

## **LegaSea Update January 2016**

### **Dive NZ**

By Trish Rea, LegaSea team



### **Recreational fishing parks**

At first glance recreational fishing parks with limited commercial fishing in the Hauraki Gulf and Marlborough Sounds seems like a good idea. However, we need to pause and consider the costs and test any potential conservation benefits in the government proposals.

Four types of Marine Protected Areas, including the parks, are discussed in a consultation document calling for submissions by March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

LegaSea will be promoting the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council's views via our online channels and we welcome your feedback.

In one sense the proposals are an admission that fisheries managers have failed to sustain fish populations at healthy levels.

Responsibility for the inshore space shifts into the hands of Conservation. This is a serious change, as non-commercial fishing interests (customary and recreational) are provided for and protected under the Fisheries Act 1996.

Another challenge is the prospect of a network of marine reserves. After years of striving for more abundant fisheries the spectre of closed areas with no active management and no real controls on excessive commercial catch and effort is disgraceful.

Instead, focus goes on families who are fishing to both put healthy food on the table and get the kids away from screen-time.

Recreational harvest is touted as being unmanaged and increasing, this is far from the truth. NIWA has conducted boat ramp surveys in the Hauraki Gulf for more than a decade; this ongoing research shows recreational effort is decreasing and harvest has reduced by more than 50% since 2011-12.

### **Summary**

At this stage there is no clear problem statement, just a reference to reducing spatial conflict and enhancing recreational fishing.

If we are serious about improving fishing success then we need to start with

enhancing our nearshore waters and increasing abundance, because there is far greater value in the recreational use of marine resources when compared with commercial exploitation.

It is nonsensical to discuss marine protection without addressing the loss of productivity and ecosystem degradation caused from land use. We need effective measures to reduce the high sediment and contaminant loads coming from agriculture, forestry and urban developments.

As a solution LegaSea proposes establishing an inshore zone limiting commercial fishing, managing to higher environmental standards and lowering commercial catch levels, thus motivating and incentivising people to conserve fish. In our view this is the most effective package of measures to restore abundance, improve catchability and provide for the public's expectations, health and wellbeing.

**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.