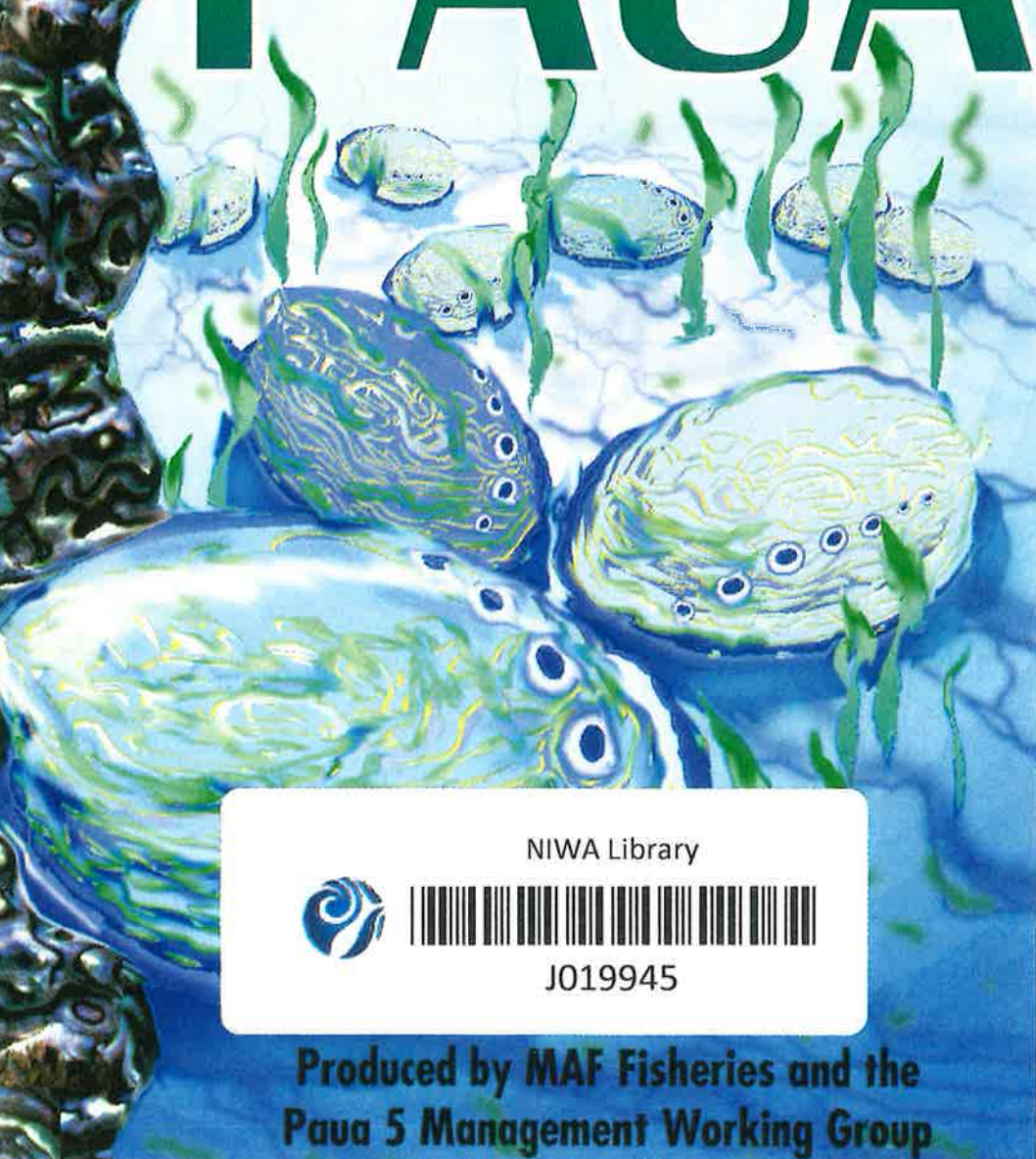


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# GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING PAUA



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Produced by MAF Fisheries and the  
Paua 5 Management Working Group



## Why have a code of practice for amateur paua divers and hand-gatherers ?

Recent studies have revealed that we have a special problem with paua.

