



NZ Fishing World – Introductory Article, May/June Edition.

By Mandy Kupenga

I'm just a regular Kiwi who fell in love with fishing five years ago.

I wasn't particularly interested in 'fishing politics' and just wanted to get out there and fish as often as I could.

Through LegaSea I found out what's really going on under the covers in the fishing industry and couldn't turn my back on. Last December I decided to muck in and started working for LegaSea.

The people I work with are passionate and inspirational. I'm proud to be part of the LegaSea team, and really grateful to be able to share with you a bit about us.

So what is LegaSea all about?

LegaSea is all about preserving, enhancing and protecting the health of New Zealand's fisheries.

We believe that the one million Kiwis' that fish every year have the right to a voice in all fisheries management decisions.

For too long now decisions being made are largely in favour of short term economic gains for a few. These are threatening the current and future of fishing for everyday Kiwi's.

Sounds unbelievable right? New Zealand is clean, green and has bountiful waters that will always provide for us right? Well, hang on to your fishing tackle boxes cause the truth is gonna hurt folks.

There is a real possibility that our children and grandchildren will miss out.

Today trevally is virtually non existent in the Manukau harbour, undersized crayfish are being taken legally by commercial fishermen

around Gisborne, scallops in the Coromandel are being stripped, yellow fin tuna are practically extinct in New Zealand waters, marlin is at risk, fishing dumping happens, by-catch is problematic, the list goes on...

I know, I know, heavy stuff New Zealand. However, we can no longer afford to change the channel, ignore the articles and close our eyes to the state of our fisheries.

Fishing is a simple privilege we enjoy that some countries have lost through overfishing and weak fisheries management. We don't want to be in the same boat.

What is its purpose?

LegaSea's purpose is to ensure the health and well being of our fisheries for everyday kiwi fishos.

This is no small task and requires a dedicated, passionate group of experts and campaigners to work tirelessly, often going against our own NZ government and industry heavy hitters with deep pockets.

Not to worry my friends, we're not mucking about. We are well represented by expert researchers and fisheries management advocates at the NZ Sport Fishing Council who have ground-breaking accomplishments under their belts.

Outside of the political arena we promote education programmes benefitting both individuals and communities.

You may have seen one of our LegaSea Legends Matt Watson promoting FreeFishHeads.co.nz. This is an easy way to reduce unnecessary waste and foster community spirit.

Also, your children may have met Hiwi the Kiwi, the travelling Minstrel who tours around schools teaching our kids about water safety and sustainable fishing.

What was the catalyst for LegaSea to come into existence?

New Zealand fisheries management has been in the shadows for too long. Poor decisions are being made by our Government, (preying on the public's lack of awareness).

The NZSFC has had a key role in NZ keeping the decision makers honest. With many years of experience they have done a fantastic job representing their 32,000 members.

So where does that leave the other 800,000 odd kiwis who fish every year?

That's where LegaSea comes in. We are here to offer you the chance to contribute and support the people fighting hard for our rights – so that we can continue to enjoy good fishing.

In your opinion, what are the biggest issues facing recreational fishing in New Zealand today?

The biggest issue facing recreational fishing today is a government biased toward the commercial fishing sector. This has led to the everyday people of NZ being overpowered at the fisheries management negotiating table.

This is why we need to raise awareness of what's going on. Ask a recreational fisho to outline the "issues" facing them today you'll more than likely face a stony silence.

The Government is taking this silence from the public as a green light to continue what they're doing.

For example, what do you think people would do if they knew that snapper bag limits could be decreased this year so that snapper quota can increase?

Or that in the Coromandel there's been a 500% increase in commercial catch limit for scallops?

Or that undersized crayfish can be legally taken by commercial fishing boats in the Gisborne region to meet markets demands for small crayfish in Asia?

LegaSea believes that the everyday kiwi fisho would act given the chance to voice their opinion. With support we have an opportunity to express up to one million voices to ensure our fisheries are managed with us in mind.

What do you think LegaSea can achieve for the average Kiwi fisho?

LegaSea is here to ensure that Kiwi fishos have the opportunity to enjoy our bountiful ocean, today and in the future.

We all want to catch fish right? So whether you're a diehard fisher or the occasional weekend fisher we all have a part to play in ensuring

the next generation gets a fair go.

“Sustainability to ensure the survival of our fisheries” should sound as exciting to you as a day on the water.

Does LegaSea see itself as opposition to commercial fishermen or is it possible for recreational and commercial bodies to work together?

Working together is really important. LegaSea is not opposed to commercial fishing or fishermen who make their livelihood from the sea.

We oppose unsustainable commercial fishing methods and we believe that the commercial sector is largely responsible for depleting stocks to the point that they are not regarded as healthy. This exploitation is endorsed by our Government.

Some commercial fishing methods result in destructive by-catch and senseless killing of whole schools of fish, juveniles, and large species such as marlin, dolphins and sharks.

We work with the Government (Ministry for Primary Industries) and commercial fishing companies. We're constantly proposing ways to improve fishing practices and make positive changes.

What is LegaSea's ultimate goal?

Our ultimate goal is to ensure New Zealand has thriving and abundant fisheries and a healthy marine environment that all Kiwis can enjoy now and in the future.

What can fishos do to get involved with Legasea?

Get involved New Zealand. Join us by visiting www.legasea.co.nz.

Volunteer your time and expertise. We're always looking for passionate and talented people.

Spread the word, together we can make a difference. Awareness is power, talk to your friends, family and workmates.

Make a financial contribution to LegaSea. No matter how big or small, every cent builds our fighting fund that will be used to fight for change.

Join our mailing list. This way we can keep you up to date with issues that affect you and celebrate positive changes we make together.

