



22 MAY 2013

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MARLIN NOT FOR SALE**

Regulations protecting striped marlin as a recreational-only fishery are under threat by commercial fishermen who want to keep and sell marlin.

The Ministry for Primary Industries appears to be wavering in their support for the existing regulations. They will be advising the Minister, Nathan Guy, who will then decide whether to retain the status quo.

Recreational fishing groups are adamant that marlin must remain a non-commercial species. They are calling on recreational fishers to sign the online position statement at [www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php](http://www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php)

Richard Baker, the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council spokesperson, says the Council rejects any proposal to remove the non-commercial status of marlin in New Zealand.

“Our striped marlin fishery is world-class and it generates around \$90 million per annum for the country. Many tourists tag and release their catch and this effort helps to conserve fish stocks while contributing to important data collection.

“Council records show declining recreational catches in recent years, despite improved technology. Having a healthy marlin fishery contributes to the national economy and the wellbeing of people and businesses in our coastal communities.”

Existing regulations have been in place since the 1987 moratorium banning the commercial capture and sale of marlin.

Swordfish was reclassified as a bycatch species in exchange for the 1987 regulations protecting striped marlin. Swordfish is no longer a bycatch; it has become a major target species for surface longliners.

In 2010 the southwest Pacific striped marlin was in an overfished state.

Since 2010 there has been an exponential increase in the number of Chinese-funded fishing vessels in the region.

Recreational interests are disturbed that surface longlining and purse seining has already lead to the demise of the once-thriving yellowfin tuna fishery. They do not want a similar decline in striped marlin.

Sheryl Hart, spokesperson for the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council, is very concerned, “Issuing commercial quota for striped marlin will inevitably lead to more fish dying due to commercial fishing.”

LegaSea has launched a web campaign to enable people to voice their concerns to the Minister and other party fisheries spokespersons.

Mandy Kupenga, LegaSea's National project leader, is positive that people will support the cause.

"Recreational fishers are passionate about taking care of our fishing resources. LegaSea is giving all New Zealanders an opportunity to be heard, and to support the people fighting on our behalf"

Ms. Kupenga urges people to get online and take advantage of the simple online tool at [www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php](http://www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php)

LegaSea is the public outreach brand of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council.

## **ENDS**

### **For more information:**

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Website [www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php](http://www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-position-statement.php)

Website [www.nzsportfishing.org.nz/index.cfm/pageid/335/ViewPage/Marlin-Management](http://www.nzsportfishing.org.nz/index.cfm/pageid/335/ViewPage/Marlin-Management)

## **BACKGROUND INFO**

1. Striped marlin and broadbill swordfish were made recreational-only species in northern New Zealand waters in October 1987.
2. In 1993 an agreement was reached to allow limited commercial bycatch of swordfish, in exchange for a regulation making marlin a non-commercial species for the whole of New Zealand.
3. Domestic commercial longliners are lobbying for a regulation change to allow them to take and sell marlin from New Zealand waters.
4. Recreational interests are concerned that in 2010 the southwest Pacific striped marlin stock was assessed as overfished. Longline effort in the region continues to increase every year, as European and Chinese vessels target the region's fisheries.
5. Captures in the Pacific region impact on pelagic (open sea) fish availability around coastal New Zealand. Yellowfin tuna were once a common catch; very few captures have been recorded since 2005. A regulation change will inevitably lead to more marlin being killed by commercial fishers.

6. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) chaired a marlin management workshop on 23 November 2012. Meeting included Ministry, industry and recreational representatives. The meeting concluded -
  - a. The recreational sector agreed with the proposed approach but stated that any recommendation made must be in the context of keeping the existing regulations; and
  - b. Commercial representatives also endorsed the approach and share the overall concern for the stock. They also accept that marlin is a species of significance for the recreational sector.
7. On May 10 2013 the Ministry distributed a discussion document presenting potential management options for the future management of marlin.
8. MPI note the regulations will need to be reviewed due to changes applying to foreign charter vessels and large scale longline vessels.
9. On 21 May a joint stakeholder meeting was held at MPI's Avondale headquarters. Commercial and recreational representatives reiterated their views on the future management of marlin. There was no agreement, between the sectors, namely -
  - a. Industry - gave mixed messages about their concerns, whether they were related to the waste, or the potential lost income from releasing marlin.
  - b. Recreational - the current level of waste associated with commercial fishers dumping other species is a concern.
  - c. MPI will be reporting to the Minister, Nathan Guy, soon. He will make a decision within a couple of months.
10. A record of the process and available documents is online at <http://nzsportfishing.org.nz/index.cfm/pageid/335/ViewPage/Marlin-Management>.
11. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) has been advocating for recreational interests in the marlin fishery since its inception in 1957. In more recent years it has extended its advocacy to many other fisheries management, policy and marine protection issues. The NZSFC has 56 member clubs with 32,000 affiliated members. [www.nzsportfishing.org.nz](http://www.nzsportfishing.org.nz)
12. The New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council (NZRFC) represents individuals, regional and national organisations, including the NZ Angling & Casting Association, NZ Trailer Boat Federation, NZ Marine Transport Association, NZ Sports Industry Association and NZ Underwater Association. [www.recfish.co.nz](http://www.recfish.co.nz)
13. LegaSea was launched in February 2012 as the public outreach brand of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. It raises awareness, facilitates people working together, and harnesses public support for more abundant fisheries and a healthy marine environment. Its motto is 'Fish for the People'. [www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz)