



WEST COAST BACKCOUNTRY FISHERY REPORT 2020

A Summary of Angler Survey, Drift Diving & Trail Camera Surveillance Results for the West Coast Backcountry Fisheries, Conducted by Fish & Game West Coast for the 2019/2020 Sports Fishing Season.

Baylee Kersten, Fish & Game Field Officer, July 2020



Staff carrying out compliance in Karamea River Backcountry Area, January 2020.



NEW ZEALAND

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Summary

The Karamea and Mokihinui Rivers have for many years provided excellent angling opportunities for resident and visiting non-resident anglers. Following feedback of an apparent decline in the fishery status, West Coast Fish and Game designated both catchments as a Backcountry Fishery in 2016/17. This requires anglers to obtain a free Backcountry Endorsement, in doing so providing their details for an online survey following the angling season. In conjunction with the angler's survey, drift dives were undertaken through historic dive sites in both catchments. The anglers survey has focused on evaluating fishery usage, commercial guided fishing, access methods and angler satisfaction, while offering anglers currently using the fishery the opportunity to comment on these topics and offer future management suggestions. Lastly, trail camera surveillance was carried out to gauge angling pressure but also allowed for monitoring to be carried out in person when servicing the cameras. This report summarises the backcountry survey, drift diving and trail camera surveillance results for the 2019/20 season. Staff recommendations are: That council receives this report. To keep current regulations for the West Coast Backcountry Fisheries.

Introduction

The rivers of Kahurangi National Park have for decades now been well recognised for providing premium opportunities for anglers within a remote scenic environment. Two of the most notable catchments within the park, are the Karamea and Mokihinui Rivers. During recent seasons feedback has been received by Fish and Game West Coast from several anglers and fishing guides, concerned that these fisheries are not of the quality they were previously. As a result, the West Coast Fish and Game Council has designated the Karamea River catchment upstream from Kakapo River, and Mokihinui River catchment upstream of Rough and Tumble Creek confluence, as Backcountry Fisheries. The Purpose of the designation was to gain details of all anglers entering the area to fish and gather data of angler usage and the fishing experiences of those anglers currently using these fisheries. Concurrently, drift diving surveys have been carried out through two historic drift diving sections within each catchment to examine trout abundance every season since the 2016/17 season. Additional to this, surveillance has been carried out on both foot and with the use of trail cameras in the Mokihinui River, to ensure anglers are obtaining backcountry licences and to obtain a better understanding of the angling pressure on the Backcountry Fisheries.

Method

A survey was designed to look at information about of fishery status in each of the catchments and was sent to all anglers that held a backcountry endorsement and provided an email address. A copy of the survey questions is included as Appendix 1. Surveys were structured to distinguish between resident and non-resident anglers, to identify viewpoints from each group, local kiwi anglers and visiting anglers on holiday.

Drift dives were completed during January and March when conditions allowed. The Karamea River was dived adjacent to the Crow River confluence and upstream of the Karamea Bend using six divers. The Mokihinui River was dived downstream of Goat Creek confluence and upstream of the Mokihinui Forks on the North Branch using six divers.

Trail camera surveillance was carried out this season by installing cameras on trees that overlooked an attractive and accessible stretch of river for angling. The cameras were set on the time lapse function and captured an image every two minutes during daylight hours. Two cameras were operational most the season and typically were serviced once a month in conjunction with backcountry compliance. The images were then viewed, and it was recorded the number of anglers fishing that section of the fishery.

Where Karamea and Mokihinui Rivers are referred to in this report, unless otherwise stated, this refers to the upper reaches within the designated Backcountry Area.

Results

Backcountry Survey Participation & Angler Demographics

Throughout the 2019/20 season, a total of 2,365 Anglers held West Coast Region Backcountry Fishery Endorsements, those with a current email address were invited to participate in the Backcountry Angler Survey. Please note that in some previous years the survey has been conducted in conjunction with the Nelson/Marlborough region likely resulting in an increased response. In addition to this, this years survey was sent out in mid-April during Covid-19 lockdown which may induce a change in responding behaviour. Of the 2,365 anglers holding a West Coast endorsement 2,340 provided an email address. The number invited to participate was further reduced to 2,064 due to invalid emails and the same email address being provided for multiple licences. The survey had a response of 783 anglers, with 126 answering that they fished the West Coast Back country in the 2019/20 season consisting of 62 non-resident anglers and 67 resident anglers (Figure 1). Resident angler region of origin details was gathered. As with previous seasons surveys, a large proportion of resident anglers fishing the West Coast Backcountry Area are licence holders from the Nelson/Marlborough and North Canterbury Regions (Table 1).

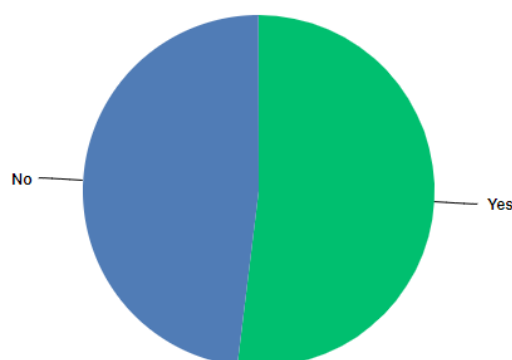
Table 1: Location of Origin for Resident Anglers.

Region of Origin	Percentage of Anglers
West Coast	13.64%
Nelson/Marlborough	34.85%
North Canterbury	24.24%
Otago	9.09%
Central South Island	4.55%

Northland	3.03%
Hawkes Bay	3.03%
Wellington	3.03%
Southland	3.03%
Auckland/Waikato	1.52%

Are you a New Zealand resident? That is: you hold a NZ birth certificate or passport or citizenship, or you hold a permanent resident visa

Answered: 129 Skipped: 654



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	51.94%	67
No	48.06%	62
TOTAL		129

Figure 1: Percentage of Visiting Non-Resident Anglers vs Resident Anglers from the Survey That Fished Within the West Coast Backcountry Area During the 2019/20 Angling Season.

Angler Usage During the 2019/20 Season

Anglers were questioned as to how many trips they made into the West Coast Backcountry Fishery, what was the average length of their stay and what was the total number of days fished in each catchment. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents to number of days in the West Coast Backcountry Fishery as a whole. Figure 3 provides answers as to how many nights respondents stayed in the area, while Figure 4 depicts how many days the majority of anglers fished each catchment. Figure 5 presents respondents frequency of encounter with other anglers whilst fishing the West Coast Backcountry. Lastly Figure 6 displays the angling pressure distribution throughout the season in the West Coast Backcountry.

Most entered the backcountry area over only one or two trips, while some anglers made up to 11 trips into the West Coast Backcountry Fishery. There was a smaller percentage that fished 5-11 days total in either or both catchments. The anglers on average fished for longer in the Karamea, with one angler spending 20 days fishing in the Karamea for the season. Anglers encountering other anglers appears to be uncommon with 56% not encountering another angler and 18% encountering anglers on rare occasions.

How many trips (visits) did you do into the West Coast backcountry fishery during the 2019/20 season?

Answered: 124 Skipped: 659

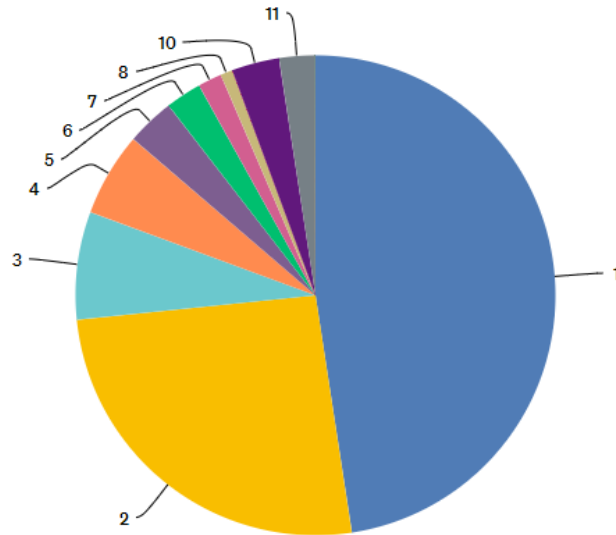


Figure 2: Number of Trips into The West Coast Backcountry Fisheries by respondents.

What was your average length of overnight stay in the West Coast backcountry fishing area?(if only one visit please enter the number of nights you stayed)

Answered: 112 Skipped: 671

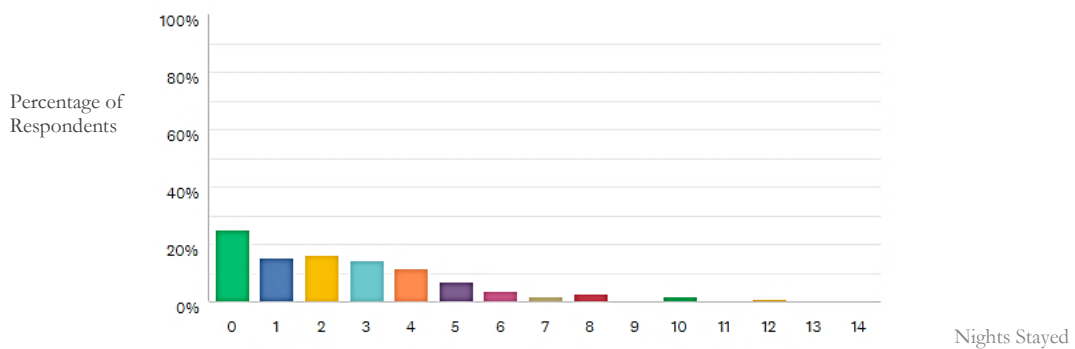


Figure 3: Average Number of Nights Stayed by Respondents.

