



More fishing opportunities with abundance

1.

Tip the Scales campaign

Thanks to everyone who went online and added your signature to the list of caring fishos supporting LegaSea's 5 principles. As recreational fishers this was our chance to Tip the Scales towards sustainable abundance, balance and fairness in fisheries management.

Prior to the election it was also an opportunity to show the politicians that we care a lot for our fisheries and ensuring we leave a legacy of abundance for future generations.

LegaSea's 5 principles are:

1. Let's rebuild the fishery.
2. Stop senseless waste.
3. Our fisheries are publicly owned.
4. Equal size limits for all.
5. Value recreational fishing.

Earlier in the year these principles were sent with specific policy recommendations to all of the political parties, to help them develop public friendly fisheries policy. LegaSea scored each party policy according to its alignment with these 5 principles. If you want to see the final scores, from zero to 100 then go online to Facebook or LegaSea.co.nz/tipthescales. You may be surprised at the results.

2.

Principle 1 – lets rebuild the fishery

Nearly all our inshore fish stocks are sitting below the international best practice standard for sustainability, defined as at least 40% of the original stock size that existed prior to fishing.

Historically, fisheries managers have targeted a much lower level, around 20 to 25%. Commercial fishers seem content to fish down stocks and then keep those fisheries depleted. As long as a profit is made within a reasonable time there is no pressure to change.

For example, the Bay of Plenty snapper stock is estimated to be below 10% of its original size. If it was a stand-alone fishery it would be termed collapsed and considered for closure. But because it is just one of three sub-sets in Area 1,

between North Cape and the BOP, there is no urgency in addressing this depletion.

LegaSea's solution

If the snapper stock is rebuilt to 40% of its original size there will be benefits for all sectors. Productivity will improve, there will be a broader size range, and more fish will be able to be taken without depleting the stock.

To achieve a rebuild we need to kill less fish each year. We also need to adopt a more modern "ecosystem wide" approach to management, one that takes into account the interdependence of different species. After all, fish don't live in isolation and neither do we. Let's work together to rebuild our fisheries.

3.

Principle 2 – stop senseless waste

Millions of small, mostly immature, fish are killed and discarded every year. We cannot rebuild the fishery and manage for abundance while this level of mortality continues.

A common cause of this gross waste is the use of unselective and archaic fishing methods. Danish seining and trawling in particular are wasteful and unpopular.

Industry and taxpayers have invested more than \$50 million dollars into developing new technology aimed at reducing this unproductive waste.

So far we have been denied access to any research results. We need proof that the senseless waste of our precious juvenile fish is finally being addressed.

Most recreational fishers releasing live fish expect they are conserving fish for the future. Fish that are lip hooked and caught in depths less than 25m have a better chance of survival, with a few conditions.

Fish caught in depths over 30m will have punctured or very distended swim bladders. Survival of these fish is far less certain, and varies with species.

LegaSea's solution

Until they can meet high standards of selectivity and do less damage to the environment, bulk-harvesting methods such as trawling need to be banned from within the 100m contour.

We also need to identify significant and nursery areas that need protection from fishing, preserving suitable habitat where juvenile fish can grow to adult size.

Recreational fishers also need to reduce waste. People have lots of good ideas and we heard many of those during last year's snapper campaign.

LegaSea calls for investment into resourcing a meaningful process so we, the public, can research, consult and devise ways to conserve fish to accelerate the fishery rebuild.

BREAK OUT BOX – START

1994 report still under wraps

To better understand wastage caused by commercial fishing we need the Minister to release the 1994 Trawl Mortality Report. Despite repeated Official Information Act requests the Ministry continue to refuse its release.

Hiding this 20-year old information only leads to distrust and doubt.

LegaSea can only conclude the report reveals data that would horrify the public.

What else can surmise when our latest request was refused on the grounds that it is subject to a confidentiality agreement with the Fishing Industry Board?

That the Board was dissolved 13 years ago and any assets or liabilities likely transferred to the Crown.

If the Ministry is serious about addressing unnecessary waste caused by fishing the first priority ought to be targeting the most serious offender, trawling.

BREAK OUT BOX - ENDS

4.

Principle 3 – Our fisheries are publicly owned

All of the fish in our Exclusive Economic Zone belong to the people of New Zealand. The government manages those fish on behalf of all of us.

The Quota Management System (QMS) enables the Minister to exercise his discretion when allocating catching rights for commercial use.

Public fishing remains outside of the QMS, and the Minister is obliged to manage fisheries sustainably to enable us to provide for our social, economic and cultural wellbeing, and to ensure there is enough fish to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.

Currently our fisheries are being exploited for private profit and no resource rental is being paid to us, the owners of the resource. This is highly unusual. Other industries that exploit the public estate pay rentals to the Crown, including forestry, concessionary activities on the public estate, marine farming and oil and gas ventures.

We are missing out on significant revenue, while the rentals are being captured by quota owners.

For example, about \$15 of every kilo of snapper fillets sold in supermarkets is paid to the quota owner by the fisherman. That fisherman only receives a few dollars for himself, yet he did all the hard work!

There is no excuse for allowing the public royalty for exploitation of our fisheries resources to be captured by private interests. A monopoly is created and this drives dumping and illegal activities, destroying all the benefits that could be accrued from having a quota system.

LegaSea's solution

Learn from Iceland's mistakes. Iceland is dismantling their quota system that failed to deliver benefits to the national economy. They are working to ensure the wealth generated by the use of their fisheries is shared with the nation.

Here in Aotearoa we need to impose a royalty on commercial fishing so that our country, and our children, get fair compensation for the private use, the environmental impacts, and sale of the fisheries resources that we all own.

If implemented well royalties could:

- Deliver a national income from fishing.
- Reduce the retail cost of fish.
- Reduce the corporate monopoly price pressure that drives illegal activity and dumping.
- Reduce the cost of quota, allowing smaller operators in coastal communities to be able to afford to return to fishing.

5.

Principle 4 – Equal size limits for all

Management inequities enable commercial fishers to profit from catching and selling fish that recreational fishers must return to the sea. That is because in some fisheries commercial minimum size limits are smaller than recreational limits. Commercial catch of small fish keeps the stock size small and denies us recreational opportunities.

Size differentials apply in a range of fisheries, including snapper, crayfish, scallops and kingfish. These inequities exist for no biological purpose. It is a blatant way of transferring public catch to private interests, creating an unfair advantage.

LegaSea's solution

Size limits on fish ought to be set for biological reasons to ensure sustainability. They should never be used to give priority to commercial interests.

Recreational minimum size limits ought to apply to commercial catch. Protecting young fish will have long-term benefits for the fishery. Area or method controls may be required.

6.

Principle 5 – Value recreational fishing

In a world where many political decisions are based on financial outcomes it is only fair and reasonable to ascertain the true value of recreational fishing, so that decisions can be balanced accordingly.

A US study found that a fish caught recreationally is worth 69 times more to the national economy than a commercially caught fish. This study is now influencing how some fisheries are managed.

LegaSea's solution

Our Ministry estimates 31% of New Zealanders participate in recreational fishing. We must establish a value for recreational fishing so that Ministerial decisions can be balanced according to the wellbeing of our people and country.

Let's rid ourselves of the speculation and get some proper research into how much we spend on fishing, travel, accommodation, bait, ice, tackle and capital investment in boats, rods and reels. Not forgetting the popular fishing media, tourism, entertainment, TV, videos, contests, festivals, clubs and community hubs around fishing. Fishing is worth plenty to NZ Inc!

ENDS

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