

REPORT ON SURVEY INTO
PROPOSED VOLUNTARY FISHING CODE
FOR GREAT BARRIER ISLAND WATERS



APRIL 2016

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Introduction: This report summarises the findings of the public survey into a proposed Voluntary Fishing Code for Great Barrier Island (Aotea). It will also present an updated final Code and discuss next steps.

Background: For years, many residents and frequent visitors to Great Barrier have been concerned about a degraded inshore and freshwater fishery, with both commercial and recreational fishers identified as part of the problem.

The number of overall fishers has increased and fishing gear has become more sophisticated; fish size and volume were observed to be declining. The impacts of these changes are thought to be negative for the wider inshore ecosystem. Meanwhile existing Government regulations are not seen as effective in addressing the decline, and no proposals are being actively considered in the short to medium term to improve things. In addition, freshwater fish, eels and shellfish, along with many seabirds, are also declining. It seemed time to do something locally; something that might begin the process of improving things. It was felt the right actions could help arrest further decline and restore things to a more natural and healthy state.

“We wanted to take the initiative and show that Great Barrier Island people are interested in conservation beyond the norm. If adopted, the Code could be used as a touchstone. And if it worked - for both locals and visitors - it could improve fishing in the long run.” - **Bill Carlin, Great Barrier Island resident and one of the authors of the draft Voluntary Code**

Voluntary Code

Barrier residents have long discussed inshore fishery problems among themselves. The Great Barrier Local Board began to collect the views of residents and visitors on the problems and solutions some years ago. The general situation is outlined in the Local Board’s three-year plan¹. Arising out of the general concern, a group of Board members and interested residents met in early 2015 to discuss what could be done. It was decided a “*Voluntary Fishing Code of Conduct*” for Great Barrier waters was worth discussion and feedback from the community.

The aim of the code would be several-fold. It would: 1) encourage discussion, 2) act as a tangible statement of concern, 3) demonstrate that Great Barrier Islanders are committed to the health and conservation of our fishery and are willing to take

¹<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/representativesbodies/LocalBoards/GreatBarrierlocalboard/Documents/aoteagreatbarrierlbp201417.pdf>

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steps to preserve it, and 4) make a positive impact on our fishery and marine environment so we can continue to enjoy them for years to come.

The Code was to be an “honour” system designed and promoted as “the way we do things around here”. A voluntary code, if widely supported, has the advantage of quick adoption, no red tape, and no requirement for Government approval. It marks a direction of travel and a willingness to make change.

Of course a voluntary code has the *disadvantage* of lacking the force of the law. Despite the disadvantage, it was felt it was worth a try. It did not seem to offer any downside if adopted and followed by the community. A voluntary code would not seek to supplant current fishery regulation limits, but would generally be stricter and more protection-orientated.

Draft Voluntary Code and Survey

In May 2015, the Great Barrier Local Board expressed support for the project and in November last year approved funding to cover some of the cost of public consultation. A Draft Voluntary Fishing Code was drawn up and tested with the local group. The group called itself “Supporters of the Barrier Fishery” for the purposes of the survey.

The draft Code was launched in the January 7th issue of the Barrier Bulletin, along with a simple survey form (see appendix B) for people to respond to if they wished. It was also placed online on January 15th to give people the option of filling it out electronically. The closing date for responses was 15 February (later extended to 22 February).

A number of locations were established across the island where people could pick up blank forms or drop off completed ones. Survey Monkey was enlisted to manage the online responses.

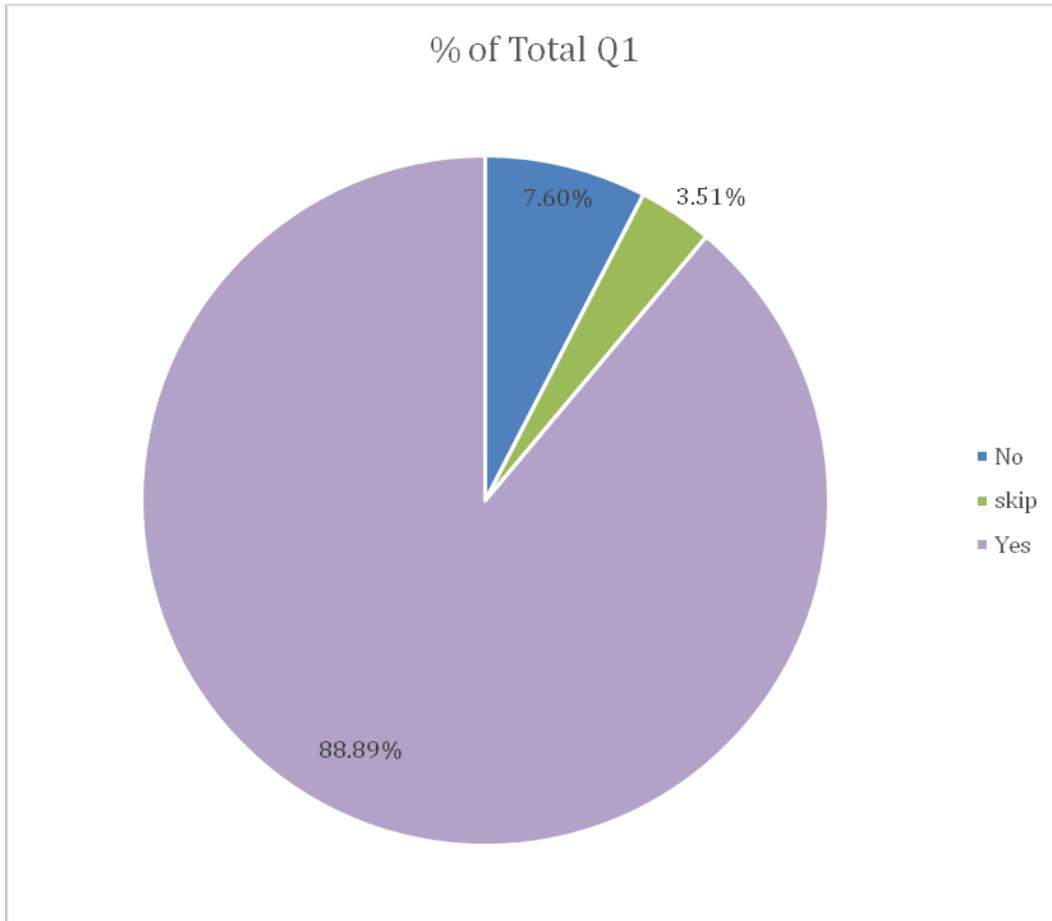
Two interviews were undertaken on Great Barrier’s community radio station (Aotea FM) to explain the survey. A reminder of the closing date was placed in the Barrier Bulletin of 18 February.

One hundred and seventy one people responded to the survey; about 86% were Barrier residents.

Survey responses in detail:

QUESTION 1: Do you agree that the Barrier inshore fishery is degraded?

152 of respondents (nearly 89 percent) agreed with the statement that “the Barrier inshore fishery is degraded”. Thirteen people (7.6%) said they did not agree that was the case. Six skipped the question.