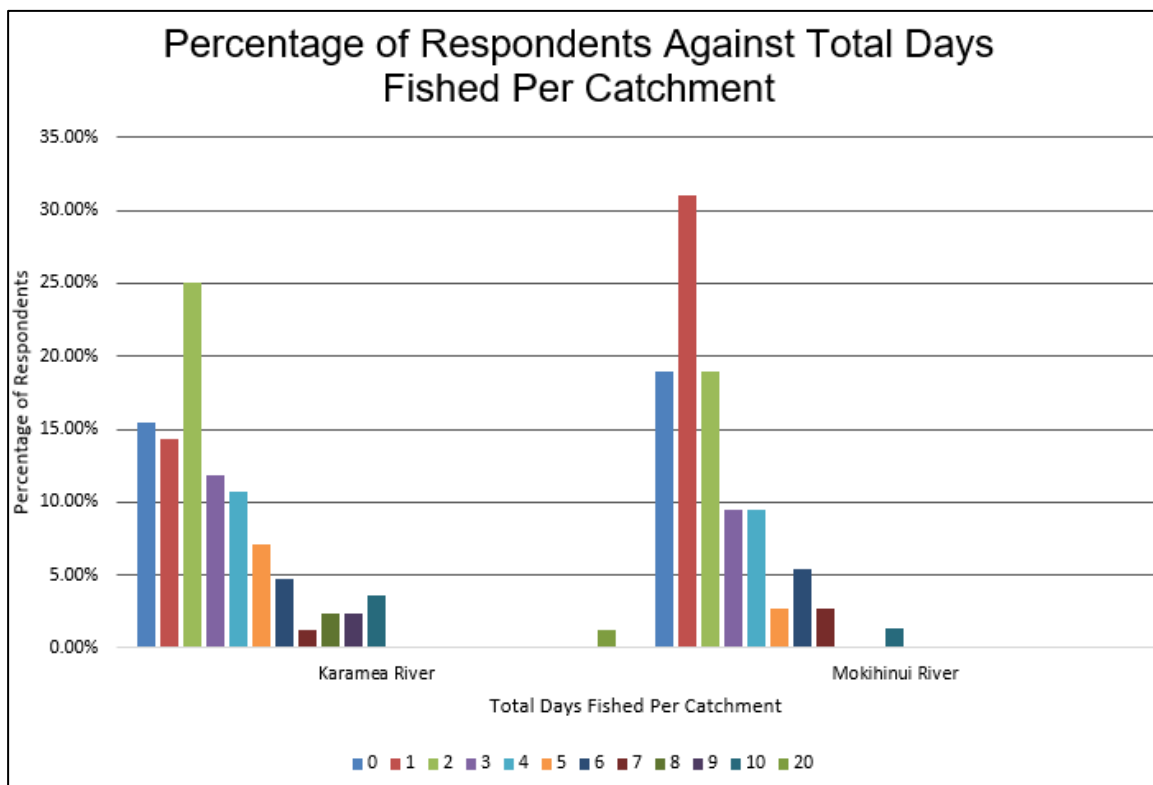


Figure 4: Distribution of Anglers vs Total Days Fished in Each West Coast Backcountry Catchment for the 2019/20 Season.

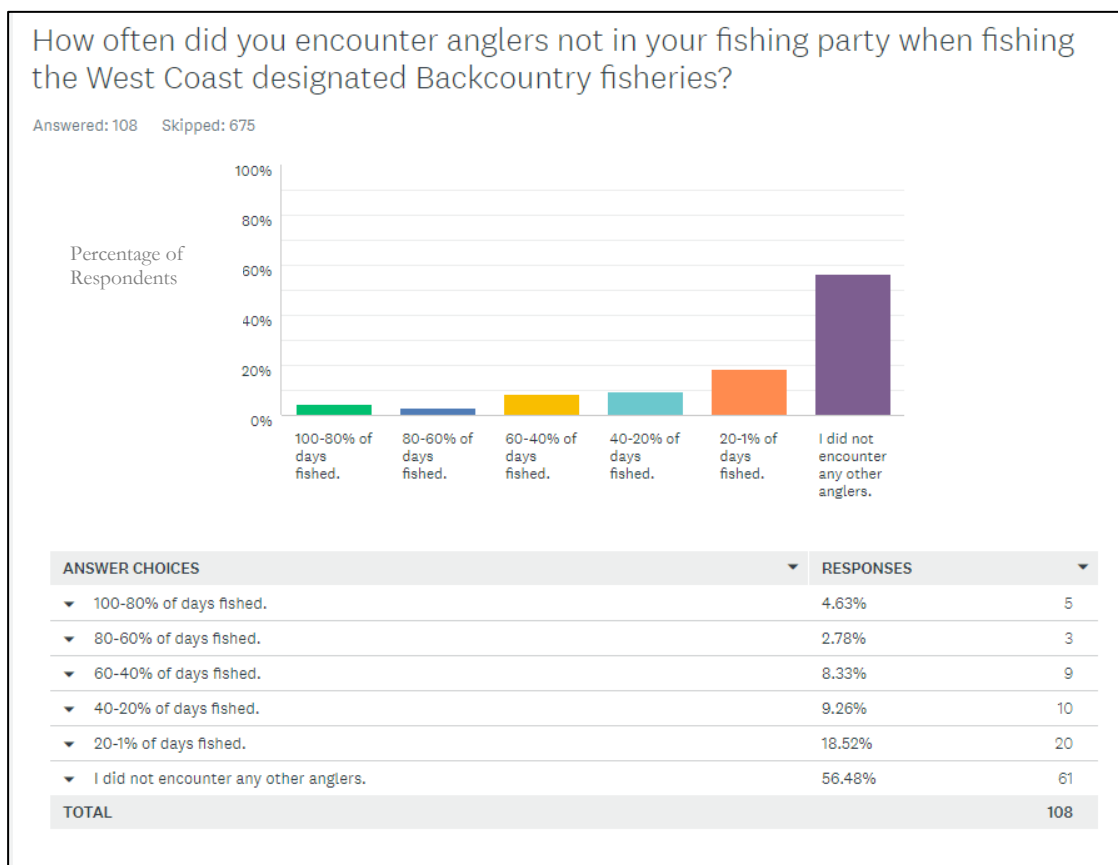


Figure 5: Frequency of Encountering Other Anglers in the West Coast Backcountry

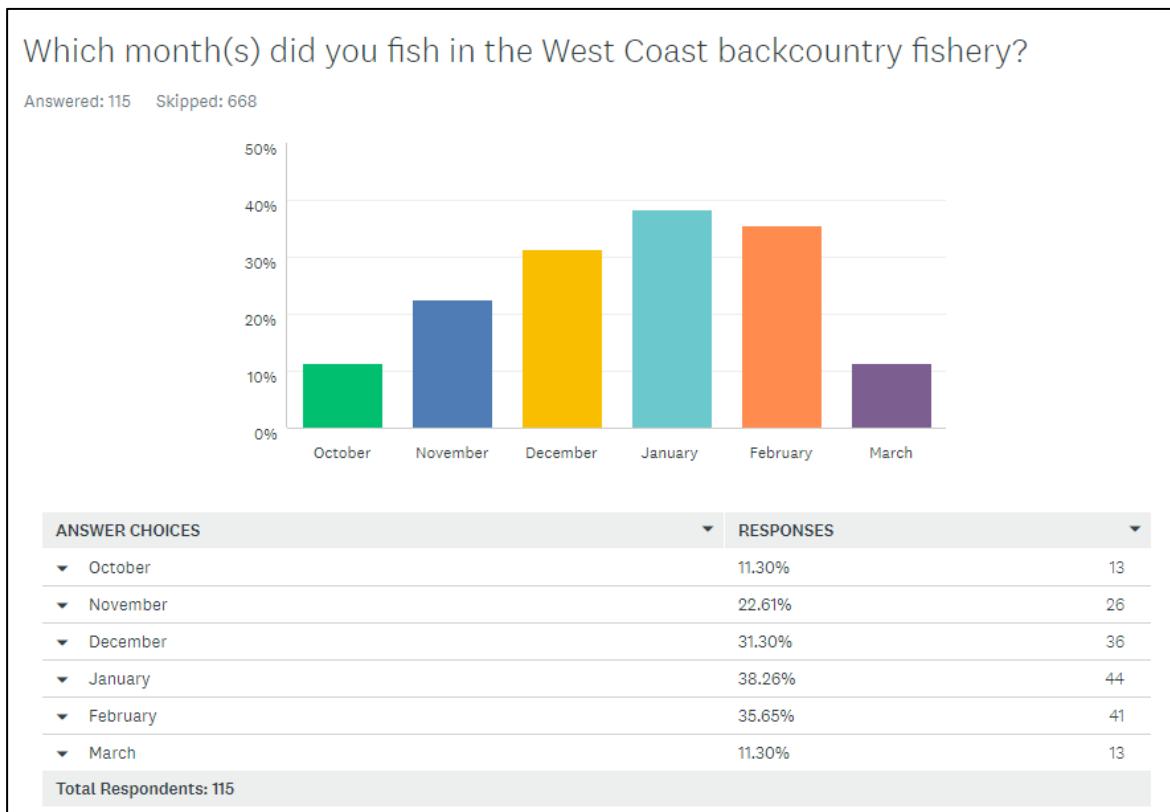


Figure 6: Angling pressure distribution throughout the season in the West Coast Backcountry. (Note some respondents have answered to more than one option).