While most recreational fishers are responsible, some use fishing techniques which kill undersized paua. A number of practices used in both the recreational and commercial paua fishery result in high mortalities of undersized paua through ignorance and poor harvesting techniques.

## Lethal damage

Many fishers remove undersized paua from the reef surface using sharp instruments. This will usually result in some damage to the foot of the small paua. Paua are unable to clot blood when cut, so even the tiniest nick could result in the paua bleeding to death. Even if the paua survives the cut, the blood will attract predators into the area, and the paua may be killed before it has a chance to clamp down onto the rock surface.

Furthermore, damage to the paua may reduce the ability of the paua to clamp on to the rock surface. Research has shown that damaged paua may develop abscesses, which will result in death weeks later.

## Drying out

Paua are often removed from the water and placed on deck to be counted and measured. Paua left in the sun quickly dry out, and will soon die in these conditions.

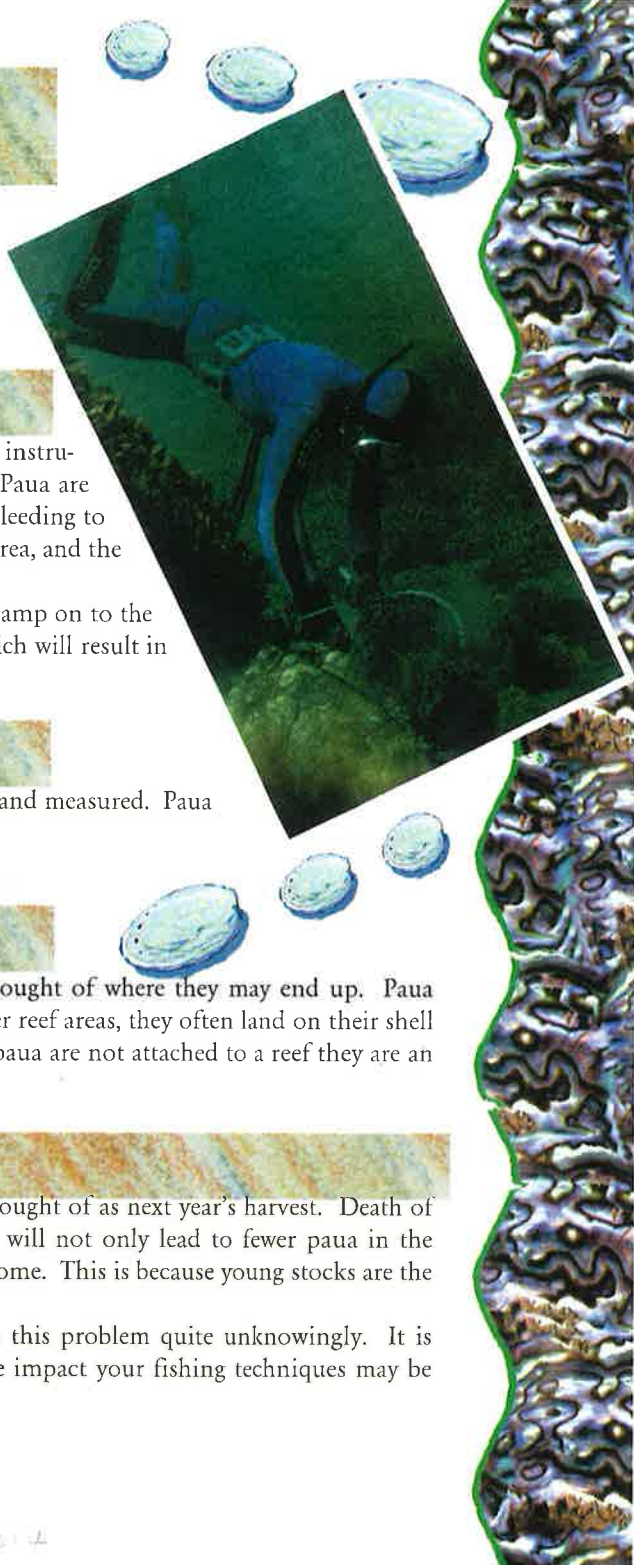
## Left to die

Undersized paua are commonly thrown back into the water with no thought of where they may end up. Paua thrown over areas of sand have no hope of survival. Even if paua are thrown over reef areas, they often land on their shell and take some time to right themselves and clamp onto the reef surface. While paua are not attached to a reef they are an easy meal for predators in the area.

## Why worry ?

Undersized paua should be thought of as next year's harvest. Death of any damaged paua that you return will not only lead to fewer paua in the following year, but also in years to come. This is because young stocks are the breeding stocks of the future.

You could be contributing to this problem quite unknowingly. It is important that you are aware of the impact your fishing techniques may be having on the paua resource.