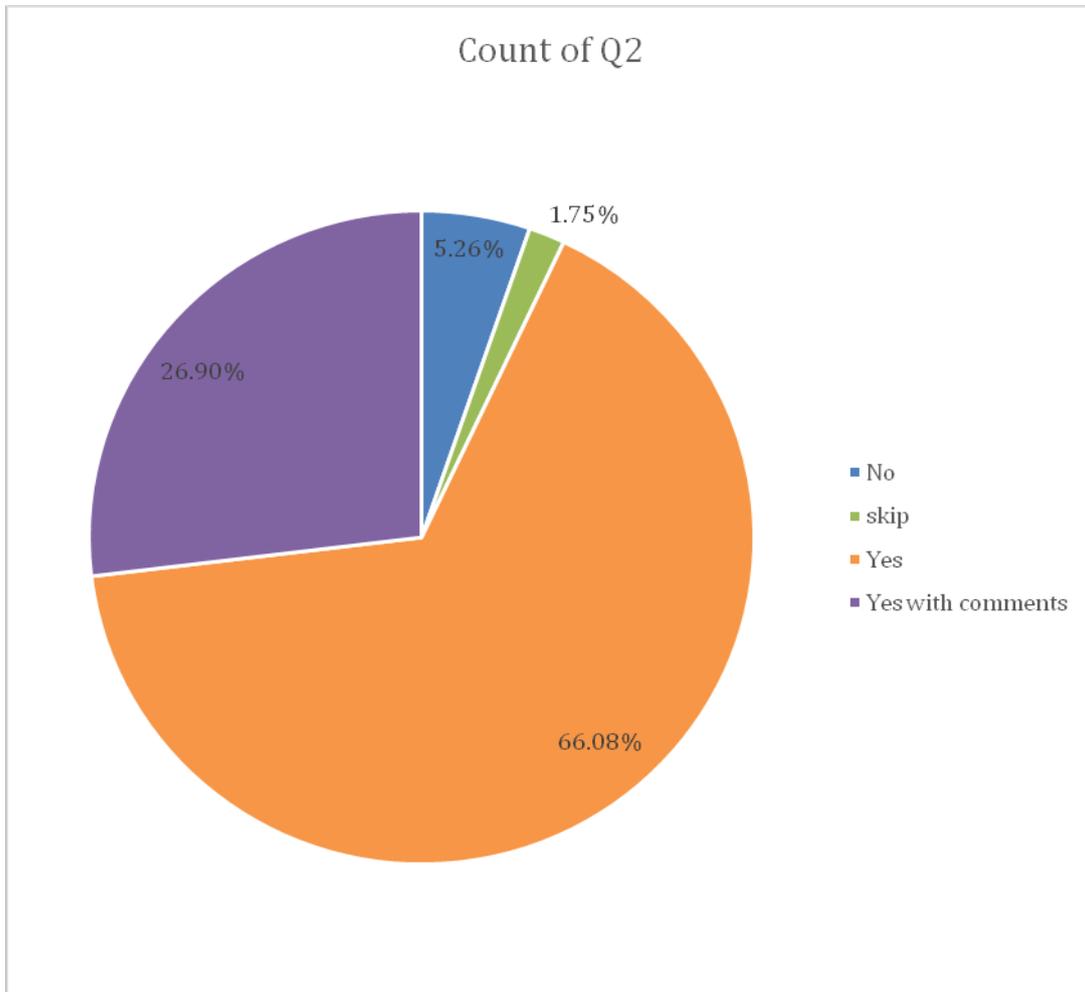
Conclusion: There is a very strong view from respondents that the inshore fishery is degraded. Even a few respondents who thought the fishery was okay felt some species and sites were under pressure.

QUESTION 2: Do you support a Voluntary Fishing Code?

One hundred and thirteen people (66 percent) said they supported the Voluntary Code as drafted; nine people (5.25 percent) said they did not support it and 46 people (26.9 percent) said they supported it with changes or with comments (see *Question 3* - below).

People were generally supportive of the concept of a code: “*I agree completely with all points*”/ “*Excellent draft*”/ “*a very worthwhile project*”/ “*best initiative to come out of Aotea*”.

One respondent from the North praised the Code’s ethos - to allow local residents to “take back *kaihakitanga* (*guardianship*) over the marine resources”.



Conclusion: A large majority of the respondents supported the Code, with a sizeable group proposing alterations or making comments.

QUESTION 3: If you support the Code would you make any additions, deletions or amendments?

Several key themes emerged from responses to this question. These are discussed below.

1) DEFINITION OF “LARGE”

Point 1 of the draft Code proposed that “*large snapper and crayfish be released to assist breeding and recruitment*”.

Five respondents asked for “large” to be defined, or an explanatory note provided. Two said the biggest fish might not necessarily be the breeders. “*As a spear*

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fisherman, I am not sure about the large snapper bit. In discussions with marine biologists the impact of spearing the very occasional large snapper is significantly less than shooting my limit of 2 kg ones each time. One person suggested an exception to the release rule “during an existing island-based amateur fishing competition with less than 50 entrants”. Some said they’d like other species be added to the “breeding fish category” specifically hapuka and kingfish.

Finally it was seen as important that the release of larger fish be handled well to avoid damage, with shallow-water catches having the best chance of survival overall.

