

Hon Eugenie Sage

Minister of Conservation

Minister for Land Information

Associate Minister for the Environment

Minita mō Te Papa Atawhai

Minita mō Toitū Te Whenua

Minita Tuarua mō Te Taiao



18 October 2018

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your email regarding the Conservation (Indigenous Freshwater Fish) Amendment Bill.

This Bill is a technical bill that makes minor amendments to the current law, the Conservation Act 1987, in relation to indigenous freshwater fish. It aims to fix some provisions so they work better, so there is an adequate toolkit to improve indigenous fish management in future, to remove some old regulations that aren't being used, and to clarify when indigenous fish can be taken.

Because it is only a small technical bill, stakeholder and public consultation is being done through the select committee, and any necessary changes made at that stage.

As the Minister responsible for Fish and Game, I value highly the work of Fish and Game councils in managing sports fisheries in the interests of licence holders, and advocating for freshwater. Sports fisheries such as trout are an important recreational and tourism resource, and the current arrangements are important in safeguarding the fishery. I can assure you that the Bill does not in any way change the ability of Fish and Game to manage sports fish, or remove fundamental controls such as the prohibition on sale of trout and trout farming.

The Bill was not intended to have any negative effects on fish and game management so Fish and Game councils were not involved in its preparation. The Bill does remove some legal risks for fish and game management. It improves the ability to manage threats to indigenous fish that also affect sports fish (e.g. noxious fish). But it does not otherwise affect sports fisheries. Any future use of regulations about indigenous fish will be subject to public consultation.

I am aware that there has been some confusion about the bill and its intentions, and this may have caused concern among anglers. Let me assure you that the Bill does not do many of the things that have been mentioned in social media – it does not allow the sale of trout, it does not allow trout farming to occur, it does not give DOC greater powers to remove sports fish from waterbodies, change the relative hierarchy of fisheries and conservation plans, or create new Treaty settlement arrangements, nor does it transfer any fisheries revenue from fish and game to DOC, or remove any currently implemented consultation requirements.

That doesn't, of course, mean that the Bill is perfect. Legislation can always be improved at the select committee stage and I welcome public input into this process. In particular, Sir Geoffrey Palmer has raised, in his advice to the New Zealand Fish and Game Council, some technical points that I would expect the Select Committee to consider. Where there are different interpretations of a bill's provisions the select committee can recommend changes to clarify their meaning.

If you wish to make a submission, the information on how to do that is on the Parliament website - https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_79000/conservation-indigenous-freshwater-fish-amendment-bill

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E M Sage". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon. Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation