. All blue cod catch possessed in the Fiordland Marine Area must be retained and landed either in a whole, or gutted measurable state (minimum length 33cm). In relation to blue cod, “gutted”, means the removal of the abdominal cavity organs. When you “bleed” blue cod, do not cut out the gills or sever the spine to compromise the measurable state, particularly for any fish close to 33cm minimum length.

While it is unlawful to possess or land processed unmeasurable state blue cod, fishers on board a fishing vessel, may possess blue cod in a processed state, if it is to be immediately eaten on board the fishing vessel from which it was taken. Any fish eaten form part of the daily limit. If you have filleted blue cod on shore to take home, you cannot take the fillets back on a vessel in New Zealand fisheries waters to transport in an unmeasurable state.

## Blue cod pots

It is prohibited to use or set any blue cod pot in the Internal Waters. They can, however, be used outside the Internal Waters in accordance with the following pot limit rules:

- All pots, and surface buoys or floats attached to the pot and float line, must be legibly and permanently marked with the person's initials and surname. This includes possession on any vessel.
- Blue cod pots must use a single layer of rigid square mesh with minimum inside width dimensions of 54mm to allow undersize fish to escape.
- Pot limits apply to all catching pots including blue cod pots and rock lobster pots. The pot limits are:
  - a maximum of 3 pots for one person on a vessel; or
  - if two or more persons are on a vessel, the maximum vessel pot limit is 6 pots, being any lawful combination of species-specific catching pots and including no more than 3 rock lobster catching pots and up to 2 rock lobster holding pots.

## Blue cod hook recommendations

When fishing for blue cod, size 8 and larger size wide gap or circle fish hooks with no offset are recommended to avoid damage and promote survival of undersize blue cod.

## White pointer shark prohibition

It is unlawful to take or possess any white pointer shark.

## Set line restrictions

Set line restrictions apply to all static line gear that is set in the water and not attached to a vessel in New Zealand fisheries waters. This includes longlines and dahn (drop) lines but does not include any rod and reel line or handline. Within the Fiordland Marine Area, including the Fiords and Internal Waters, the following set line fishing restrictions apply:

- surface floats attached to any set line must be legibly and permanently marked with the fisher's surname and initials; the boat name is also useful
- a maximum of five hooks per set line is allowed
- if only one person on a vessel, a maximum of one set line may be used or set
- if two or more persons are on a vessel, no more than two set lines may be used or set from, or possessed, on board that vessel.

**Note:** Do not use or set any set line inside the Internal Waters, which are closed to groper/bass fishing to conserve depleted stocks.



## Set nets and drift nets prohibited

It is unlawful to recreationally use, set or possess any set net in the Fiordland Marine Area. It is also prohibited to use a drift net for fishing in any New Zealand fisheries waters.

## Shellfish

### Daily bag limits and size restrictions

Shellfish are considered “taken” (collected or harvested) when they cannot freely return to the water e.g. put into a catch bag. At no time while gathering shellfish may you possess more than your daily limit.

Shellfish species	Fiordland Marine Area (outside the Fiords) Max daily limit per active fisher	The Fiords Max daily limit per active fisher	Min size length (mm)
Cockles	20		–
Kina (sea eggs)	30		–
Mussels	10		–
Oysters – (flat/dredge)†	No take allowed		
Pāua – ordinary/blackfoot*	5	2	125 mm
Pāua – Yellowfoot*	2		80 mm
Pipi	20		–
Scallops †	No take allowed		
All other shellfish combined •	20		–

- † Prohibited to take or possess any flat/dredge oysters or scallops taken from within the Fiordland Marine Area due to species low abundance.
- \* Possession of any ordinary/blackfoot pāua taken from inside the Fiords waters must be counted together with any ordinary/blackfoot pāua that was taken from outside the Fiords and are not additional to the maximum 5 ordinary/blackfoot pāua species limit.
- This is a combined shellfish mixed-species bag limit (whether same or different species) for which a specific limit is not specified in this table. It applies to all shellfish species not specifically named above and includes all crabs, cat’s eye, cook’s turban, limpets, periwinkles, starfish and freshwater crayfish (kōura).

