

Comparison of New, Current West Coast and Current Rest of NZ Whitebait Regulations, with rationale for change

Note: these summarise changes being made. Other provisions are unaltered and some remain specific to the West Coast.

Change proposed	Date of Effect	New Rule	Current West Coast Rule	Current Rest of NZ rule	Rationale for change
Nationwide upstream limits on whitebait fishing	2021	Nationwide upstream limits on whitebait fishing (defined by back-pegs or upstream tidal extent).	The upstream limit of whitebait fishing is defined using back-pegs and upstream tidal limit.	No upstream regulatory limit for whitebait fishing.	No whitebait harvest beyond back-pegs and tidal limits, increasing the proportion of whitebait passing through lowland habitats.
Whitebait (fishing excluded) refuges in selected waterways	2021	Current refuges from whitebait fishing maintained in some waterways on the West Coast of the South Island. New refuges in certain streams and rivers flowing from Abel Tasman and Fiordland National Parks.	Refuges from whitebait fishing in some waterways.	No refuges from whitebait fishing.	Excluding whitebait fishing from some waterways will provide refuges for migrating whitebait juveniles in those waterways, increasing adult fish numbers in prime upstream habitat.
Whitebait fishing methods	2021	Maximum screen length 3 m; screens are the only lawful diversion.	Maximum screen length 3 m; screens are the only lawful diversion.	No specific requirements.	Reduce fishing pressure on the whitebait species and bycatch species. Increase equity of catching opportunities among fishers. Improve consistency of the regulatory regime.
Whitebait fishing methods	2021	Fishing prohibited within 20 m of weirs, groynes and illegal diversions.	Fishing is prohibited within 20 m of any tide gate, flood gate,	Fishing is prohibited within 20 m of any tide	Reduce fishing pressure on the whitebait species and bycatch species.

			confluence, or culvert or illegal diversions.	gate, flood gate, outlet pipe or culvert.	Increase equity of catching opportunities among fishers. Improve consistency of the regulatory regime.
Whitebait fishing methods	2021	One net used when fishing from a stand.	One net used when fishing from a stand.	No limit on number of nets fished from a stand.	Increase equity of catching opportunities among fishers. Improve consistency of the regulatory regime.
Whitebait fishing methods	2021	Nationwide maximum incursion of fishing gear (excluding stands) into a waterway of one-quarter of its width.	This distance is currently 1/3 of the width of a waterway.	This distance is currently 1/3 of the width of a waterway.	Improve consistency of the regulatory regime, as the width in Fisheries Act provisions is not more than one quarter of river width.
Whitebait fishing methods	2021	Minimum fixed distance of 20 m between set fishing gear (not stands).	No current minimum distance between set fishing gear.	No current minimum distance between set fishing gear.	Reduce fishing pressure on the whitebait species. Increase equity of catching opportunities among fishers.
Timing of the whitebait season	2022	1 September – 30 October fishing season NZ-wide (except Chatham Is).	1 September – 14 November.	15 August – 30 November (except Chatham Is).	Reduce harvest and fishing pressure, particularly during peak migration periods of whitebait species that are most Threatened or At Risk.
Whitebait fishing methods	2023	Nationwide maximum overall length limit for fishing gear of 6 m.	No maximum limit on overall length of fishing gear.	Maximum overall length limit for fishing gear of 6 m.	Increase equity of catching opportunities among fishers. Improve consistency of the regulatory regime.