



**April 2016**

## **Our fishing is worth billions**

By Trish Rea, LegaSea Liaison

Kiwis and tourists spend a billion dollars a year on recreational fishing but the benefits don't stop at the fish on the end of the line. This expenditure ripples through the country generating 1.7 billion dollars in economic activity and supporting over 8,100 jobs.

Our recreational fishing industry also contributes at least \$638 million to the New Zealand economy, so as recreational fishers we are more than paying our way. We make a significant contribution to the national economy, enhancing the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

### **Good news**

These results are just some of the good news included in a report: Recreational Fishing in New Zealand. A Billion Dollar Industry, by independent researchers Southwick Associates. The New Zealand Marine Research Foundation commissioned the research and LegaSea spearheaded the fundraising effort through the What's Fishing Worth? campaign later in 2015. [www.nzmrf.org.nz/value-of-recreational-fishing.php](http://www.nzmrf.org.nz/value-of-recreational-fishing.php)

This ought to be welcome news for our decision makers and treasurers who are wrestling with diminishing tax returns from the farming sector that is being crushed by falling commodity prices.

In our view this report provides enough evidence to support a recalibration of monetary focus - from low rent, bulk harvesting fishing practices to high value recreational uses of abundant fisheries.

For example, a fly fishing expedition targeting kahawai as part of a Lodge package must be more attractive and sustainable than wiping out entire schools to sell for a bizarre price (between \$1.30 and \$1.60 per kilo, whole frozen, no added value, no GST) to foreign shores. Add on a snorkeling trip, dolphin watching, a Maori cultural experience or wine tour and we are getting into bonus territory of having high abundance and diversity in our marine waters.

Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in New Zealand. More people are arriving, they are staying longer and spending more. We need to take advantage of the opportunities to offer low impact marine recreation experiences to our visitors.

## **What's the hold-up?**

The biggest handbrake is current fisheries management policy that tries to maximise catch, and largely ignores environmental factors to maintain bulk exports of our fish.

Having information on the size of the recreational fishing industry and the jobs this supports will help to refocus the compass onto the best use of our marine resources. However, this change in policy direction will only come about if it is based on sound economics and renewable sources of income, and this latest report provides that evidence in bucket loads.

## **Regional benefits**

People like to travel and fish during their holidays. This drives money out of the main centres into the regions, supporting much-needed jobs and businesses in coastal communities.

Without doubt, recreational fishing is a winner on a personal, regional and national level.

What we need now is a government committed to restoring abundance and diversity so we can maximise the value of our precious marine resources.

## **Take action**

It's easy to stand up for more abundant fisheries. Sign up to be a LegaSea Legend at [www.legasea.co.nz/legend](http://www.legasea.co.nz/legend).

## **ENDS**

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LegaSea is a public outreach initiative of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. The Council has an experienced fisheries management, science, policy and legal team. On behalf of the Council LegaSea raises funds and provides public-friendly information about a variety of processes that are important to restoring abundance in our fisheries for future generations.