**Note:** No accumulation of shellfish except rock lobster. Refer to **Rock lobster** section.

## Shellfish to be landed in a measurable state

All shellfish to which a minimum size restriction applies (including pāua), must be landed in the shell in a measurable state and cannot be shucked or shelled seaward of the mean high-water mark. This includes transporting shellfish catch on the water.

## Measuring shellfish

**Pāua:** measure the greatest length of the shell in a straight line parallel to the underside pāua foot. Do not measure over the curve of the shell.



## Shellfish restrictions

### Underwater breathing apparatus (UBA)

- It is prohibited to take pāua using UBA and unlawful for any person to possess pāua while in possession of UBA. This includes possession in or on any vessel, aircraft (including helicopter) or vehicle.

### Scallop and dredge oyster prohibition

No person may take or possess any scallops or flat/dredge oysters taken from within the Fiordland Marine Area due to species low abundance.

### Dredges prohibited

It is unlawful to use or possess any shellfish dredge in the Fiordland Marine Area.

### Protection of coral

No person may take or possess any black coral or red coral.

# Rock lobster

## Daily bag limit

A maximum daily bag limit of 6 rock lobsters (both red or spiny rock lobster and packhorse rock lobster species combined) applies in the Fiordland Marine Area, including within the Fiords and Internal Waters.

This excludes Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) Internal Waters, which has a rock lobster limit of 3, with no accumulation.

Rock lobster species	Fiordland Marine Area (except Milford Sound Internal Waters) Max daily limit per active fisher	Milford Sound (Internal Waters) Max daily limit per active fisher
Red or spiny rock lobster and packhorse rock lobster (both species combined)	6	3

## Limits on rock lobster accumulation

Within the Fiordland Marine Area, fishers are allowed to possess and accumulate rock lobsters taken over 3 or more days if:

- not more than 15 rock lobsters are possessed by an individual fisher
- the daily take limit of 6 rock lobsters was not exceeded on any day
- not more than 3 rock lobsters were taken from the Milford Sound Internal Waters
- rock lobsters held on board or landed from a vessel, must have each fisher’s daily catch held in separate containers or bags that are labelled to identify the individual fisher, the number of rock lobster and the date taken.

In the case of live rock lobster held temporarily in a holding pot at sea, the fisher must maintain and be able to immediately produce upon the request of a fishery officer, a legible written record containing the following information:

1. The individual fisher’s full name.
2. The date on which the fisher took the rock lobster.
3. The number of rock lobster held in each rock lobster holding pot, including the number of rock lobster taken from within the Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) Internal Waters.

4. The global positioning system (GPS) coordinates or physical location of each holding pot.
5. The date on which the fisher removed rock lobster from each holding pot.
6. The number of rock lobster removed from each holding pot.

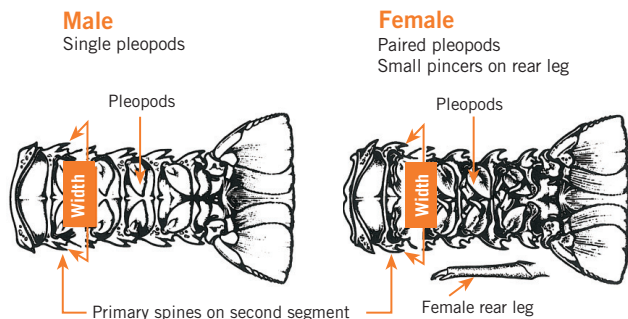
In the case of rock lobster held on board or landed from a vessel (including rock lobster removed from any holding pot), the rock lobsters are held in labelled containers that:

1. contain only rock lobsters taken on a single day.
2. are clearly labelled to record the following:
  - (i) the individual fisher's full name; and
  - (ii) date on which the rock lobster was taken by the fisher; and
  - (iii) the number of rock lobsters held in the container; and
  - (iv) the number of rock lobsters (if any) taken from within the Milford Sound Internal Waters.

**Note:** Failure to comply with the above holding pot record and the “bag and tag” conditions, risks any accumulated rock lobsters beyond the 6 daily limit being confiscated and receiving an infringement notice for exceeding the 6 rock lobster possession limit.

