



Media Release – for immediate release

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Storm brewing around crayfish and scallops

Recreational fishers believe something smells off in recent proposals to manage selected regional fisheries, including crayfish and scallops. New Zealanders are missing out on these seafood delicacies because management favours commercial and export priorities ahead of public interests.

LegaSea supporters and New Zealand Sport Fishing Council affiliated clubs are particularly concerned about the overfished CRA2 area, covering the greater Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty, and the collapsed scallop fishery at the top of the South Island.

LegaSea is campaigning against ongoing management inequities.

LegaSea is also encouraging people nationwide to have a say and to support their submission using a simple online tool. www.legasea.co.nz/crayscallop

Commercial interests have for years dominated the advisory body to the Minister, the National Rock Lobster Management Group.

This Group proposes the Minister maintains CRA2 at a level that produces an average catch rate of 410 grams per potlift for the next 20 years.

In comparison, catch rates in adjoining areas are much higher. 1.7kg per potlift in Northland (CRA1), and 2.45kg on the East Coast (CRA3).

CRA2 is already the most depleted stock in New Zealand. Commercial fishing effort has increased from 250,000 potlifts in 1999 to a whopping 530,000 potlifts per year in 2012 for the same catch, 230 tonnes.

At this stage there is no proposed reduction to the annual recreational allowance.

LegaSea is concerned that public fishers are being denied reasonable access to crayfish due to low abundance. The public is only catching around 28% of their entitlement in CRA2.

Campaign coordinator Adam El-Agez, says, "This is just another symptom of a failing quota management system. Last year Nathan Guy, the Minister for Primary Industries, continued to support the loophole that allows commercial operators to catch undersized crayfish around the Gisborne coast - a blatant tool for denying the public catch so they can be exported to China".

"This year they seem intent on keeping the public in the Hauraki/BOP area scraping over the last few refugees of a collapsed fishery."

Mark Connor, President of the Sport Fishing Council is emphatic, "Crayfish are an important species in the coastal ecosystem and highly valued by customary and recreational fishers. The management proposals are too little too late. The public want real crayfish, not paper ones".

Mr. Connor is based in Canterbury and shares the ongoing concerns for the scallop fishery in Tasman and Golden Bay. This southern fishery was once praised as a shining example of industry self – management. It has also collapsed.

Last year the Bays were closed to commercial dredging by voluntary agreement, but the quota remained at 747 tonnes of scallop meat.

Commercial fishing effort has now shifted into the fragile and extremely significant recreational areas of the Marlborough Sounds.

"The industry and Ministry call this shared pain, shared gain. In reality it's just the same old story of public pain for commercial gain, says Mr El-Agez.

The Ministry proposed a reduction in quota to 46 tonne, but after pressure from the fishing industry released a late alternative of 416 tonne.

"Yet again the Ministry and Minister are being pressured into giving priority to commercial economic considerations over the sustainability of the stock and the public interest. If the scallop stock is less than 10% of the unfished population then it should be closed according to the Ministry's own policy" said Mr. Connor.

People can sign a letter to the Minister and support the LegaSea submission online at www.legasea.co.nz/crayscallop

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Contacts:

Adam El-Agez
LegaSea campaign coordinator
021 318575

Trish Rea
LegaSea liaison
0274 175121

Mark Connor
President, New Zealand Sport Fishing Council
0274 327485

Background information

LegaSea promotes fisheries management practices that will allow for 'more fish in the water'. www.legasea.co.nz

LegaSea brings together the energies and resources of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and other groups and individuals seeking to protect and conserve New Zealand's marine resources for future generations.

An estimated one million Kiwis enjoy fishing. Protecting our marine environment, our fisheries and public access is vital to maintaining our Kiwi lifestyle, and our national wellbeing.

LegaSea was launched in February 2012 to facilitate the people working together, raise public awareness, promote education, and to provide an opportunity for people to unite in action, to stand for and protect our precious marine resources for our people, our communities and for the future.

NZSFC-LegaSea submissions

Submission on the review of rock lobster (crayfish) sustainability measures for 1 April 2014

<http://www.legasea.co.nz/documents/CRA-submission-NZSFC-Feb14.pdf>

Submission on the review of sustainability measures for southern scallops (SCA 7) for 1 April 2014

<http://www.legasea.co.nz/documents/SCA7-submission-NZSFC-Feb14.pdf>

LegaSea campaigns

In 2013 LegaSea managed two successful campaigns –

Hands off our marlin

<http://www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-feedback.php>

SOS Save Our Snapper

<http://www.legasea.co.nz/snapper1.php>