



1.

Coastal zones for public fishing

If ever there was a time for coastal zones free from industrial fishing it is now.

There is increasing concern from coastal communities about the lack of fish, shellfish and poor water quality inshore. Local groups are trying their best to deal with a raft of problems but there are few institutional structures to support their needs.

LegaSea acknowledges the Quota Management System may be a good mechanism for managing fisheries such as hoki, but it is clearly not a good fit for inshore fisheries where public interests in abundance and fishing need to be paramount.

From the outside it seems the QMS is ideal, given that current management is based on the concept of sustainability. Problem is, for many inshore stocks this concept has come to mean sustainable depletion, that is, how many fish can we extract year after year without causing collapse?

As public fishers we need abundant inshore fisheries that provide for our social, economic and cultural wellbeings. This is not rocket science, this is the very purpose of the Fisheries Act – to maintain abundant fisheries to enable people to provide for their wellbeings, and keep sufficient stocks in the water to sustain future generations.

LegaSea is discussing the principle of coastal zones, where communities can extract greater value from their marine resources simply by having access to more abundant fisheries.

This means identifying a coastal zone extending from the waters edge, moving industrial fishing methods and practices further offshore, and making commercial fishing a discretionary, by approval-only activity in the inshore zone.

We don't have to look far to see how successful this concept could be. Maori, as part of their 1992 Settlement, were given the ability to implement various forms of customary marine protection mechanisms including mataitai reserves. Commercial fishing is automatically excluded from a mataitai while recreational and customary fishing continues. There are now some very productive areas where local Maori have successfully managed the marine resources for the community.

LegaSea is keen to get the coastal zone discussion underway. It will be one of the issues covered in the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council submission in response to the fisheries system review. If there is enough support for the concept from officials there will be more discussion in 2016.

It has been 30 years since the Quota Management System was introduced to curb rampant commercial fishing effort and rebuild our depleted inshore fisheries. While the system has had some success there are fundamental issues that continue to undermine its usefulness. Those shortcomings are often ignored when the QMS is trumpeted as "world leading".

New Zealand could regain its reputation as fisheries managers by demonstrating inspirational leadership - by designing coastal zones to rebuild abundance, to provide for local interests in conservation and to extract greater value from our marine environment.

To get there we first need to acknowledge that while the quota system might be a suitable mechanism to feed the world, it is inflexible when it comes to serving public interests at home.

It's time for change. It's time we had coastal zones for public fishing in New Zealand.

2.

Snapper management plan

By now the Minister for Primary Industries would have received the plan recommending measures to guide the future management of Snapper 1, on the northeast coast of the North Island. It will be up to Nathan Guy to decide what happens to the plan and if it will be released for further consultation.

This planning process to set management objectives and strategies has been underway for two years and is a result of the public outcry in 2013 after the Ministry released controversial management proposals for Snapper 1.

We all learnt valuable lessons from the 2013 debacle.

LegaSea established itself as the public face of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. We learned that people are willing to conserve fish for future generations, but are unwilling to conserve fish just to increase exports or prop up excessive commercial catch limits.

The proposed research to collect better information on snapper in area one, using a large scale tagging programme and recreational harvest surveys, will take time and money. It could be several years before the next stock assessment is available and the Minister is asked to make the next snapper decision. In the meantime all fishers

need to work on ways to ensure snapper stocks rebuild and juvenile mortality and waste is reduced.

There have been a lot of small snapper around for the last two years. A strong year class would boost snapper numbers if they get the chance to grow on. The best way to ensure the survival of small fish is not to catch them in the first place. This applies to commercial and recreational fishers.

If you are catching a lot of small fish then try moving to another fishing spot. Have a go at using modern soft baits and jigs - they are good at catching larger fish and are not as attractive to small fish. Commercial fishers have their own move-on rule and are trialing new net technology.

Making positive changes to our fishing practices will contribute to the rebuild of our precious snapper fishery. And a rebuilt fishery has got to be good for all of us.

3.

Information request update

Two Official Information Act requests were submitted at the end of October. Both OIA requests sought information about reported mortality due to commercial fishing off the east and west coasts of the North Island.

By mid November Ministry had actioned one request related to the frequency and amount of fish reported as 'accidental loss'. These are fish lost due to net splits, gear failure or adverse events. If a loss occurs the skipper must estimate the amount of fish lost and record that on their catch landing report.

In the past few months there have been several discoveries of slicks of dead fish on both the east and west coasts. News of this wastage has created a wave of reaction in the media. After generating widespread interest the Ministry investigated and received reports from the offending vessels.

More recently Ministry has advised that skippers are now reporting 'accidental loss' events before they are reported in the media. This is a positive development.

It also enables closer scrutiny of mortality caused by bulk harvesting fishing methods.

November 27th is the deadline for Ministry to respond to our second request asking for information relating to the capture of juvenile snapper off the North Island's northeast coast.

In our view, when it comes to making fisheries management information available there is no threat to national security. Fisheries are a national resource. Any

exploitation of our marine resources needs to be open to public comment, especially if that resource is then being on-sold for private profit.

LegaSea will continue to support more transparency in our decision making, science and monitoring processes so we can all contribute to more abundant fisheries in the future.

4.

Positive changes in our fisheries team

LegaSea is a public outreach initiative of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. Each month 100% of public donations to LegaSea are transferred to the Council and applied to fisheries management, advocacy, research and education. LegaSea's operating costs are met by corporate sponsorship and target donations.

There are six people on the Council's Fisheries Management sub-committee deciding what submissions are developed and who and what engagement is made with the Ministry, commercial and other organisations. They are Peter Campbell (chair), Mark Connor, Richard Baker, Scott Macindoe, and the most recent volunteers are Wayne Bicknell and Lewis Avenell.

Volunteer: Lewis Avenell (picture) credit Dale O'Donoghue

Lives in: Papakura, South Auckland

Fishing likes: Big game fishing, small boat day missions and (learner) fly fisherman.

Why I joined the Fisheries Management sub-committee: I was so impressed with the quality of the reports and submissions that the Fisheries Management team were putting together I knew I wanted to be part of it. I have always had a curiosity for how the fisheries are run so this is my big chance to jump in the deep end and give myself a challenge.

Aspirations: To continue the culture that our Fisheries Management team has created, to be reasonable, to be the sensible voice. To be part of a team who are working together to achieve the goal of rebuilding our fisheries to 40% of their original stock size.

As much as I plan (dream) to travel the world to hotspots like Cairns, Cabo and Hawaii, I want the world's sportfishers to dream and plan of coming to New Zealand because we have a world class abundant fishery.

Ultimately, success would be having all recreational anglers in this country standing for and supporting LegaSea's 5 Principles.

Hot Tip

Seabirds use sight and smell to hunt for food. The best way to catch fish instead of birds is not attract them in the first place. Keep fish scraps and old bait in a covered bucket while you fish.



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.