## How to measure rock lobster

Measure the tail width in a straight line between the tips of the two large (primary) spines on the second segment of the tail. The minimum size measurements for males and females are shown in the table.



## Minimum sizes

Lobster species	Tail width measurement
Red or spiny rock lobster	Male – 54mm Female – 60mm
Packhorse rock lobster	Male – 84mm Female – 90mm

If you are unsure of the sex, use the female (larger) measurement.

## Rock lobster restrictions

### Protected rock lobster

The following types of rock lobster must be immediately returned to the water and cannot be legally possessed:

- undersize rock lobster
- female rock lobsters carrying external eggs (in berry) – these are carried between the pleopods on the underside of the tail
- any soft-shell stage rock lobster (following moulting where the exoskeleton has not reached full hardness)
- rock lobster that cannot be measured (e.g. because of damage to the tail preventing accurate measurement). Specific exemptions apply for very large rock lobsters – for more information go to [fisheries.govt.nz/rock-lobster](https://fisheries.govt.nz/rock-lobster)

## General restrictions

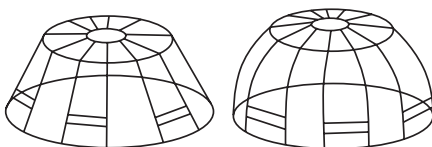
It is unlawful to:

- remove external eggs or the egg bearing appendages from any rock lobster
- possess any rock lobster seaward of the mean high-water mark in an unmeasurable state or to land from a vessel any rock lobster in such a state that the tail cannot be measured
- use a spear or device which could puncture the shell when taking rock lobster or possess any rock lobster that have been speared
- use a spring loaded loop or lasso, which is prohibited. Only hand operated loops or lassoes may be used
- use or set a baited net for taking rock lobster, or possess any rock lobster with a baited net.

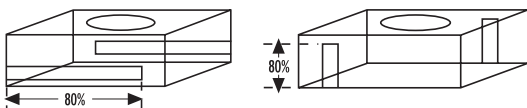
## Escape gaps

It is unlawful for any person to set or possess a rock lobster pot unless it has escape gaps or apertures to allow undersized rock lobster to escape from the pot. Escape gaps must not be in the top or bottom of any pot, with inside dimensions of not less than 54mm wide by 200mm long.

- **Round or beehive pots** must have at least three escape gaps/or apertures (other than the mouth). Each aperture must have an inside dimension of not less than 54mm x 200mm.



- **Square or rectangular pots** must have at least two escape gaps/or apertures (other than the mouth) in opposite faces of the pot. Each aperture shall not be less than 80 percent of the height or length of the face of the pot in which the apertures are contained. Each aperture shall have an inside dimension of not less than 54mm x 200mm.



- **Mesh pots** constructed entirely of unaltered spot welded mesh with inside dimensions of 54mm x 140mm do not have to have escape gaps/or apertures. Mesh pots may be used with covers or liners provided they leave unencumbered at least 80 percent of the surface area of each of two opposite sides.

## Rock lobster pot limits

No person may on any day within the Fiordland Marine Area:

- possess, use or set more than three rock lobster pots
- possess on any vessel, or use or set more than three rock lobster pots from any vessel.

## Pot limits

- All pots, and surface buoys or floats attached to the pot and float line must be legibly and permanently marked with the person's initials and surname. This includes pot possession on any vessel.
- An individual on a vessel may use, set or possess up to 3 rock lobster (catching) pots in any one day.
- If two or more persons are on a vessel in the Fiordland Marine Area, the maximum vessel rock lobster catching pot limit is 3 pots within a 6 pots vessel limit; being any lawful combination of species specific catching pots and including blue cod pots and no more than three rock lobster catching pots and up to two rock lobster holding pots.

## Rock lobster holding pots

A rock lobster holding pot is a pot that is used, or can be used, for holding or storing rock lobster but does not include any pot that is capable of catching rock lobster. Within the Fiordland Marine Area, specific provision allows the use of rock lobster holding pots in addition to rock lobster catching pots. Holding pots are excluded from other rock lobster pot limits and escape gap requirements. The following restrictions apply:

- a limit of one holding pot per person or a maximum of two holding pots per vessel if there are two or more persons on board
- holding pots and attached surface floats used from or transported on a vessel must be clearly and permanently marked with the vessel name and the characters **HP1** for the first holding pot and (if applicable) **HP2** for the second holding pot
- holding pots and attached surface floats used other than from a vessel must be clearly and permanently marked with the fishers surname, initials and the characters **HP**.