Commercial Guides

During the survey respondents were asked if they were fishing guides. As shown in Figure 7 below, approximately 14% of those surveyed were fishing guides. Survey respondents were asked if they were guided into the Backcountry, please refer to Figure 8. Of the 34 that answered yes, 24 were non-residents, which means approximately 41% non-resident respondents were guided that fished the West Coast Backcountry this season. This proportion is underrepresented given it's not uncommon for guided anglers' backcountry endorsements to have the guiding agency email rather than the clients and therefore could not be surveyed.

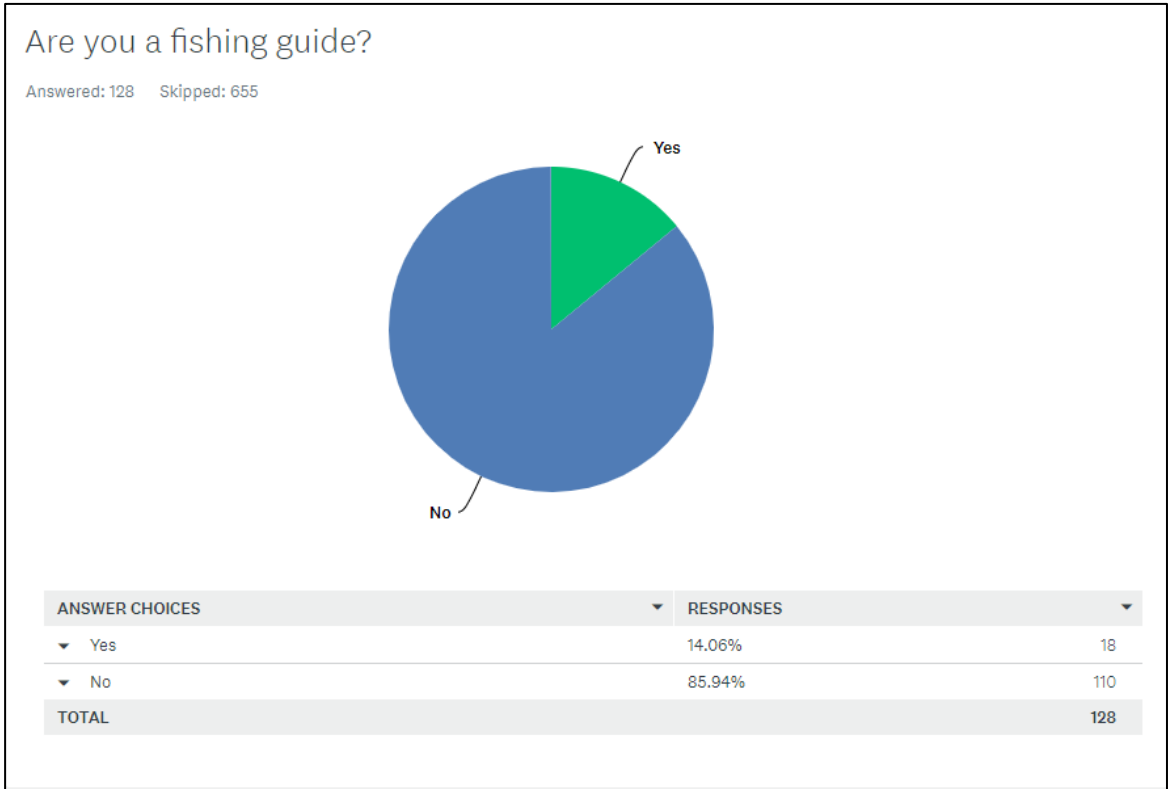


Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents That Fished in The West Coast Backcountry Fishery Area During the Survey Period That Are Fishing Guides.

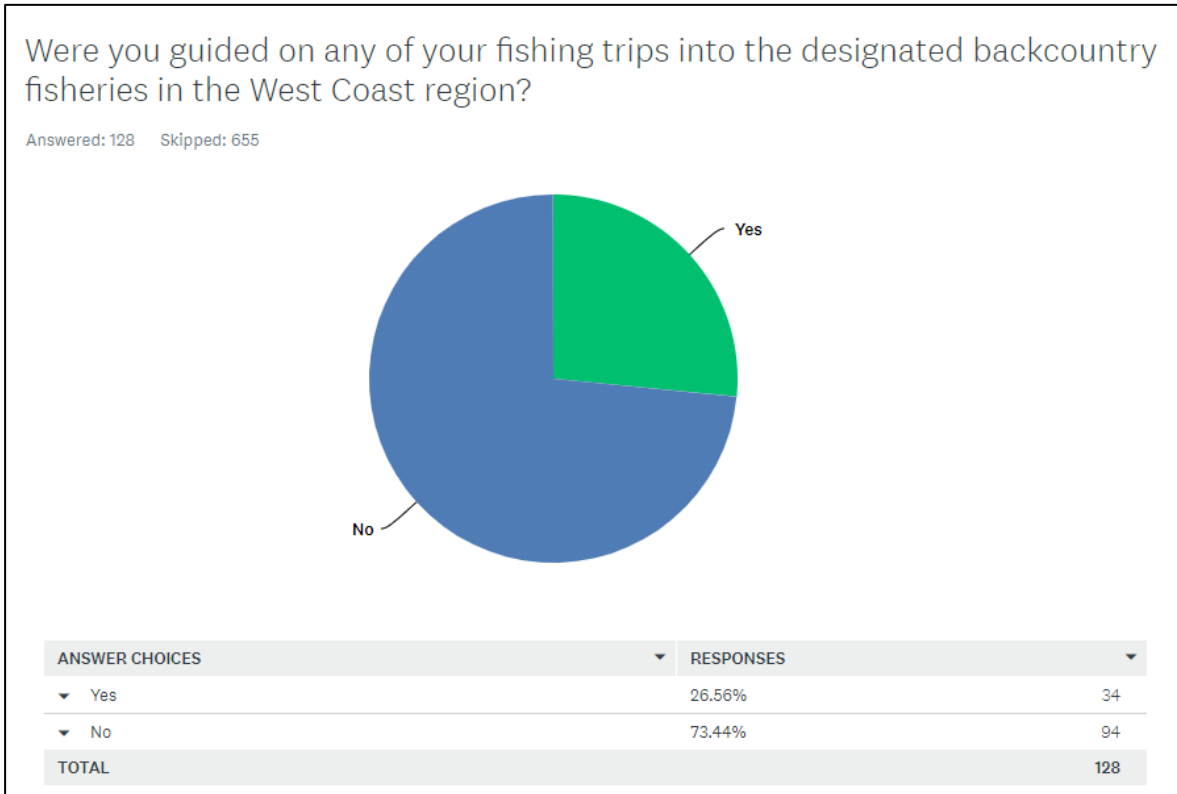


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents that fished in the West Coast Backcountry fishery area during the 2019-20 season that were guided.

Backcountry Access Methods

Anglers surveyed were asked if they used helicopters as a means of access to determine the level of helicopter usage. As shown in Figure 9 below, under half of respondents, 45.31% flew in. 49.25% of resident angler respondents used a helicopter to access the West Coast backcountry fisheries vs 42.88% of non-resident anglers. In terms of helicopter use to each of the individual fisheries, as shown in Figure 10, nearly twice as many anglers used helicopters to access the Karamea catchment than the Mokihinui.

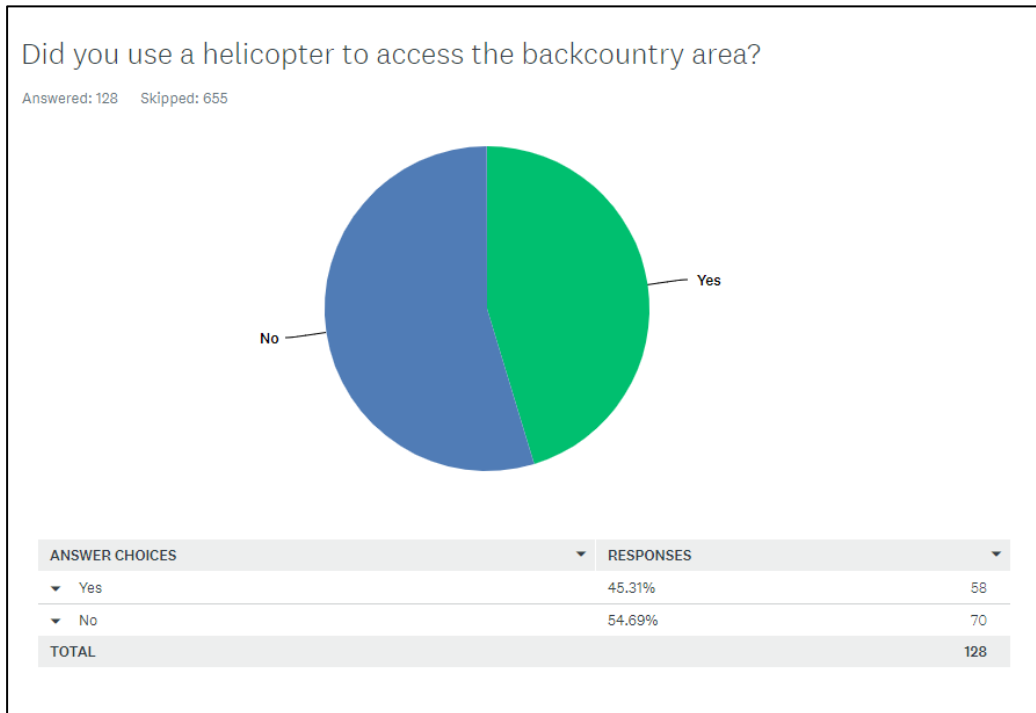


Figure 9: Percentage of Survey Respondents Accessing the West Coast Backcountry Fisheries Via Helicopter 2019/20 Season.

