



1.

Pathway to prosperity from fisheries reforms

Exposing flaws in the current fisheries management framework and offering innovative solutions were all part of the LegaSea submission to the recent fisheries system review. We are now on standby for the next part of the process, to discuss the major issues raised by all submitters and potential law changes.

In the submission we encourage reforms because major changes to current management are required if New Zealand wants to both benefit from restored abundance and generate greater value from our fisheries.

Joint contributors to the submission were the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and affiliated members, the New Zealand Angling and Casting Association and LegaSea supporters. More discussion with the Ministry for Primary Industries policy team is expected by mid-year. <http://goo.gl/p1DtTf>

Underpinning the submission is the increasing public awareness of the need to grow New Zealand's wealth and provide for people's health and wellbeing by applying LegaSea's 5 Principles. www.legasea.co.nz/5principles.

5 Principles of LegaSea – Fishing for Abundance:

1. Let's rebuild the fishery.
2. Stop senseless waste.
3. The public (NZ Inc) owns the fishery.
4. Equal size limits for all.
5. Value recreational fishing.

In brief, we submitted that the Quota Management System is not all it is cracked up to be.

In 30 years the QMS has delivered some economic benefits from exploiting large volume, deepwater stocks, but the same system burns value in popular near-shore stocks.

There are alternative ways to use fewer resources and deliver greater value for NZ Inc, but that will require a sea change in thinking and management, starting with setting higher environmental standards and sticking to them.

We also emphasised the need for more transparency. There are vast amounts of data from commercial and recreational fishers in Ministry databases that is locked away because of confidentiality or privacy concerns.

The information that forms the basis for management decisions must be made publicly available in a machine-readable format. This would allow for an in-depth understanding of what is going on, and the ability to share that information with a broad audience.

How the Government responds to feedback from this review will be interesting because, while they rely on high quality advice and honesty from officials, National has set a target of doubling the export value of primary produce by 2025.

This fisheries system assessment has come at a good time because we can draw on the experience of Iceland, who recently reviewed and renewed their quota system. Their changes were designed to increase the national and regional benefits derived from fishing. Some of their lessons could be adapted and applied here so we can generate increased value from each fish caught.

Value generators could include royalties charged on each kilo of commercially caught fish, and managing fisheries at more abundant levels to take advantage of increased tourism.

New Zealand's largest and fastest growing industry is tourism and there is enormous potential to generate value from sport and recreational fishing opportunities for international and domestic travellers.

We must take this opportunity to refresh and improve New Zealand's Quota Management System for the next 30 years. If done well we could soon enjoy a greater abundance of fish and higher catchability of quality fish, while handing onto the next generation a more prosperous society.

2.

Curious proposals to protect marine areas

Recent government proposals to create recreational fishing parks in the Hauraki Gulf and Marlborough Sounds as a solution to enhancing recreational fishing are curious given that none of the measures will restore fish abundance or catchability.

These recreational fishing parks have drawn attention away from the three other types of Marine Protected Areas proposed for the 12 nautical mile (nm) Territorial Sea - a network of marine reserves, seabed reserves and species sanctuaries.

Consultation on the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Act is a joint effort between the Ministers for Primary Industries, Conservation and Environment.

LegaSea encourages you to make a submission before the 11th March deadline.

Mixed response to proposals

Including the recreational fishing parks in the MPA discussion document has drawn criticism from many quarters, including commercial and recreational fishers, some environmentalists who want tighter controls on amateur fishers and reserves out to the 200nm limit, and Maori who are struggling to establish their own stake in the inshore zone.

LegaSea will be promoting the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council's views via our online channels. Please keep updated as new information is emerging as we dig deeper into the objectives and implications of these proposals.

If the government is committed to enhancing the enjoyment and value of recreational fishing then it must get serious about restoring abundance, by reducing wastage and the impacts of commercial fishing.

A marine park has existed in the wider Hauraki Gulf since the year 2000. Little regard has been given to the statutory obligations to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Gulf and its islands, as matters of national significance.

There is no doubt that snapper fishing in the Gulf has improved from the low levels of the 1990s. In recent years surveys show that recreational snapper catch has declined by more than 50%. This decline didn't occur because there is no recreational fishing park, it declined because the fish did not move inshore and stay for summer the way they had in 2011 and 2012!

Drawing lines on a map that fish cannot read is clearly a waste of time.

A simple solution

From our perspective the solution to enhancing recreational fishing is a simple one – clearly identify the problem and devise solutions to address those issues.

Nutrient loadings and contaminants from land use entering waterways and choking nursery areas have already been identified as the major threat to the Gulf. Further out, the damage caused by mobile bulk harvesting methods such as trawling has dramatically changed the seabed and the life it supports.

A recent study of the Marlborough Sounds found sedimentation from forestry activities and trawling, and dredges scouring channels in the seabed, was causing significant damage to the local ecology. Locals are supporting a marine biologist's call to ban trawling and scallop dredging from sensitive areas within the Sounds.

We don't need MPAs that just shift fishing effort from one area into someone else's waters. We support a durable solution, an integrated package of measures to increase fish abundance, improve catchability and one that provides for the public's expectations, health and wellbeing. That package includes:

- an inshore zone with limited commercial fishing;
- managing to higher environmental standards; and
- lowering commercial catch levels.

3.

International spotlight on New Zealand's underreported fish catch

Up to 60 per cent of historical commercial catch taken from New Zealand's marine environment is unreported. Under reporting is widespread and deliberate according to a global report by eminent scientists, the Universities of British Columbia and Auckland.

LegaSea spokesperson, Richard Baker, says recreational fishers are concerned that the report, released in January, exposes major flaws in New Zealand's Quota Management System (QMS) and our fisheries officials' ability to monitor and control excess commercial catch.

"New Zealanders, including our politicians, have repeatedly been sold the line that our Quota Management System is world leading and that every kilo of fish caught commercially is reported, this latest report dispels that myth.

"Sadly New Zealand's reputation as a good steward of marine resources is now blown apart and we have a lot of work to do to regain international confidence in our management systems."

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) collects data from marine fishing nations. This recent study involved reconstructing actual catch from 200 nations between 1950 and 2010, then comparing those results to the reported landings sent to the FAO. The research reveals 30 per cent of catch worldwide is unreported.

New Zealand's real catch between 1950 and 2010 is estimated to be 40 million tonnes, about 2.9 times more than the 14 million tonnes reported by our government to the FAO for that timeframe. Since the quota system was introduced in 1986 total catch is estimated to be 2.2 times more than the reports to the FAO.

The researchers consider recreational and customary catch to be an insignificant contributor to the unreported catch. The National Panel Survey measured the total recreational catch in 2011-12 at 12,000 to 15,000 tonnes whereas the reported commercial catch is around 430,000 tonnes.

The major discrepancy is the unreported catch and discards by industrial fishing vessels, some of which are foreign flagged vessels chartered to New Zealand companies.

The researchers note the need for more transparent and open management practices by companies and government officials.

“If there is a positive to come out of this conversation it is the realisation that trusting in a self reporting regime largely managed by fishers doesn’t guarantee accurate data. Self reporting by recreational fishers has been discussed recently as a means to monitor recreational catch, these research results have just put a massive hole in that bucket”, added Mr. Baker.

More info about this research is online at the Sea Around Us site <http://www.searoundus.org>.

Hot Tip

Catching seabirds can be a hazard especially when stray line fishing. Most seabirds fish within six metres of the surface so if seabirds are present and are at risk of getting hooked, add weights to your line so your bait sinks quickly. More info at www.legasea.co.nz/seabirds.



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.