Conclusion: There is strong scientific evidence that large fish are key breeders. Recommended size could be added to the code, but there are many species, and it is generally best to leave discretion to the fishers. However the survey sponsors believe a suggested key breeding size for snapper (50cm), a popular target fish, would be useful. Local social fishing contests could photograph and release. A few fish species, such as hapuka and gurnard, seem under severe pressure.



2) LONGLINING

Point 3 of the draft Code proposed: *“longlines for recreational use have no more than 20 hooks”*. Ten respondents (nearly six percent) commented on this. Two disagreed with any form of longlining at all. One said *“commercial and recreational longlines should be subject to similar conditions”*. Others suggested limiting

commercial longlining “on a wider km range on the east coast” and defining where commercial longlines can operate. There was some disagreement over hook numbers. One respondent felt 20 hooks was arbitrary - “Why 20? 5 less hooks on longline is meaningless.” Another suggested 10 hooks, and another proposed 15 hooks.

Conclusion: 20 hooks for recreational or commercial longline fishing may be too many. Restricting longlines for recreational and commercial use to 15 hooks makes sense. The commercial use of longlines should be only for local consumption when and if this use occurs.

3) EELS

Point 6 of the draft Code proposed that: “eels not be taken from Great Barrier streams and estuaries”. Eight respondents commented on this. They all felt a ban on taking eels went too far, and instead proposed a “lesser take”, or “maximum limit” and that “private fishermen can have one eel for family”. One full time resident on the Barrier pointed out eels are a customary right.

Conclusion: Eel fishing is a traditional use for customary practice and recreation. The eel fishery on Great Barrier is very limited. The supporters group believes the fishery is not sustainable. Long fin eels are endangered nationally. On balance it is best to restrict the eel fishery until and if its sustainability is proven.

4) PROCESSING OF FISH

Point 7 of the draft Code proposed that: “Fish not be gutted or filleted and dumped in inshore areas or estuaries or streams”.

Conclusion: The general feeling was fish filleting and gutting should be allowed in the inshore area but not on the shoreline (especially beaches,) or in streams and estuaries.

5) CRAYFISH

Point 8 of the draft Code proposed that: “no crayfish pot be laid in the following harbours – Tryphena, Schooner Bay, Okupu (Blind Bay), Whangaparapara, Fitzroy and Katherine Bay.” This was the point that attracted the most comments, with 25 people (nearly 15 percent of respondents) picking up on it.

All 25 agreed there’s a problem. According to one respondent: “The most significant and alarming decrease in fishing around Great Barrier has been crayfish.” Another observed: “the size & number of crayfish has been decimated due to significant commercial overfishing”.

But there was skepticism as to whether an outright ban on setting pots in those six harbours would solve the problem. “There are many other bays... where crayfish

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pots should not be set.” Harataonga Bay is fished heavily for crays . “If there is to be no craypots in the areas mentioned will that mean other areas e.g. Medland's Beach, will be awash with craypot floats?”/ “Blocking the setting of any cray pots in certain harbours will simply put more pressure on other places around the island”/ “The ‘not on my beach, move them to the next bay’ mentality is not beneficial.”/ “Not fair for locals not to be allowed a craypot but for visitors from town to be able to dive for crays”.

Several people called for a reduction or ban on commercial crayfishing. “A reduction of commercial crayfishing needs to be included.” “Limit commercial crayfishing on a wider km range on east coast” / “No commercial craypots on inshore harbours”.



Most felt that some level of recreational craypot setting must be allowed to continue. “Seafood is essential for some local families to survive. Consultation on limits would be preferable.” / “Local residents can still put a (limited) number of craypots in their local harbor”/ “Recreational craypots okay”/ “Locals allowed one craypot with name and number”.

Conclusion: Recreational but not commercial craypots should be allowed in the named harbours but their catch should be limited in number. Harbour areas should be better defined where practical. Harataonga Bay should be added to restricted bays as it is fished heavily at times. Diver take should be restricted in said harbours.

6) DREDGING

Point 10 of the draft Code proposed that *“commercial dredging not be used in Great Barrier waters”*.

Seven people commented on this, all of whom wanted restrictions to extend to recreational fishers. *“Recreational dredging for scallops should also be discouraged. It wrecks the sea floor and it is cheating”*. Three respondents called for a blanket ban on the practice. *“No dredging whatsoever” / “no dredging at all within Barrier coastal waters”*.