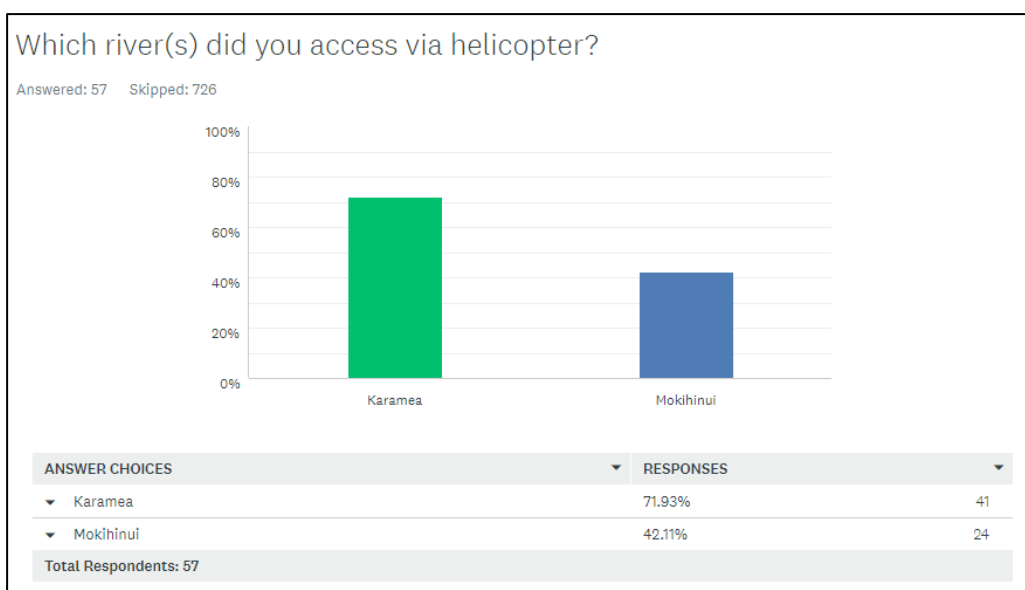


Figure 10: Percentage of Fly in Survey Respondents Accessing Each Catchment by Helicopter

Distribution of Usage Within and outside of the Kahurangi Wilderness Area

Respondents were asked if they fished within the Kahurangi Wilderness area. The majority of anglers from the survey, over 60%, fished outside of the wilderness area.

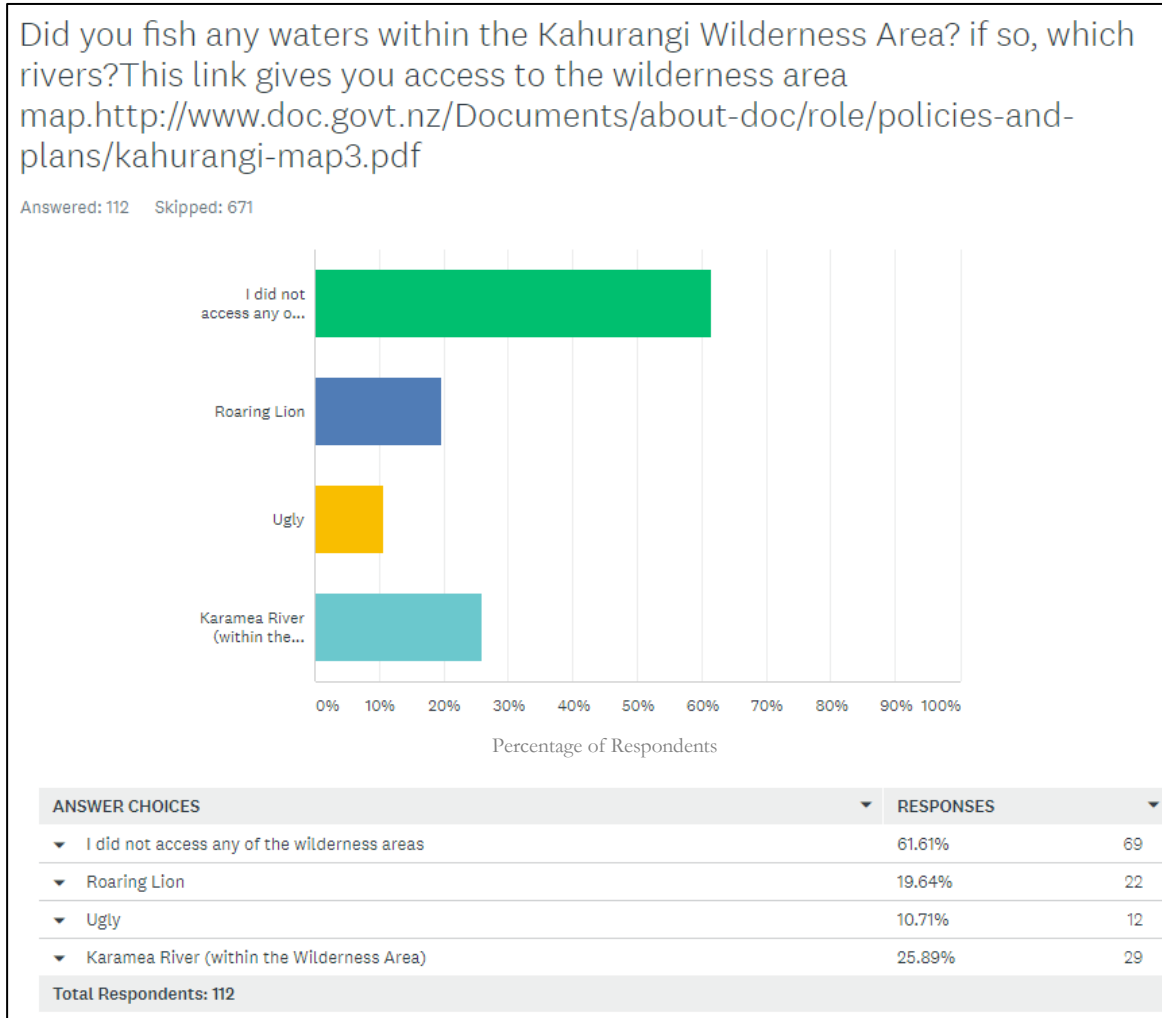


Figure 11: Angler Usage Within and Outside of The Kahurangi Wilderness Area. (Note some respondents have answered to more than one option)

Trout Caught/Kept

Results were gathered from anglers as to how many trout they caught in total from each of the Backcountry catchments, see Figure 12 below. Figure 13 shows how many trout were kept by anglers from each catchment. While a high number were caught from each catchment with some anglers catching 20+ fish, most anglers chose to release their trout. Over both catchments 80-90% of respondents kept no trout regardless of the number of days fishing.

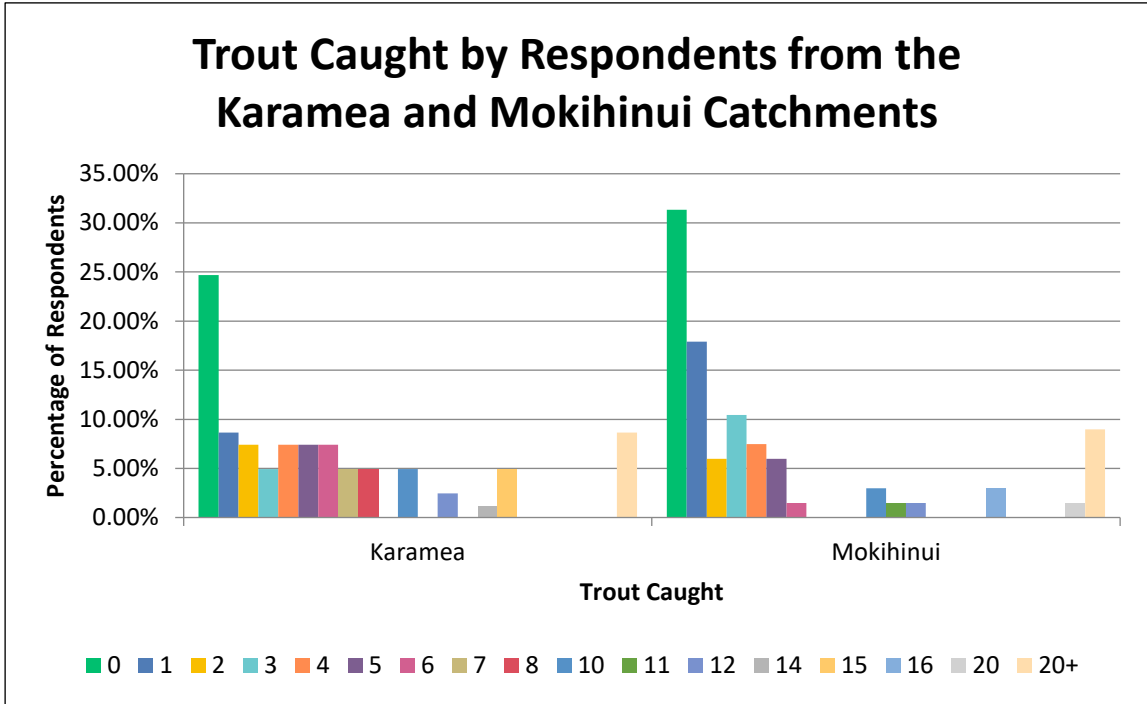


Figure 12: Total Trout Caught in West Coast Backcountry Fisheries by Respondents

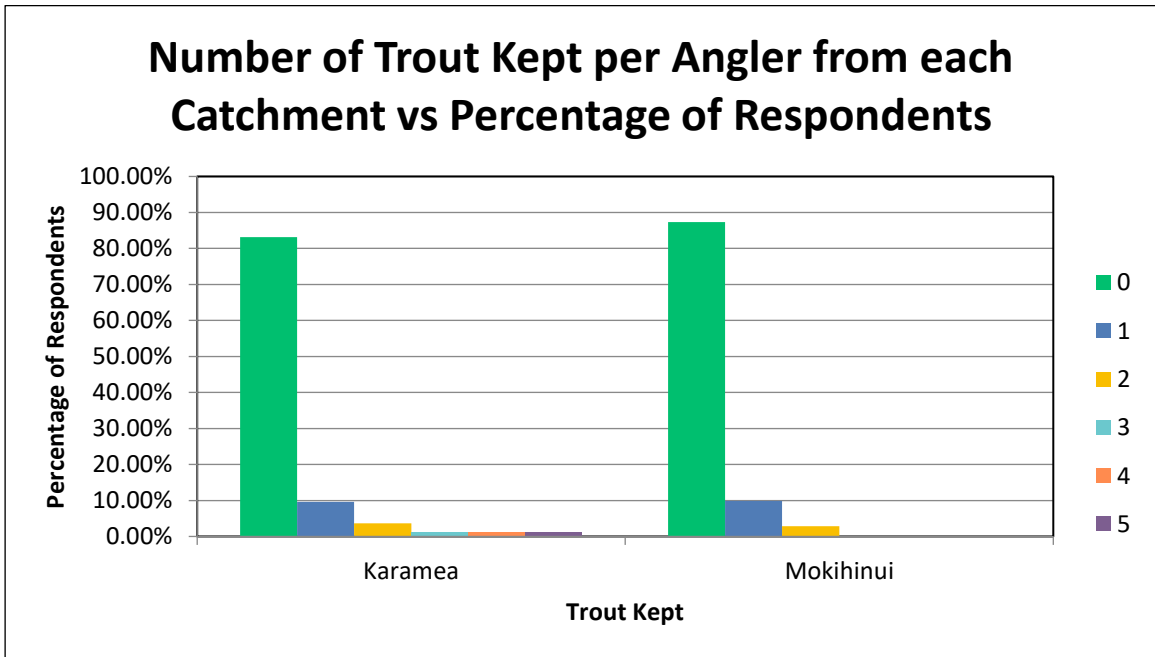


Figure 13: Total Trout Kept by Survey Respondents from Each West Coast Backcountry Catchment

Angler Satisfaction

Previous backcountry angler surveys have found that angler satisfaction is not simply a derivative of the number of trout caught, but a combination of the fishing experience, scenic environment, sense of remoteness, pristine environment, large trout observed and positive angler interactions. As part of the survey anglers were asked to rate their backcountry fishing experience on a scale of 1-5, with options for very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied, along with an option for not fishing that catchment.

Figure 14 below represents how anglers viewed their experience in each West Coast catchment during the 2019/20 season. Table two is the same data, but with the removal of the *I did not fish this river* proportion of participants and consists of also the data collected over the previous three seasons. To identify what may be impeding a positive backcountry experience, survey participants were asked *Which of the following most limited your satisfaction when fishing the West Coast backcountry fisheries?* For those anglers who choose other and specified, I have summarised their responses into six categories, please refer to Table 3 below.

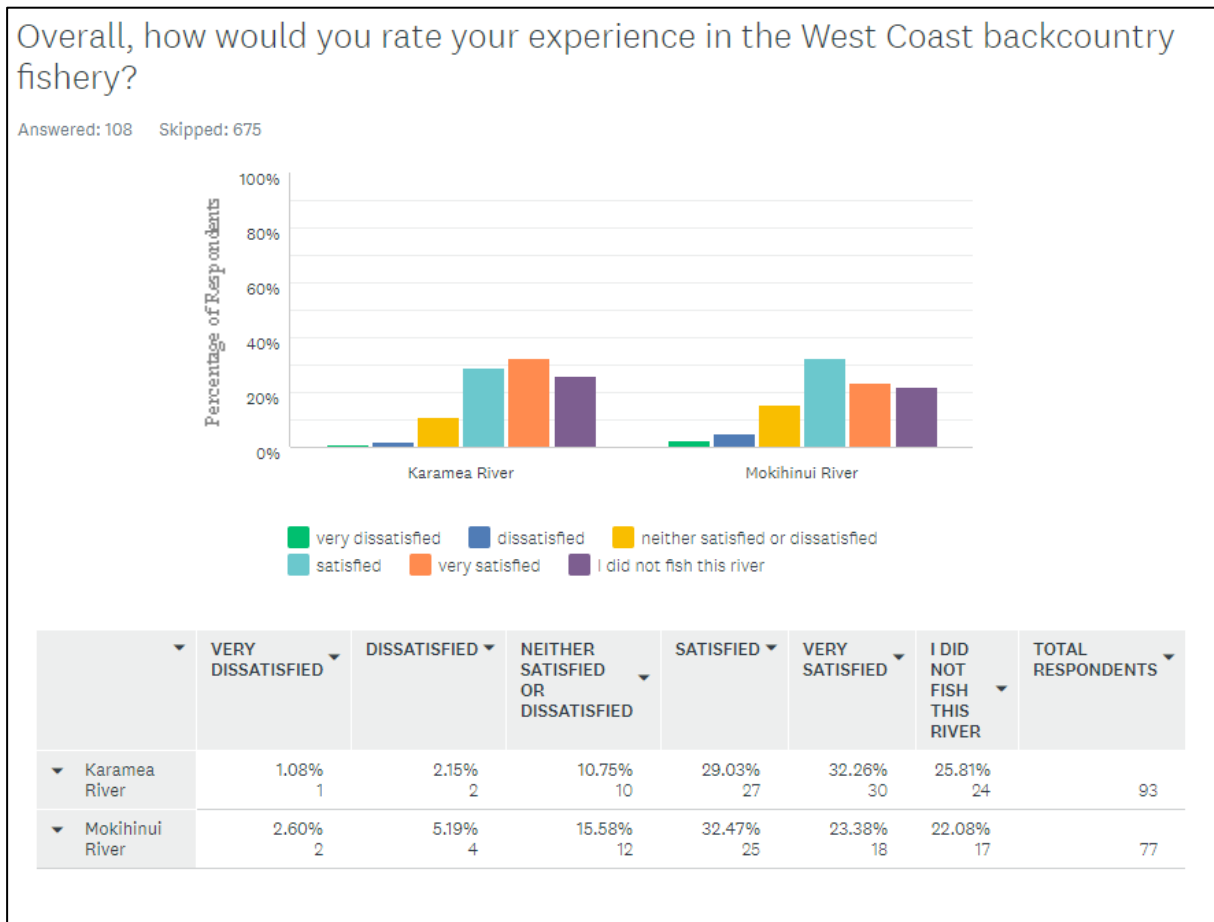


Figure 14: Angler satisfaction within the West Coast Region back country catchments 2019/20.

Table 2: Table of Angler Satisfaction Within the West Coast Region Backcountry Catchments over the last four seasons

		Experience Rating - Percentage of Respondents		
		Very Dissatisfied / Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied/ Very Satisfied
Karamea River	2019-20	4.29 %	14.29 %	81.42 %
	2018-19	4.00 %	9.05 %	86.95 %
	2017-18	14.40 %	10.94 %	74.66 %
	2016-17	11.50 %	16.95 %	71.55 %
Mokihinui River	2019-20	9.84%	20.00 %	70.49 %
	2018-19	12.12 %	9.10 %	78.78 %
	2017-18	22.60 %	5.41 %	71.99 %
	2016-17	21.20 %	15.30 %	63.50 %

Table 3: Table of what most limited angler satisfaction in the West Coast Backcountry fisheries.

Answer Choices	Responses 2019-20		Responses 2018-19	
The size of the trout.	4.67 %	5	6.06 %	4
The number of trout.	18.10 %	19	10.61 %	7
How challenging the trout were to catch.	6.67 %	7	21.21 %	14
Coming across other anglers.	11.43 %	12	12.12 %	8
Coming across people not fishing - loss of wilderness experience.	2.86 %	3	4.55 %	3
Weather conditions/river flows.	16.19 %	17	21.21 %	14
Nothing limited satisfaction	29.52 %	31		
Other (please specify)				
<i>Other - Nothing limited satisfaction</i>	0.95 %	1	12.12 %	8
<i>Other - Hut/river crowding issues</i>	2.86 %	3	4.55%	3
<i>Other - Wildlife complaints (insects/birds)</i>	1.90 %	2	4.55%	3
<i>Other - Didymo</i>	0.00%	0	1.52%	1
<i>Other- Helicopters</i>	3.81%	4	1.52%	1
<i>Other- Everything</i>	0.95%	1	1.52%	1
Total	100%	105	100%	66

Backcountry Drift Diving Results 2020

The following graphs and observations were obtained from the West Coast Drift Dive Report 2020 composed by G Newton 2020.

Mokihinui River: (South Branch site)

This season the dive at the Mokihinui South Branch on 16 January 2020 resulted in a count of 4 small/km, 14 medium/km and 30 large/km. Numbers of fish were about average and very similar to that recorded in 1987.

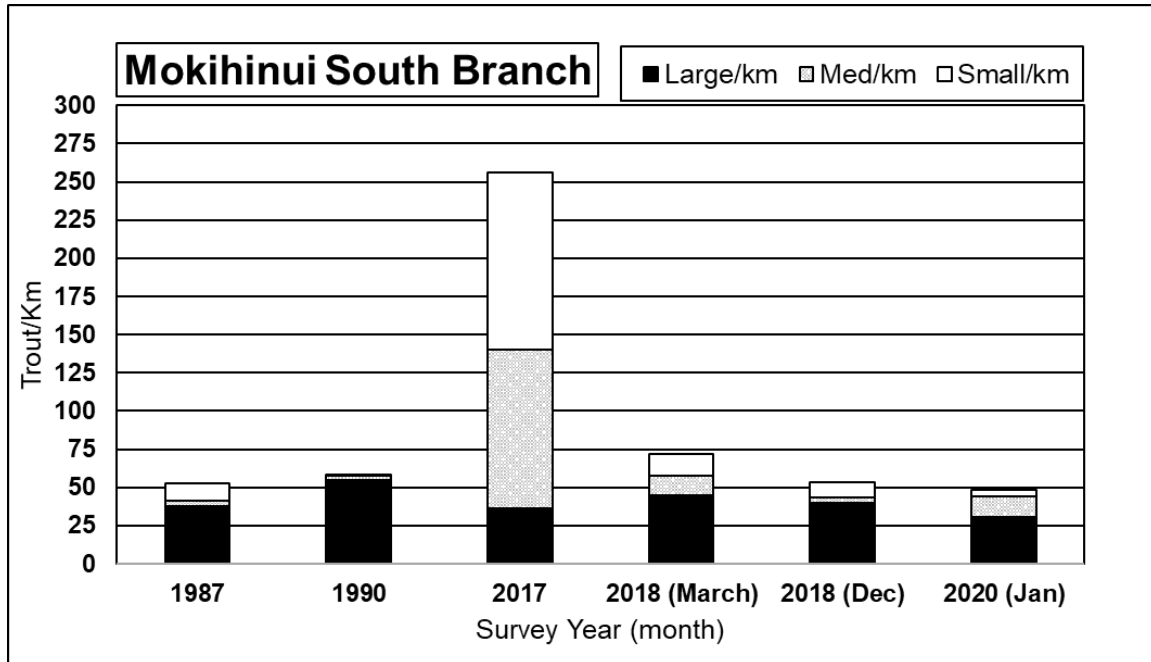


Fig 6. Number of Brown Trout recorded during drift dive surveys at the Mokihinui River, South Branch 1987 - 2018.

Mokihinui River (Below Gorge)

This season the dive at the Mokihinui North Branch site below the gorge on 16 January 2020 resulted in a count of 5 small/km, 4 medium/km and 15 large/km. Numbers of fish were marginally down on the count done in December 2018.

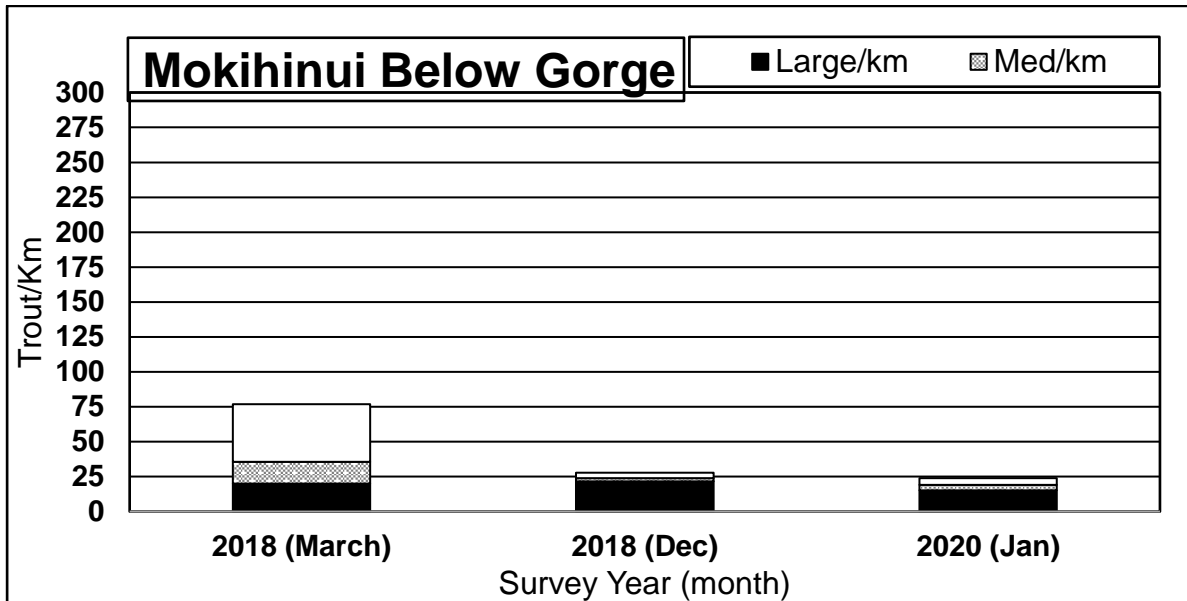


Fig 7. Number of Brown Trout recorded during drift dive surveys at the Mokihinui River, North Branch below gorge 2018.

Karamea River (Upstream of Crow)

This season the dive at the Karamea River upstream of the Crow on 13 March 2020 resulted in a count of 7 small/km, 37 medium/km and 43 large/km. Numbers of fish were very similar to last season except for lower numbers of small fish.

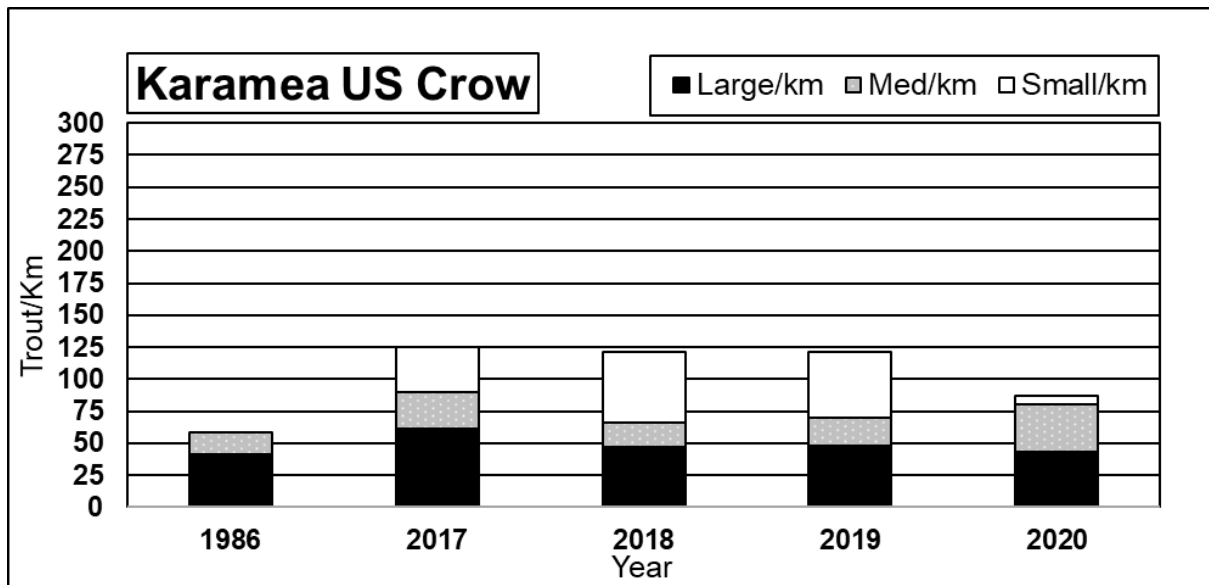


Fig 8. Number of Brown Trout recorded during drift dive surveys at the Karamea River, upstream of Crow 1986- 2020.

Karamea River (Downstream of Crow)

This season the dive at the Karamea River downstream of the Crow on 13 March 2020 resulted in a count of 10 small/km, 8 medium/km and 30 large/km. Numbers of fish were lower than recorded last season particularly for small and medium fish.

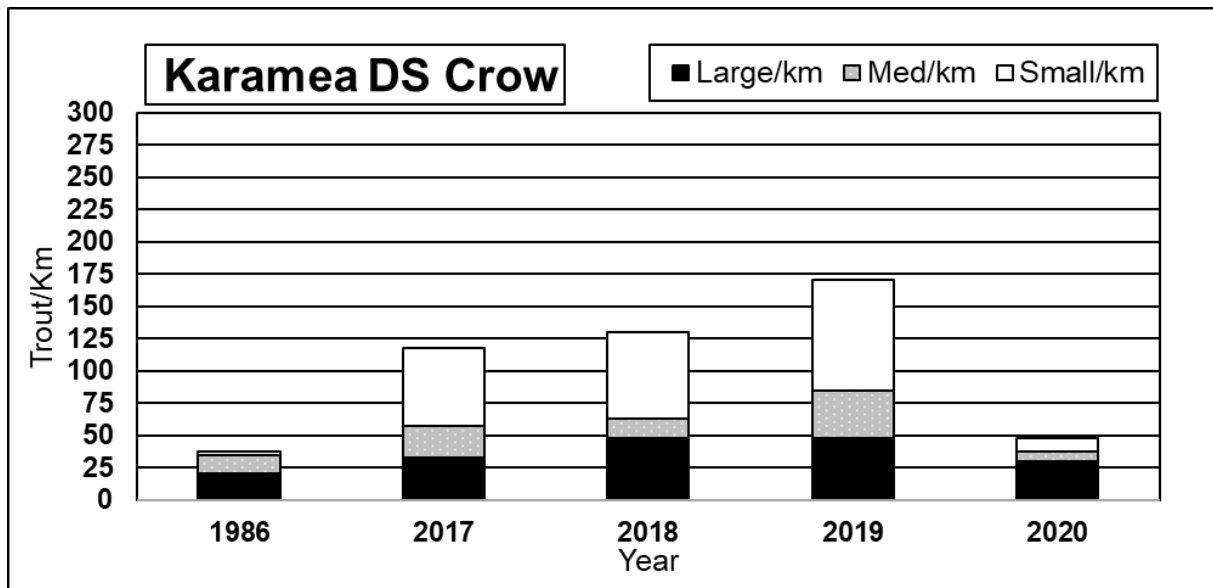


Fig 9. Number of Brown Trout recorded during drift dive surveys at the Karamea River, downstream of Crow 1986 - 2020.