## Closed and restricted areas

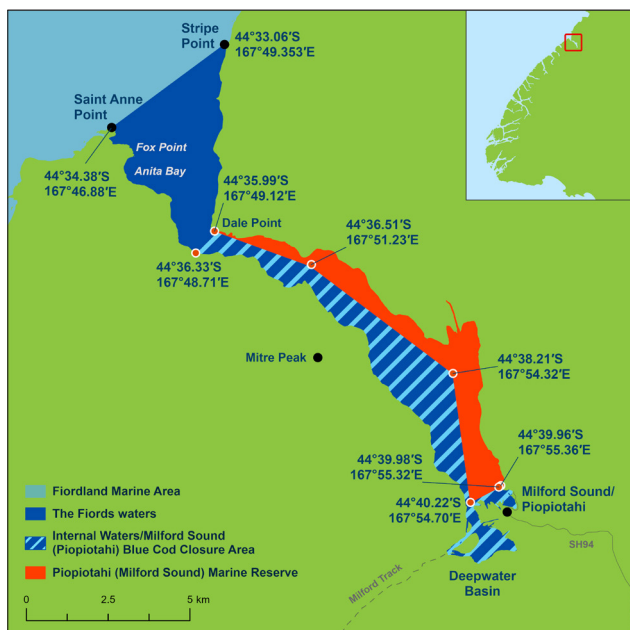
Closed areas are areas where no fishing is allowed. These may be closed by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) as prohibited areas or by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as marine reserves. For full details of marine reserves contact DOC.

Restricted areas are areas where the use of particular fishing methods (e.g. set nets) is restricted or where catch limits may be different. This includes Māitaitais and Taiāpures.

Some closed and restricted areas are listed in this brochure. However, these are a guide only. Check for recent closures and local restrictions by using our free information services provided in this brochure. Refer to **Check the rules** section.

### Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) internal waters blue cod closed area

It is prohibited to take or possess blue cod taken from within the Internal Waters of Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) blue cod closure area, being all those waters outside the Piopiotahi Marine Reserve, lying inside a line extending from Dale Point at 44°35.99'S and 167°49.12'E across to a point at 44°36.33'S and 167°48.71'E.



Map 2: Milford Sound/Piopiotahi Fiord waters and the Internal Waters – Blue cod closure area



# Marine reserves

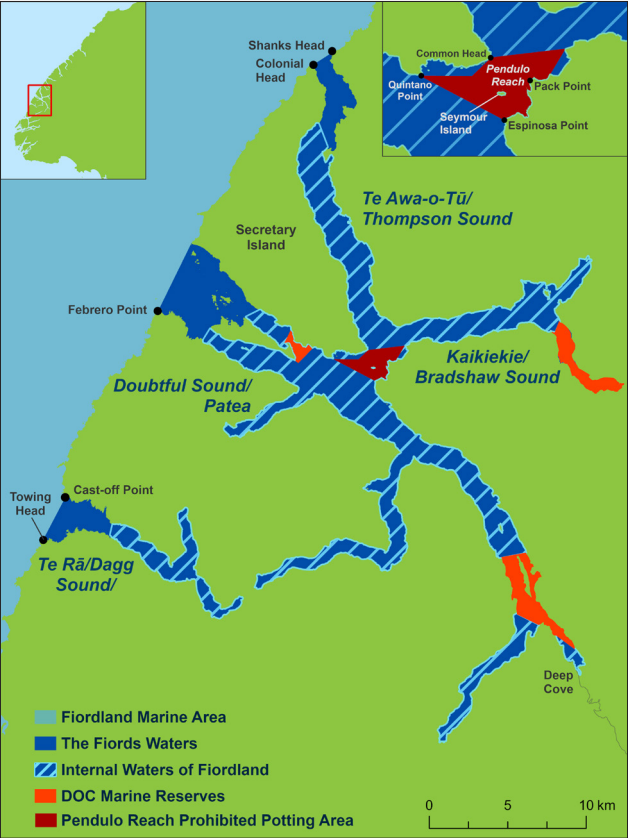
In the Fiordland Marine Area there are 10 marine reserves administered by the Department of Conservation, which are closed to all fishing. Within the reserves all marine life is fully protected, with all fishing both commercial and recreational totally prohibited. For full details on marine reserves go to [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



Map 3: Fiordland Marine Area DOC Marine Reserves

# Pendulo Reach Doubtful Sound (Patea) prohibited potting area

It is prohibited to use or set any rock lobster pot, or any holding pot within the Doubtful Sound (Patea) Internal Waters known as Pendulo Reach. This is to protect fragile seabed species and sensitive bottom sill habitat.

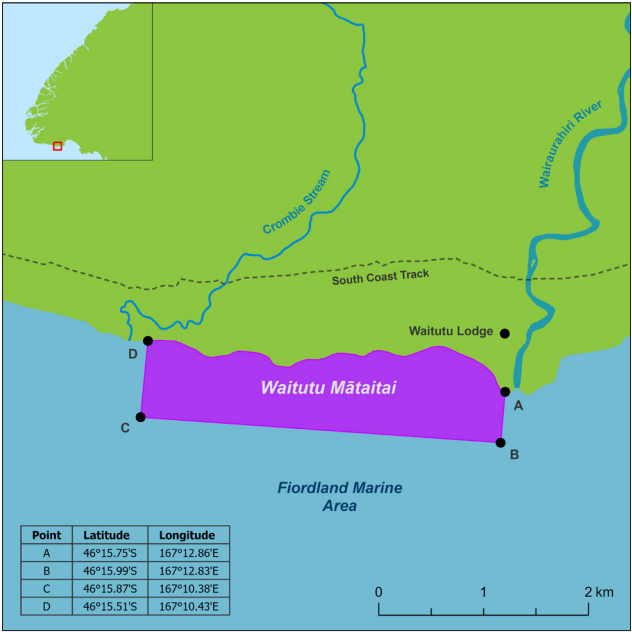


Map 4: Doubtful Sound (Patea) Fiords waters, including Internal Waters and the Pendulo Reach prohibited potting area.

# Waitutu Mātaitai Reserve – pāua prohibition

Mātaitai Reserves are established over traditional Māori fishing grounds to allow for customary seafood gathering and sustainable management of the area/rohe moana by appointed Tāngata Tiaki/Kaitiaki (Guardians).

The Waitutu Mātaitai Reserve, declared in June 2014 is located on the south Fiordland coast, between the western side of the Wairaurahiri River mouth and the eastern side of the Crombie Stream mouth and extending seaward 450 metres (0.24 of a nautical mile) from the mean high-water mark. The mātaitai reserve is closed to commercial fishing and all recreational pāua fishing is prohibited within the mātaitai reserve.



Map 5: Waitutu Mātaitai Reserve – Pāua take prohibition

## Poacher prevention

Fisheries New Zealand's Compliance Team is responsible for policing local fisheries and stopping illegal activities such as poaching.

Breaking the fishing rules risks tiered infringement penalties, hefty Court fines and property forfeiture. It is illegal to sell, offer to sell or trade your fish catch.

If you see people acting illegally, taking more than the daily limit or undersize fish, or selling or trading their recreational or customary fish catch, please report it. Any information provided stays completely confidential.

**Report poaching, suspicious or illegal activity  
- call 0800 4 POACHER (0800 476 224).**

## New Zealand's fishing rules at your fingertips

This brochure is a summary of the recreational fishing rules for the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area. It is a guide only and may not include all local restrictions and rules, or any changes since it was printed. To keep up to date, please check the rules each time before going fishing.

## Check the rules

### Check the rules using our FREE app

Download our free NZ Fishing Rules app by scanning the QR code or visiting the app store. The app works even when you have no coverage.



### Other services

- Free text the name of the species you are fishing for (e.g. kahawai or kina) to **9889** and receive a text with the legal size and bag limit.
- Visit [www.fisheries.govt.nz/rules](http://www.fisheries.govt.nz/rules)
- Email [recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz) to subscribe to fishing related updates in your area.
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