



LegaSea news medley

Thanks for your feedback at the recent Hutchwilco Boat Show and online. In response, LegaSea is changing its format to give you broader news coverage from our fisheries, research and advocacy teams. Your ongoing feedback is welcome and can be sent to info@legasea.co.nz.

1.

Snapper 1 discussions

The multi-stakeholder snapper Strategy Group has had three meetings, with the fourth due in mid-June. Our recreational representatives are keen to get stuck into discussing the important issues of management targets to increase overall biomass in Area 1, but it is slow going.

Increasing biomass means having a thriving population of more and bigger fish, and an opportunity to restore the marine ecosystem between North Cape and the eastern Bay of Plenty.

There are overseas examples of fisheries being managed at higher levels compared to what is applied here and New Zealand needs to be heading into this more abundant realm.

We also need to recognise our mixed species fisheries. Snapper do not live in isolation; they are trawled up alongside other, less robust species such as gurnard and tarakihi.

LegaSea is keen to have snapper and our other inshore species managed at the level called B40. That is rebuilding our fisheries to a level that equates to 40% of the estimated unfished stock size. That is about double what we currently have in Snapper 1.

And to be meaningful the rebuild needs to occur in a reasonable timeframe.

The Ministry for Primary Industries has a Harvest Strategy Standard that outlines acceptable timeframes, depending on the species and state of the stock.

Bay of Plenty snapper

Snapper 1 is divided into three sub-stocks, East Northland, Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty. The BOP sub-stock is estimated to be below 10% of its unfished size. If this sub-stock were managed on its own it would be classified as being below the 'Hard Limit'.

The Strategy's description of the limits is,

"Hard limit - if this is breached, fisheries will be considered for closure until the stock has rebuilt to at least the level of the soft limit with an acceptable probability (70%)".

"Soft limit – if this is breached, a formal, time-constrained, rebuilding plan is to be implemented."

So far no formal management actions are directed to rebuilding the Bay of Plenty snapper fishery even though it is below 10%.

For Bay of Plenty fishers (and many other areas around the country) the simple, most immediate remedy would be to shift trawlers out, well past the breakers.

Doing this would address local concerns about the extent of inshore trawling, the damage caused to fish stocks, nursery grounds and the seabed. To date locals' complaints have fallen on deaf ears.

Given that the fishery is below the Ministry's hard limit, the ongoing community concerns and the willingness of people to conserve fish for future generations, now is the time to be actively rebuilding our fisheries to abundant levels.

2.

South Island snapper

Snapper 7 extends west from the Marlborough Sounds to Greymouth. It is not a big fishery in catch terms, but it is important recreationally given the strict rules applying to blue cod.

Within the Marlborough Sounds the snapper daily catch limit is three per person. Further afield to the west, over "a line in the water," the daily limit is 10 pp. (A consistent daily bag limit i.e. 6pp, seems more manageable and fair.) The Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) is 200 tonnes.

We were expecting a management review this year, but this has been deferred.

Preliminary results suggest the fishery is above the Ministry's 'Soft limit', but nowhere near the default management target of B40. That is a level equal to 40% of the estimated unfished stock size.

Between the late 1950s and 1980 this southern fishery was thrashed to very low levels. Stories of spotter planes and trawlers targeting spawning aggregations are common from that time.

A fishery that has been severely depleted is likely to have a distorted age structure, with few large, productive fish, and lots of juveniles. So not only do we lose the productivity of healthy adults, there is an over-reliance on small fish. More small fish are killed per tonne of quota and that is not good for future prospects.

From the latest, preliminary assessment it seems the snapper 7 fishery is relying on a couple of successful recruitment years. The summers of 2007 and 2008 have produced a pulse of fish that is contributing a lot to the overall state of the fishery.

For the future sustainability of the fishery we need these fish to continue to grow big and strong and produce lots of healthy young ones.

Another year of zero commercial catch increases is a win for this fishery, the marine environment and the people at the top of the South Island.

3.

Building LegaSea

“To rebuild our fishery we need qualified tradesmen”

This sums up LegaSea’s new engagement campaign that is targeted at New Zealand’s construction industry.

Statistics reveal that Kiwis involved in all aspects of construction whether in materials supply, plumbing, building, electrical, machinery and even design, love to fish.

Fishing is as much the subject of conversation on the building site as is the weather.

Construction industry companies can now officially join the Building LegaSea project for an affordable monthly contribution and receive a list of quality rewards and benefits in return.

LegaSea was approached by a number of passionate construction industry leaders with a logical suggestion, “if you’ve got a big building project why don’t you get the New Zealand construction industry to help?”

This insight has evolved into the new “Building LegaSea” funding and support initiative with its own unique identity.

It is designed to attract the support of all entities involved in our construction industry, and even the dentists and mechanics that keep our tradies going!

Building LegaSea is enabling a range of entities to join forces and empower LegaSea to achieve better fisheries management of our wild and valuable marine resources.

Commercial fishers trawling inshore have “hammered” our stocks of popular recreational species. This, combined with the high juvenile mortality rates and dumping of unwanted fish, puts a real strain on our ability to develop a healthier fishery, long term.

LegaSea is now talking to the construction industry because building and fishing is in their blood.

By putting fishing and building together we have a far better chance of rebuilding our fishery than we've ever had.

A few weeks into the campaign LegaSea can report an unprecedented level of support and understanding from construction industry leaders, big and small.

"It is so refreshing talking to the guys in the construction industry about the challenges we face in attempting to rebuild our fisheries," says Building LegaSea Project Leader, Simon Yates.

"Each time we take a step forward in a rebuild effort the Minister for Primary Industry just ups the commercial quota to tear it down again. Our builders don't take too kindly to seeing hours and hours of hard labour torn down as the roof is about to go on.

"Now we have an industry of fishers that really care about an abundant fishery and meaningful fishing experience for our future generations.

"It's time to stop getting nailed by poor fisheries management."

To find out more about Building LegaSea and to get involved contact LegaSea. Email us at building@legasea.co.nz or visit www.legasea.co.nz/building

4.

Marlborough Sounds blue cod

Frustrated recreational representatives in the Marlborough Sounds are pleased Nathan Guy has acknowledged their management concerns, but are dismayed it has taken eight months to receive a response from the Minister for Primary Industries.

After sending two letters and a delegation to Wellington the Marlborough Recreational Fishers Association's (MRFA) concerns were seemingly ignored until May this year. Minister Guy eventually apologised, saying the letter got "lost in the system"!

The MRFA is calling for:

- The abolition of the slot rule, currently limiting recreational catch to blue cod between 30-35cm only;
- Restoration of the daily bag limit, from two per person, to 4 or 5.
- Abolition of the transit rule, banning the transport of more than 2 blue cod per person through the Sounds;
- The fishing closure during August and September to apply to all fishers, not just recreational interests.

There are other measures that discriminate against recreational interests in the Sounds, and after years of inaction by his Ministry the MRFA is keen to talk through those measures and offer constructive alternatives to the Minister.

This is more than just a local election issue, because fishers from Nelson, Marlborough, Christchurch and Wellington are affected by the strict regime applying in the Sounds.

Clearly what we all need is a Minister that cares enough to respond in a timely and positive manner.

ENDS

P: 0800 LEGASEA (534 273)

E: info@legasea.co.nz

W: www.legasea.co.nz

FB: www.facebook.com/legasea