Karamea River (Karamea Bend)

This season the dive at the Karamea Bend on 13 March 2020 resulted in a count of 19 small/km, 13 medium/km and 18 large/km. This site has slowly declined in numbers, particularly large fish, since counts began although over the last three years the counts appear to have stabilised.

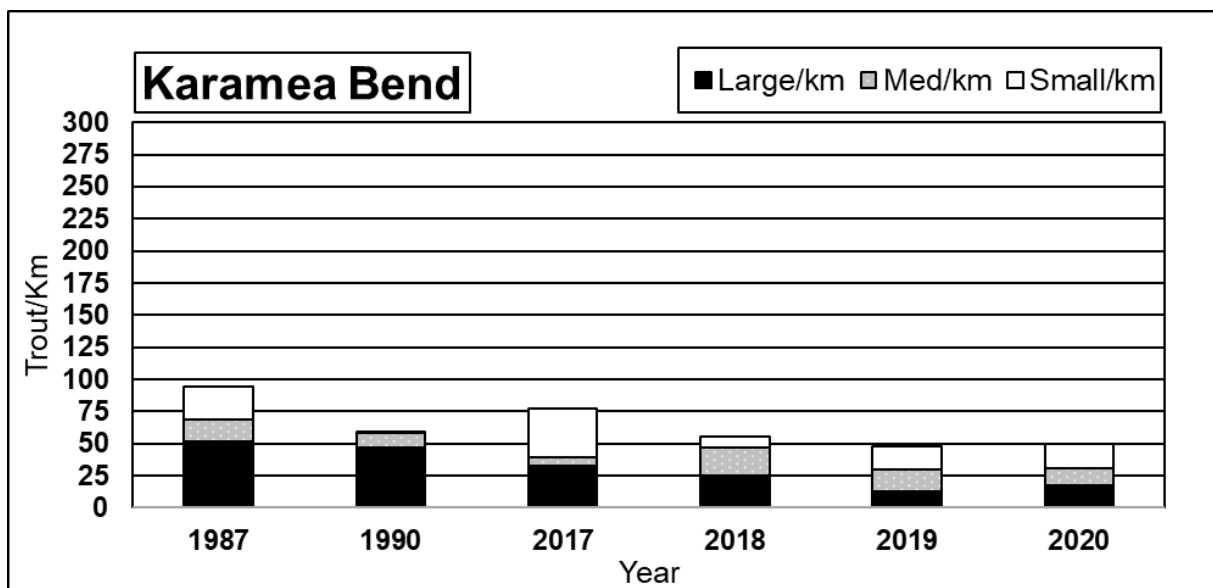


Fig 10. Number of Brown Trout recorded during drift dive surveys at the Karamea River, bend 1987-2020.

Drift Diving Summary

Dives completed upstream and downstream of the Crow River confluence in the Karamea River resulted in similar numbers of trout to that observed in 2019 although numbers of small fish were down. Further downstream at the Karamea Bend, trout numbers appear to have stabilised following a period of slow decline at this site.

The dive completed in the South Branch of the Mokihinui provided similar numbers of trout overall compared to last year although numbers of large fish were down. The dive was completed in the North Branch site for just the third time, but the results were much like the South Branch site with similar trout numbers to last year but lower numbers of large fish being recorded.

Overall, there appears to be little evidence to suggest perceived high angler usage is impacting on trout numbers within the designated backcountry fisheries. While there is fluctuation across the sites and by year most sites still have similar trout numbers to those observed when they were first dived 1986-87. Consideration should be given to the benefit of continuing the counts in these fisheries. Resources may be better spent monitoring trout in more easily accessible catchments that we know have high angler usage and are not currently monitored.

Backcountry Trail Camera Surveillance Results 2020

Trail cameras were installed and serviced monthly in conjunction with compliance in the Mokihinui Backcountry Fishery area. Cameras were installed prior to the opening of the fishing season on the South Branch and in the Mokihinui Gorge inside the backcountry fishery area. The cameras overlooked attractive pools that were readily accessible off the Old Ghost Trail. In January, following over three months of an angler not being captured in the gorge, this camera was relocated to the Mokihinui forks.

Table 4: Results of Trail Camera Surveillance on the Mokihinui River

	Number of days anglers observed	Days Captured	Percentage of the season captured (%)	Occupancy percentage (%)
Mokihinui Gorge	0	83	47	0.00
Mokihinui Forks	4	69	39	5.80
South Branch	13	176	100	7.39

Please note from the 25th of March to the 30th of April the country was either under level three or level four Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, therefore days captured and percentage of season captured have excluded these days from calculating usage.

Angler parties consisted of one or two anglers at the Forks but interestingly out of the 13 parties captured in the South Branch, 8 parties consisted of three anglers. Unpublished backcountry work from Southland Fish & Game region has found that if there are three anglers in a party, it is highly likely they are being guided. Angling parties captured were relatively well spread over the season although October only captured one party and January and March captured three in the South Branch. Lastly the parties that were observed through early season were typically one or two anglers but January through to March were predominantly parties of three.

Of the 24 anglers checked on the Mokihinui River and the Karamea River this season, 13 were inside the backcountry fishery area. Two local gentlemen were found intending to fish in the backcountry area without backcountry endorsements. It was to their surprise that they didn't hold a backcountry endorsement, given that they were requested at the purchase of their licences. The matter was followed up with the issuing agent and the matter is now closed. The two gentlemen were given warnings. Following this incident, material was posted on our Facebook page and our online ezine of how to check your backcountry endorsements as it does not appear on their plastic licences.

Discussion

This year's backcountry surveys suggests the Upper Karamea and Mokihinui Rivers again saw reasonable levels of angler usage, with evidence to suggest that more resident anglers than non-resident anglers fishing the West Coast Backcountry Area for the first time since surveys started in 2016. This season differed from the previous two seasons, with a very wet spring and early summer, limiting angling opportunities. On top of that, there was a month less angling due to Covid-19 lockdown through from late March to the end of the season.

Both survey respondents and the number of backcountry endorsements obtained indicated that more residents had fished the West Coast Backcountry area than non-resident this season. As positive as this is to see, going off the previous year's data for obtaining backcountry endorsements, it's likely that non-residents would have obtained more backcountry endorsements by the end of the season if the borders didn't close on the 19th of March. That a side, it was the highest ever number of backcountry endorsements obtained by residents with 1192 residents obtaining a backcountry endorsement vs last season where 1050 were obtained. This is likely due to the beech mast and resident anglers going the extra distance in search of large trout.

Looking at the responses for average nights stayed and total days fished, this is similar to the 2016-17 survey where poor weather limited angler visits and this was much the case for the first half of this season. The previous two seasons saw very stable weather and as a result, trips on average were longer. The most common trip length this season was day trips, as helicopters were utilised more especially by residents, and fit anglers made use of the cycle trail for access to the upper reaches of the Mokihinui River observed from our compliance rounds.

Approximately 14% of respondents that fished the West Coast Backcountry were fishing guides. This is significantly up on the previous season (6% of respondents) and 2018 (9% of respondents). With the percentage and number of guided respondents being down, in both resident and non-residents, the increase in guides presence in the backcountry I do not believe is a matter of concern. It either shows guides spreading the angling pressure over more fisheries or are visiting the location for personal fishing trips.

This year saw a significant increase in resident use of helicopter use with nearly 50% of residents that fished the backcountry utilising helicopters. Although helicopter access overall was down this year, because of an 8% drop in non-resident using helicopters compared to last season.

Angler satisfaction was similar to last year and a lot better than the previous seasons. There continues to be a drop in dissatisfaction in the Mokihinui which is pleasing to see with it relatively high in early surveys. This season saw a drop in the satisfied bracket as anglers moved into the neutral bracket. Looking at the table of what most limited satisfaction and even with the added choice of *nothing limited satisfaction*, the *number of trout* was a serious contributor to dissatisfaction this year. Interestingly, last year it was more, *how challenging the trout were to catch*, with this change in dissatisfaction likely the result of different river conditions with low flows last season resulting in spooky fish and higher flows this season making the fish harder to spot/find. As much as drift dives showed a drop in trout numbers, it was predominantly the smaller trout that anglers tend to not target, which was put down to the wet spring we had. Lastly, it's likely that the surge in resident anglers going into the backcountry and utilising

helicopters to go the extra distance this season is the beech mast and the great fishing it brings. Unfortunately for these anglers, their expectations will have likely not been met as the Karamea and Mokihinui are known not to benefit to the same extent as other catchments from beech masts. This may explain why more anglers felt *Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied* than last season. Reviewing the last four years of surveys, it is becoming evident that the fluctuations in satisfaction are linked to climatic factors rather than result of anthropogenic problems.

Most respondents didn't keep trout or kept very few. This has been the case on all four surveys, confirming over harvest of trout by anglers isn't an issue in the West Coast Backcountry.

Drift diving in general provided similar results to previous dives. It was noted that it was good to see trout holding in good lies rather than deep pools when dives were completed. Trout also appeared to be feeding well while staff carried out backcountry compliance.

