



Photo Courtesy of Paul McKenzie

The 4-Month Ban on All Species of Grouper (Kawakawa) and Coral Trout (Donu) Factsheet



The Fiji Government has banned the harvest, sale, buying, possession or export of all species of Grouper (kawakawa) and Coral Trout (donu) during their peak spawning months, from the 1st of June through to the 30th of September, to help revive these rapidly declining fish species.

Any person or business found harvesting, selling, buying, possessing or exporting kawakawa and donu during the 4-month ban period will have their fish confiscated and will receive high fines:

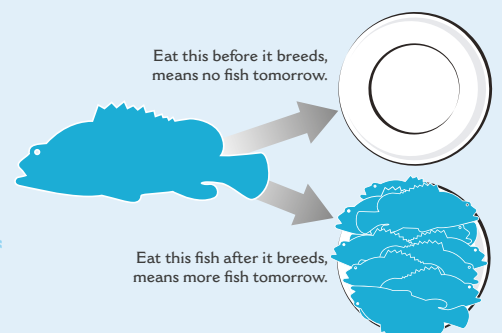
- For individuals, an instant fine of \$10,000, with the potential of up to \$50,000 in fines.
- For corporations, an instant fine of \$20,000, with the potential of up to \$100,000 in fines.

The level of the fine can depend on the severity of the offense and will be determined by the Fiji Court System.

Why is the Ban Needed?

Kawakawa and donu are A-grade fish that are critical food and income for Fijians. But these fisheries are facing collapse, if no management action is taken. The ban is intended to ensure the fish species are allowed to successfully breed each year, so the stocks recover. Because if we let them breed each year, we can have more fish the rest of the year.

IT'S SIMPLE MATH

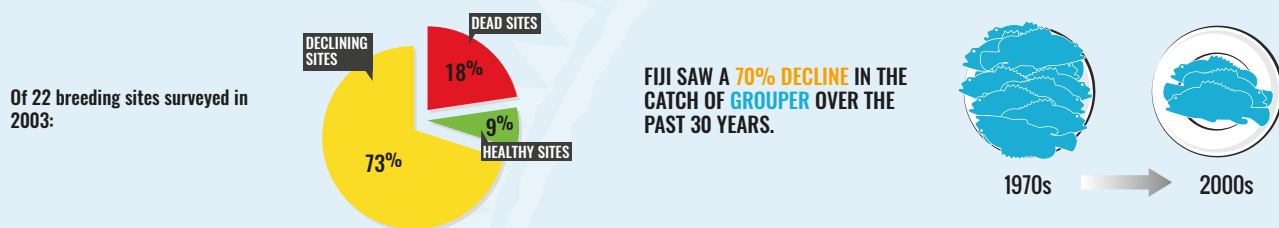


4-Month Ban on Kawakawa & Donu **FAQ**

Why These Fish?

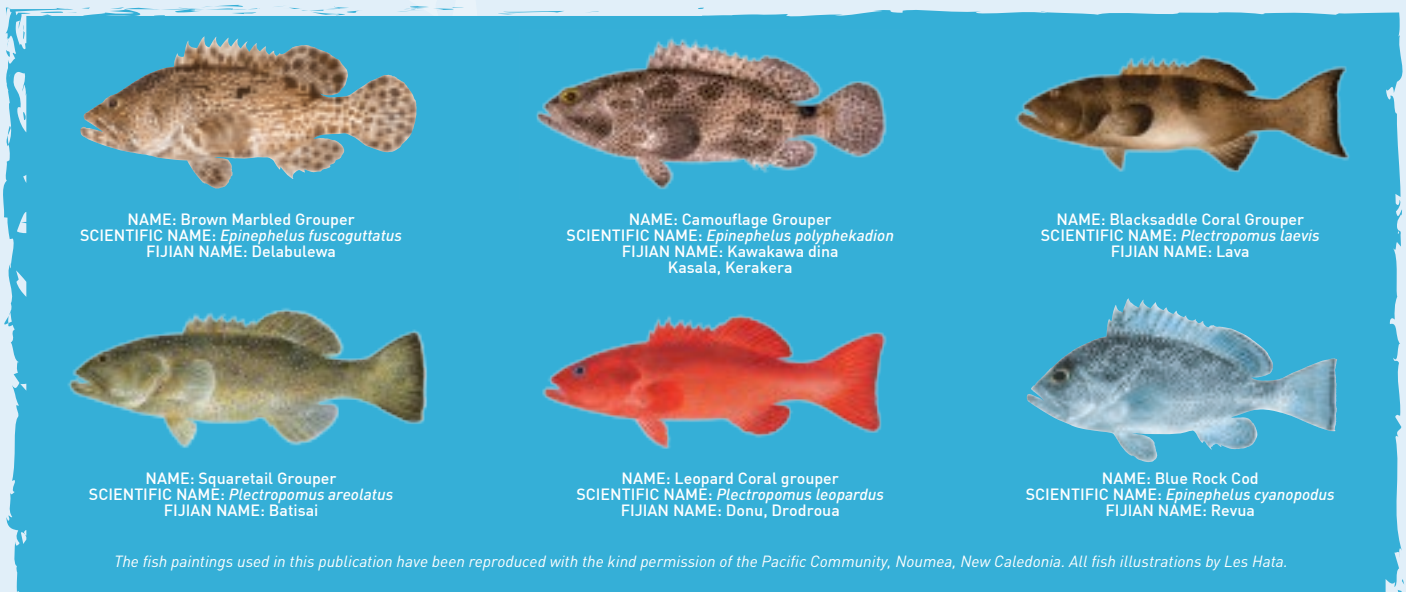
Kawakawa and donu breed each year, in large numbers, in the same places. These breeding sites were traditionally fished, but as the population and income needs in Fiji have increased, these breeding sites are being heavily overfished, leaving too few fish to restock Fiji's fishing grounds.

According to the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, more than 80 per cent of Fiji's known kawakawa and donu breeding sites are either declining or have been lost. One study found fish landings of kawakawa have declined 70 percent over 30 years, with some areas of Fiji hardly catching the prized fish anymore. Fishers interviews tell the same story: These fish are harder and harder to catch in our fishing grounds. We are losing these prized fish at alarming rates.



What Species are Banned?

The harvest, sale, buying, possession and export of all species of kawakawa (grouper) and donu (coral trout) are banned. The six most common kawakawa and donu typically caught are:



For a full list of the fish, please see the companion Kawakawa and Donu Fish Buyers Guide and poster developed for fishers, sellers and exporters in Fiji.

When Was the Ban Enacted?

The Fiji Government announced in June 2017 its intention to impose a seasonal ban on the harvest, sale, buying, possession or export of kawakawa and donu at the United Nations Oceans Conference. The ban was officially enacted on June 2018, through the Offshores Fisheries Management Regulation, after repeated public announcements in Fiji over the previous years.

Please note, all harvesting, selling, buying, possessing and exporting of kawakawa and donu must cease during the ban period of June 1 to September 30th each year.

4-Month Ban on Kawakawa & Donu **FAQ**

How Did the Ministry of Fisheries Ban these Fish?

Under Regulation 4 of the Offshore Fisheries Management Regulations 2014 (OFMR), the Ministry of Fisheries can establish species and seasonal closures as necessary to protect the food security and livelihoods of Fiji citizens. The power to seize and fine individuals and companies for violations is established under the Offshore Fisheries Management Act, under which the OFMR are enacted.

How Long is the Ban?

The kawakawa and donu peak breeding months are June through September. The ban covers that period of time each year, from June 1 to September 30 and is designed to ensure these fish breed and restock our reefs. The ban is just a little longer than a traditional 100-night tabu placed on marine resources following the death of a chief in Fiji.

Can I Still Catch Kawakawa And Donu For Food?

No. The ban covers harvesting, selling, buying, possessing and exporting. The key target for the Ministry of Fisheries is the harvest and commercial sale of kawakawa and donu during the peak breeding months but the ban applies across all forms of fishing and the Ministry of Fisheries strongly encourages ALL fishers to comply.

What if I catch one by mistake?

If you accidentally catch a kawakawa or donu, you should let it go. Because that fish can bring you far more fish in years to come, if it gets to breed before you eat it.

The reason these fish are declining so rapidly is because fishers target their breeding sites. The good news is that fishers are well aware of where the fish breed and can easily avoid the channels where they typically are breeding. In other words, fishing in a breeding site is not an accident and is absolutely banned.

And it's important to note, anyone attempting to sell accidental catches of kawakawa and donu can be prosecuted and heavily fined.

Can I Still Sell Kawakawa And Donu during the Ban Period?

