

LegaSea Update 17
The Adventurer



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Marine protected areas nearby

By Trish Rea, LegaSea Liaison

A marine protected area is coming to a place near you if you live in a coastal community or fish in the sea. New legislation has been proposed and is expected back in parliament in late 2016. If you enjoy the sea's bounty LegaSea recommends you learn more about the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Act proposals and submit by March 11th.

The Government proposes four types of MPAs variously managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC), Ministry for the Environment, and Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). The proposed MPAs are marine reserves, species-specific sanctuaries, seabed reserves and recreational fishing parks, one in the Hauraki Gulf the other in the Marlborough Sounds.

Recreational fishers need to be cautious in their support for recreational fishing parks because there will be trade-offs and strings attached.

MPI records show fishing participation is dropping and recreational snapper catch in the Gulf has reduced by more than 50% since 2011-12.

On page 28 of the proposal document it states that there is increasing tension between fishers, and that on a typical day in the Hauraki Gulf there are up to recreational 6900 vessels carrying 21,000 fishers.

Bruce Hartill, NIWA's Group Manager and fisheries scientist, has been researching recreational catch in the Gulf for decades. He reports that the most popular fishing day on record is when an estimated 3200 boats were out in the Gulf carrying about 7700 fishers.

It is this type of misinformation, the incoherent consultation document, and vague answers from officials that leaves us wondering what to believe and questioning the real motive behind this process.

Another question is how will these parks be funded? We have already been told that DoC's compliance budget can be blown in weeks so we can't expect too much from that Department. And we already know from experience how stretched the fisheries budget is. There is no indication that any new money will be available after these parks are established.

Maybe the public will be expected to volunteer their time and effort to manage and monitor fishing activity in both the Gulf and Marlborough Sounds. How that will work while commercial fishers are still allowed to fish in the parks is unclear.

An advisory group will be established for each recreational fishing park. Group members will be drawn from commercial and recreational fishing, environmental, iwi, science, and community interests. They would be tasked with providing advice on park affairs to the Minister.

Our concern is that this would create another barrier between the public and Nathan Guy, the Minister responsible for providing abundant fisheries and protecting our rights and fishing interests.

Adding to these issues is the news that self reporting will be mandatory. All recreational fishers in the parks will need to report their daily catch.

We already know that self reporting is not an effective way to gather reliable data to determine annual harvest estimates so there must be another agenda underpinning this whole process. What that agenda is, is anyone's guess.

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.