The trail camera surveillance was very insightful when it comes to angling pressure. The cameras were very likely to capture all anglers that fished the stretch in front of them while they were operational as some anglers were photographed up to 43 times and all anglers were at least photographed three times. Where cameras were set on the river it was readily accessible from the Old Ghost Trail as approximately 68% respondents reported not using helicopters to access the Mokihinui river, therefore the Old Ghost Trail is the obvious and most popular access way to the Mokihinui headwaters. With angling pressure as low as recorded, it provides rationale for not introducing further restriction to the backcountry fisheries. As much as the most popular pool may not have been captured, to have three readily accessible stretches with occupancy rates of less than 8%, if anything we need to increase angling pressure to make better use of the resource!

The survey question of how often did you encounter other anglers also supports our findings of low angling pressure. For the second year in a row 75% of anglers either never saw another angler or saw another angler 1-20% of days fished. Our discussion with guides and surveillance work done, did note some crowding over the Christmas/New Year's period but that was short lived and is to be expected when great weather coincides with extended holiday periods. Looking at the data, this is likely the only time the remaining anglers that had higher encounter rates could have done so unless they did a short trip and were unlucky enough to bump into another angler.

Comments from survey respondents are provided in Appendix 2. Complaints continue to be significantly down compared to the two first survey years, as to be expected with angler's satisfaction being up. There are quite a few very positive comments that mirror the comments received from anglers we encountered doing compliance rounds.

With the upcoming season forecasted to have very few non-resident anglers, this will provide an opportunity to see if there is any noticeable change to the fishery and resident angler satisfaction without the non-residents present and at least half the angling pressure.

Staff Recommendations

- That council receives this report.
- To keep current regulations for the West Coast Backcountry Fisheries.

References

Unwin, M.J. (2016). Angler usage of New Zealand lake and river fisheries: results from the 2014/15 National Angling Survey.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questions Asked During Backcountry Angler Survey 2019/20

Q1: During the 2019/20 fishing season did you fish a backcountry designated fishery within the West Coast region? That is: the Karamea or the Mokihinui river catchments (including tributaries)

Q2: Are you a New Zealand resident? That is: you hold a NZ birth certificate or passport or citizenship, or you hold a permanent resident visa

Q3: Which Fish and Game Region do you hold your fishing licence with? (if unsure, please select the region where you live)

Q4: Are you a fishing guide?

Q5: Were you guided on any of your fishing trips into the designated backcountry fisheries in the West Coast region?

Q6: Did you use a helicopter to access the backcountry area?

Q7: Which river(s) did you access via helicopter?

Q8: How many trips (visits) did you do into the West Coast backcountry fishery during the 2019/20 season?

Q9: Please enter the total number of days you fished in Karamea or the Mokihinui River and/or its tributaries.

Q10: Which month(s) did you fish in the West Coast backcountry fishery?

Q11: Did you fish any waters within the Kahurangi Wilderness Area? if so, which rivers? This link gives you access to the wilderness area map. <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/kahurangi-map3.pdf>

Q12: What was your average length of overnight stay in the West Coast backcountry fishing area? (if only one visit please enter the number of nights you stayed)

Q13: In total for the season, approximately how many fish did you land from each designated backcountry fishery you fished?

Q14: In total for the season, approximately how many fish did you keep from each designated backcountry fishing area?

Q15: How often did you encounter anglers not in your fishing party when fishing the West Coast designated Backcountry fisheries?

Q16: Overall, how would you rate your experience in the West Coast backcountry fishery?

Feedback

Q17: Which of the following most limited your satisfaction when fishing the West Coast backcountry fisheries?

Q18: Have you got any further comments you would like to make on your backcountry fishing experience?

Appendix 2: All Angler Feedback/Comments from West Coast Backcountry Survey 2019/20 Season:

Beautiful country!!!
Excellent quality of fish. Best I have experienced
Amazing how much of a deleterious effect flooding had on the crow with sedimentation this year.
Always enjoy my time out along the river fishing.
Seems to be alot less fish in the west coast. We have always done one or two trips a season and the catch rate is lower every year. I think any guides in NZ should be nz citizen only. To many people fishing guides and putting pressure on rivers. West coast is the most stunning part of the country but I have now started fishing other regions as catch were better in central. Shame really as west is stunning.
In 33 years of fishing the Karamea or Mokihinui, personally or as a part time guide I have never once been jumped or had a bad experience with engaging with other anglers . There is plenty of water and lots of trout . The fishing remains as good as it was when I first hiked in to the █████ in 1986 ..In fact catch and release has improved the fishing and as fishing techniques and gear has improved- the fishing has improved. I had my best day fishing ever on a day on Karamea in Jan 2017 hooking 20 and netting 15 averaging 5lbs .. all were safely released. Didymo hasn't had an impact on these fisheries. I have diaries and records of my personal and guide trips that go back 33 years. My advice is leave the fishing legalities alone , don't restrict anglers or meddle with fishing beats/angler booked days and the like. Keep the Mokihinui and Karamea river systems completely free for licences fishermen to use and enjoy at there will. This past season the fishing was once again been great and most of angling pressure was actually off the road through the Lewis pass / north Canterbury and Reefton area with the mice trout in the Nelson area . the Kahurangi received little pressure .
Leave the fisheries alone .. please. Don't place restrictions for anglers. Anglers just have to do there homework and it's often a case of education when it comes to meeting other anglers on the river.
Cheers █████
Backcountry fishing is the reason for us to come to New Zealand. It is a treasure that should be valued by all.
keep protecting access.
To many helicopters are aloud to fly in
Thank you very much for the great fishing in NZ! ;-)
Helicopters are annoying and allow unworthy "anglers" access to the best, remote streams without working hard. Ban helicopters and 1080.
no
Although I am an experienced angler my trip was primarily to walk the Old Ghost Road trail - which was fantastic! A couple of times fly fishing was very much secondary to walking the trail.
Of the 8 trout caught only 1 I found to be in very good condition. Very few smaller trout in the upper reaches of the Karamea river(above Trevor Carter hut) & the fish seem to be in the slow water & not in the rapids. Put this down to the amount of floods over winter or another bad days on the water.
Once again a wonderful season with lots of healthy fish in the back country most people I met all catch and release
No
awesome fishing.
BAN HELI-FISHING !
Very good trip, just a shame that two Americans had fished all the waters we wanted to fish. a couple of days before. but that's a chance you take going into places like that.
Stop 1080..its killed the bird song 😞
It would be great to have a bigger wilderness area where helicopters arnt allowed to land!

Feedback

Love it ..keep the boots clean...use the huts and tents..weather really bruised us hook ups but nothing landed..saw plenty ..some monsters...this is torture doin this in lockdown.....lol
Nil
For overseas anglers these rivers need to be prohibited and like fishing in Canada and Alaska they need to pay a premium to access our rivers like NZD\$1000 per week non negotiable
Had one helicopter day ruined because of a fish and game drift dive.
Recommended that when this is happening that an email be sent to the nzpfga.
No
Not other than it kick ass up there. Was my 40th and a trip of a life time. We landed 50 between 4 of us.
Please prevent Europeans anglers from living in the huts for long periods of time living off of trout they catch. Ruins the fisheries. Also please watch the [REDACTED] a bit more closely as they have 0 respect for other fishermen. Their helicopter flew over us and circled us several times before landing their fishermen upstream AND downstream of us. They knew we were there and still decided to ruin our trip to satisfy their clients. Other than that it's the best fishery in the world, and I'd love to keep it that way!!!
Arrived at Roaring Lion Hut to find 5 overseas anglers in one party. We sorted ourselves out, but big groups like this are not sustainable on backcountry rivers. I was surprised that [REDACTED] would fly a group that size to the RL Hut.
No
Put a log book in a weatherproof box at the trail head so anglers walking in can see who is ahead of them and when they are coming out.
Can't wait to get back!! Go away Corona virus!!!
I have fished quite a few back country arenas in otago which are easier to access than the Karamea but have not encountered so many fish recently caught. Stunning remote area, obviously however frequently visited with high fish in pressure
Generally poor weather and high flows but saw very few fish even when conditions were ok
Great places
1080 is doing far more damage on the bird population than you could ever imagine!
Ban Helikopters
No
Angler management plan / quality waters management strategy. The four step plan
Just happy I caught a couple (a very rare occurrence for me!)
Great fishery but the addition of the ghost road for bikes does mean an alternative route in to the fishery. I realise everyone has the right to fish it but it has contributed to extra fishing pressure on the river. Was great to see a fisheries ranger up there but I do wonder how many overseas anglers are camping and fishing multiple days in the area with the access from the ghost road.
None
Bloody brilliant. Sublime weather.
I would suggest management/DOC strongly discourage helicopters from multiple landings of a single party to various rivers in the one day. This is a very small minority operator/guide that ruin the experience for many, many other parties
We were out as the lockdown was going on. Fish didn't seem to be feeding much and we saw plenty and no other fishermen around.
no
Do not change anything in one of the last fishing paradise on earth !
No
The survey needs to go into more detail to get better results. I didn't fish the same water twice for the whole season and I believe overseas anglers and the large lodges need an ethics sheet printed out and given to them when they purchase their licenses.
Talked to other guides/anglers at the lodge that were impacted by bike angler traffic on the South Branch of the Mokihinui.

Feedback

would be a good idea to limit guiding and heli access in these areas
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Being not able to fish for weeks / months during the covid19 virus is disappointing but we all understand the situation. Can we have the licence extend due to the loss of fishing time ?

There are too many overseas freedom fishermen fishing and staying several nights, and stuffing up the experience for others that's why we Heli in ,and only for one day,if we see others we simply fly to another spot!