No. The ban prohibits all selling and offering or exposing for sale during the entire ban period, regardless of when this fish was caught. The Ministry of Fisheries strongly urges all businesses to manage their stock levels of these fish in the lead up to the ban period to avoid any possession when the ban commences. It is also an offence for any person to buy kawakawa and donu during the ban period. Anyone found in possession of the fish during the ban period shall have the fish confiscated and may be fined or subject to prosecution.

What are the Benefits of this Ban? More food, more money

The ban is about getting more food on our plate, and more money in our pockets. It's important to acknowledge that fishers are having a harder and harder time making a living in Fiji as fishing grounds become more and more depleted. They spend long hours in the water, catching less, and making less money than before. This ban will help increase the fish stocks of one of the most valuable fish, which means our fishers can in turn earn more money and better provide for their families. That's the benefit of the ban.

The future of fishing in Fiji will be about ensuring fishers get the maximum amount of fish from Fiji's fishing grounds and can make more money on each fish. That will mean fishing smarter, and for kawakawa and donu, that means making sure they breed each year.

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Enforcing the Ban

The Ministry of Fisheries has been quietly improving its capacity to better address illegal fishing in Fiji. The Fiji Government created a stand-alone ministry to ensure Fiji maximizes its marine resources to support livelihoods and protects the country's food security. The new Ministry of Fisheries has also created an Inshore Fisheries Management Division to better equip itself to manage fish stocks and in turn, start increasing its compliance capacity.

As the Ministry of Fisheries gears up to enforce the kawakawa and donu seasonal ban, it has an

unprecedented coalition to do it. The town councils, which manage the fish markets across the country, have all pledged to work with the Ministry of Fisheries to support the enforcement of the ban. In addition, the Fiji Police Force has made similar high-level pledges to work through its community posts to inform the public and help enforce the ban. The Fiji Revenue and Customs Service is also committed to supporting the enforcement of the ban on exporters and the Fiji Navy will support the ban through targeted patrols.

What can I do if I see someone catching or selling kawakawa and donu?

The Ministry of Fisheries will need everyone's support to effectively enforce the kawakawa and donu seasonal ban. Right now, the town councils, the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service and Fiji Navy are stepping up. But everyone can help, including fishers, middlemen, market sellers, and consumers. We need to spread the word that the ban is in place. Let's give people a chance to do the right thing.

And where we see it being caught or sold, we can report it to the **Ministry of Fisheries** by calling:

- Nausori Fisheries Office: **3476587/9966752**
- Lami Fisheries Office: **3361122/9966745**
- Lautoka Fisheries Office: **6665899/9966759**
- Labasa Fisheries Office: **8812833/9966770**

You can also help by photographing any kawakawa and donu that is caught or on sale and sharing it on the campaign Facebook page (www.facebook.com/4fjmovement) or the Ministry of Fisheries Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/fisheriesfiji/>). Please note the location, seller if possible, and time of day to help document the incident for the Ministry of Fisheries.

Has the Public Been Adequately Informed of the Ban?

The 4FJ campaign, created by the non-profit cChange Pacific to support the Ministry of Fisheries, was launched in 2014 to raise awareness on the decline of these critical fish. Since 2014, it has been actively conducting outreach, through extensive media outreach, community visits, forums and through a diverse coalition of partners, including government ministries, traditional leaders, churches, town councils, the police, NGOs and scores of passionate individuals who have taken the message to their networks.

The Ministry of Fisheries and cChange have built on an extensive private sector outreach program to visit all fish sellers to inform them of the coming ban.

There is no environmental campaign in Fiji that has been as successful in engaging the public.

One measure of success is the voluntary pledges the campaign has received from people willing to forego eating these fish during their peak breeding months, what it called the 4FJ Pledge. The campaign has received more than 20,000 4FJ pledges from people across the country, from all walks of life. There have also been high profile

pledges from individuals and businesses, including, of note, Hon Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, and sports figures such as rugby legend Waisale Serevi, and two national supermarket chains, Max Value and Newworld IGA.

Through interviews and surveys, cChange has also found fishers and fish sellers, not to mention the general public, are aware of the 4FJ campaign and the decline of kawakawa and donu. In fact, we found in one survey conducted in the Suva-Nausori corridor that 93 percent of the public supported the 4-month ban.

For more information, visit www.4fjmovement.org or call the **Ministry of Fisheries**:

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