## How important are paua anyway ?

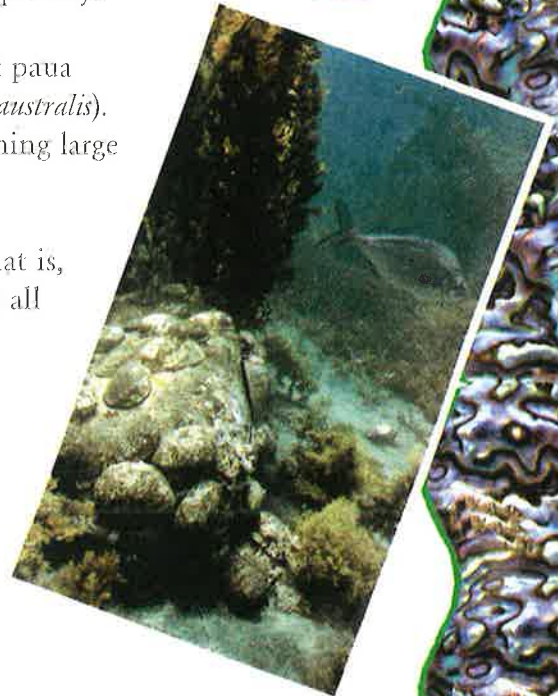
- Paua are unique to New Zealand and have always been an important part of our culture. It is in everyone's interests to look after the paua resource.
- This shellfish is highly valued by Maori, recreational fishers and the commercial fishing industry.
- Paua has always been a food source for Maori, and plays a significant role in manaakitanga ki nga manuhiri (hosting of visitors).
- The recreational paua fishery has been an important component of the New Zealand lifestyle, becoming more popular as the commercial fishery has grown.

Commercial exploitation of paua developed and expanded through the 1970s and 80s into the lucrative commercial industry it is today. The paua industry is an important component of the New Zealand economy, providing jobs and export earnings that benefit all New Zealanders.

## Current regulations for amateurs

The amateur harvest of paua is controlled by daily bag and size limits:

- Only 10 paua of each species are permitted per person per day.
- The minimum legal sizes are 125 mm for the blackfoot paua (*Haliotis iris*) and 80 mm for the yellowfoot paua (*Haliotis australis*). This allows paua to reach maturity and breed before becoming large enough to harvest.
- By law paua have to be landed in a measurable state (that is, unshelled). This is to enable Fishery Officers to check that all harvested paua are greater than the legal takeable size.
- Underwater Breathing Apparatus (UBA) is prohibited when collecting or in possession of paua (this includes your vehicle or vessel). This is to prevent large areas of paua from being systematically cleared by divers and to leave stocks in deeper waters untouched. The removal of accumulated paua stocks could significantly reduce the reproductive potential of paua in the area.





# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SEE SUSPICIOUS OR ILLEGAL ACTIVITY?

If you see others taking more than their daily bag limit or taking undersized fish, or if you are suspicious about the activity of a person or a group of people, please report what you have seen to MAF Fisheries as soon as you can.

If possible, record or memorise the following information:

- *Exact location, time, and date.*
- *Vessel name and number, description of vessel, type, colour, length.*
- *Vehicle registration number and a description of make, model and colour.*
- *Number and description of people involved (and names and addresses if known).*
- *The details of what you observed or heard about or found.*

Your calls don't have to be restricted to normal office hours. There is an after hours number under Agriculture and Fisheries in the phone book. In most cases this will be a secure answerphone automatically linked to a duty officer's pager allowing rapid response at all times.

Whether you phone or write to MAF Fisheries any information provided in confidence will remain confidential.

For further information contact your regional MAF Fisheries office: Auckland, Nelson and Dunedin.

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## What can you do to help ?

Paua less than the minimum legal size are next year's harvest. Often these paua are removed and damaged by paua divers, only to be returned to the sea to die. There are a number of ways to ensure that undersized paua are not removed from reef surfaces, and ways to care for the young paua if they are inadvertently removed.

You can help ensure your future paua harvest by following a few simple rules.

### *If possible, avoid removing undersized paua from the reef.*

Use instruments with an underwater measuring device/mark. If you measure your paua underwater you will have less chance of taking and damaging undersized paua.

### *Take care when removing paua, just in case some of them are undersized.*

When collecting paua, use paua friendly tools (that is no sharp instruments). Any damage to undersized paua will significantly reduce their chances of survival. If unsuccessful in removing a paua on the first attempt, leave it, because if it has clamped onto a rock it is extremely unlikely that it will be prised loose without suffering damage.

### *Return undersized paua to ensure their survival.*



Any undersized paua should be returned by a diver to the reef surface promptly and placed the right way up. Do not throw them over the side of your boat.

Unless paua are placed on the reef surface the right way up, they are likely to be eaten by starfish, reef fish and other predators before they have a chance to clamp on to the rock surface. It is unlikely that paua thrown back on to a sandy or gravelly substrate will survive.

### *Keep paua in the shade and ensure they remain damp when on deck.*

You should measure your paua underwater. However, if you have taken paua out of the water to measure, keep them damp and in the shade. Heat damaged paua returned to the reef will be in a weakened state and are susceptible to predation.

### *Take only what you need.*

Take only the paua you need (within the confines of the daily bag limit). Leave some for another day.

### *Don't clear out whole areas.*

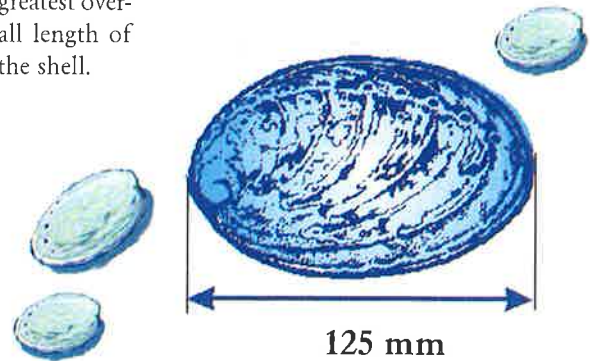
Take only a few paua from within a bed and move on to another area. If paua are cleared from large areas you may lose a favourite paua spot.

### *Don't shuck paua (remove the shell) below high water mark.*

Remember, paua must be landed in a measurable state to enable compliance staff to measure your catch. Furthermore, shucking of paua leaves waste which will attract predators to the area.

## HOW TO MEASURE PAUA

The size of paua is measured in a straight line across the greatest over-all length of the shell.



By following these simple guidelines you will protect the undersized paua, ensuring a productive fishery in the following year.