Conclusion: There is a good case for restricting recreational dredging for as it causes the same damage to shellfish and the seabed as commercial dredging.

7) ENFORCEMENT/ VOLUNTARY NATURE OF CODE

Several respondents felt the Code’s voluntary nature meant it couldn’t be effective.

“Admire the aim but without teeth it will be the usual story and the people who don't care will take no notice” / “who’d enforce all this? If no means of enforcement, there is little point to the rules” / “voluntary equates to zero enforcement” / “Should be Govt controlled” / “needs to be policed by locals”

Conclusion: There’s clearly an appetite amongst some for fully enforceable rules and regulations governing fishing in Barrier waters. However it’s unlikely a group of local fishermen would be able to bring these about in the near future. The hurdles would be high and many; it would take years and there would be no guarantee of success. What we *can* do however is make a statement of concern and intent. The idea behind a voluntary code is that it provides space and guidance for fishers to take action should they choose to. The more people who improve their practices, the more people will follow suit and improve *their* practices. A voluntary code may not be as robust as legally binding rules but with the right attitude and buy-in from local fishers it could make a significant difference.

8) MISCELLANEOUS

Three respondents lamented the fact it’s not possible to buy local fish on the island. *“It's such a shame for tourists not to be able to sample the local produce.”* The survey sponsors support this view and made provision in the longline section of the code for possible commercial catch and sale in the future.

A respondent from Whangaparoa said it’s *“pointless reducing the recreational pressure if this is only going to mean that due to increased availability, there will be more commercial pressure.* In a similar vein a Medlands resident asked: *How will we ever get commercial interests to conform to this? Pointless if we can’t?”* All we can do is promote the Code and if in the future locals follow the Code but outside commercial fishers do not, more formal rules could be sought.

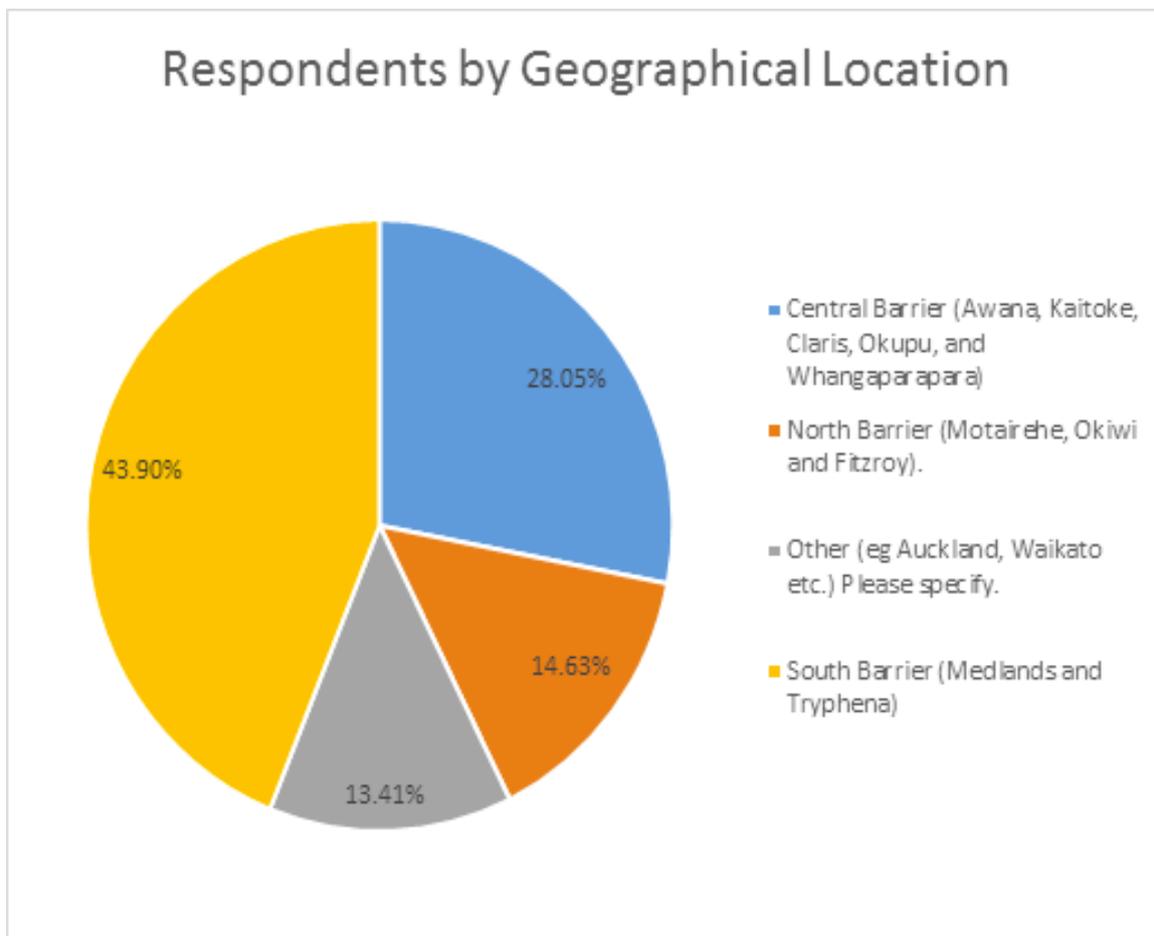
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Some respondents wanted the definition of “inshore waters” expanded. The survey sponsors agree the 2km definition does not cover the majority of inshore fishers, and accordingly have expanded the definition to 2 nautical miles (4km) in the Code.

A local in the South of the island said iwi support is important. The survey sponsors agree.

Several people wanted “no-take” marine reserves around the island to help restore species density. Others weren’t so enthusiastic: “*I hope this isn’t a precursor to the Barrier being a marine reserve!*” The issue of “no take” marine reserves remains alive for debate in the future, especially with the new Marine Protected Areas legislation underway currently. It is extremely unlikely the whole of Great Barrier waters would end up in a “no take” reserve.

QUESTION 4: Please specify primary residential location by ticking next to North, Central or South Barrier



Conclusion: the vast majority of respondents (just over 86 percent) considered Great Barrier their primary residence. Seventy-two respondents were from South Barrier, 46 from central Barrier, 24 from North Barrier and 22 people were from off-island.

General Conclusions

The survey can be viewed as a success in terms of the number of respondents. It gave a good feel for the core issues and provided valuable suggestions about how the Code might go about tackling them. After considering all the comments and suggestions from respondents and bearing in mind the Code's aims, the final Voluntary Fishing Code was drafted and is attached in Appendix C of this report.

It is hoped the changes made to the Code improve the chances of people accepting and adopting it, while retaining the support of those who liked it in its original form.

Recommendations

The final Code is now publicly available for adoption and use by individuals, groups and organisations involved in the Great Barrier fishery. The survey sponsors encourage anyone who spends time in or on our waters to put the Code to use, in the hope it leads to a change in attitude and practice. They believe if it is widely implemented the fishery will improve along with the overall marine environment.

Appendix/ Attachments

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
A	Copy of Draft Voluntary Code	12
B	Copy of Survey as distributed	13
C	Cope of final Voluntary Code	14

APPENDIX A- DRAFT VOLUNTARY CODE

Interested In Our Fishery?

A group of landowners and fishers fear for the future of the Barrier's inshore fishery. The fishery seems to be diminishing over time. The marine ecology is degraded as a result. Government action to rectify the problem is highly unlikely.

We have decided to initiate a voluntary fishing code as a tangible statement of concern, to encourage discussion about the problem and to hopefully make a positive impact on the fishery's health.

The Great Barrier Local Board has agreed to contribute to the effort to test the level of public support for a voluntary code. We are targeting for comment residents and ratepayers, all fishers of the inshore waters, tangata whenua and the interested public.

If support is strong, a voluntary fishing code will be finalised and promoted during the first half of 2016.

We are starting the process by publishing a Draft Voluntary Code of Conduct for feedback. The Draft Code is set out below. An online and paper survey for input will run until 15 February 2016.

Draft Voluntary Fishing Code for Great Barrier Waters

The coastal waters of Great Barrier, for the purpose of this code, will be within 2 kilometres of the coastline including all offshore islands and the outside of harbour headlands. To begin the process of recovery the following code of conduct is proposed:

1. Large snapper and crayfish will be released to assist breeding and recruitment.
2. Gill set nets will not be used.
3. Longlines for recreational use will have no more than 20 hooks.
4. Commercial longlines allowed only for local sale and consumption
5. Whitebait will not be taken from Barrier streams and estuaries.
6. Eels will not be taken from Great Barrier streams and estuaries.
7. Fish will not be gutted or filleted and dumped in inshore areas or estuaries and streams.
8. No crayfish pot will be laid in the following harbours- Tryphena, Schooner Bay, Okupu (Blind Bay), Whangaparapara, Fitzroy and Katherine Bay.
9. Bottom or mid- water trawling will not be used in Great Barrier waters.
10. Commercial dredging will not be used in Great Barrier waters.
11. If shellfish are scarce or small they will not be taken until they recover.
12. Sea mammals and sea birds will not be harassed and released carefully if caught.

APPENDIX B - SURVEY

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that the Barrier inshore fishery is degraded? Yes/No
2. Do you support a Voluntary Fishing Code? Yes/No
3. If you support the Code would you like any additions, deletions or amendments?

Please specify here:

4. Please specify primary residential location by ticking next to North, Central or South Barrier

North Barrier (Motairehe, Okiwi and Fitzroy).

Central Barrier (Awana, Kaitoke, Claris, Okupu, and Whangaparapara)

South Barrier (Medlands and Tryphena)

Other (eg Auckland, Waikato etc.) **Please specify.**

5. Name:

The survey will also be able to be filled out online. This is currently being organised. Register your interest for the online method by emailing kit@mrcit.co.nz.

All surveys will be treated confidentially. Results of the Survey will be published along with the final report of the project. Survey ends 15 February 2016.

Locations to drop completed survey:

The Port Fitzroy Store, The Claris Club, Hooked on Barrier Claris, Pigeon Post Claris, The Information Centre Claris Airport, Auckland Council Office Claris, The Tryphena Club, The Currach Irish Pub.Or post to Bill Carlin C/- Pigeon Post Claris , 125 Hector Sanderson Road, Great Barrier Island

Enquiries to: Bill on 4290 879 or Steve 4290 895.

Email:junebrookes55@gmail.com

Thankyou for taking part. SUPPORTERS OF THE BARRIER FISHERY

APPENDIX C – FINAL VOLUNTARY CODE

Voluntary Fishing Code for Great Barrier Waters

The following recommended Voluntary Fishing Code of Conduct was developed after taking into account comments and suggestions from respondents to the Draft Voluntary Fishing Code Survey. It is to be used by individuals, groups and organisations interested in the future of the fishery. Let's give it a try and hope for a good outcome.

The coastal waters of Great Barrier, for the purpose of this code, will be within 2 nautical miles (4km) of the coastline including all offshore islands and the outside of harbour headlands.

To begin the process of recovery the following code of conduct is recommended for use.

1. Prime breeding fish will be released, for example snapper over 50cm.
2. Gill set nets will not be used.
3. Longlines for recreational use will have no more than 15 hooks.
4. Commercial longlines allowed only for local sale and consumption
5. Whitebait will not be taken from Barrier streams and estuaries.
6. Eels will not be taken from Great Barrier streams and estuaries as the fishery cannot sustain this and long fin eels are very rare and endangered.
7. Fish will not be gutted or filleted and dumped on the shoreline (especially near beaches) or in estuaries and streams.
8. No commercial crayfish pots will be laid in the following harbours - Tryphena (Glasshouse Point in Ross Bay to Shag Point), Schooner Bay, Blind Bay, Whangaparapara (Beacon Point to Lighthouse Point), Fitzroy (Governors Pass to Kotuku Point), Harataonga Bay and Katherine Bay. The taking of no more than 2 crayfish per day per diver or recreational crayfish pot will be encouraged in the named harbours.
9. Bottom or mid- water trawling will not be used in Great Barrier waters.
10. Dredging for shellfish will not be used in Great Barrier waters because of the damage caused to shellfish and the seabed.
11. If shellfish are scarce or small they will not be taken until they recover.
12. Sea mammals and sea birds will not be harassed and released carefully if caught.

Supported by the Great Barrier Local Board