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LegaSea will seize opportunities for change

By Mandy Kupenga

The warmer weather and warm summer feeling is upon us, and snapper will no doubt be on the menu at some point this silly season.

Having fully reviewed hundreds of pages of documents on snapper we have a clearer view on how LegaSea will continue to push for better outcomes for managing the snapper 1 fishery.

We will not be taking the Minister to court for his decision. In essence the majority of the decision made will lead to positive outcomes for the fishery, and four out of five aspects of this decision were favourable for the people of New Zealand.

The one stinging point that we disagree with was the decrease of individual bag limit from 9 snapper to 7 and the increase of the legal minimum size from 27cm to 30cm. We reject this on the basis of the method used to calculate the averages. Our recommendation was to use the 8 year average as a more robust measure, and keep the bag and size limits the same. Unfortunately the Ministry did not propose this option to the Minister in their final advice paper.

While the merits of this decision may be unfair, (and we do disagree with this aspect of the decision) this does not lead to an automatic ability for judicial review. After review and analysis at this point in time a greater impact can be made with our focus on other areas of action. Such as:

- Push for the interim 40% biomass target for snapper 1 to confirmed and adopted (the commercial sector will seek to reduce this).
- Active participation building the strategy to manage the snapper 1 fishery into the future, through the new Snapper

Strategy Stakeholder group. Our aim is to ensure the stock is capable of meeting the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.

- Monitor and report on the implementation and results of the announced measures to reduce commercial waste. Intent is one thing, effective implementation is another.
- Launch a new education initiative to assist the fishing public to reduce release mortality – a LegaSea “Fish Smarter” guide.
- Call for specific Ministry action to be taken to address collapsing snapper stocks in the Bay of Plenty including trawl exclusion zones.
- Call for review of the commercial minimum legal size for snapper. Given the introduction of new smarter trawl technology, there is no good reason the commercial sector should continue to keep fish under 30cm.

On review of the documentation we have discovered a very significant statement from Nathan Guys announcement.

The Minister has stated explicitly that the commercial fishery asset is only a share of the TACC (Total Allowable Commercial Catch) and not the TAC (the Total Allowable Catch). This is bloody great and basically means that quota holders have been put back in their box. They were trying to claim a share of the public resource (i.e. muscle in on our share), and have been told to back off.

Even better is that the documents also state that this decision will set a precedent for future fisheries management practice. These are positive aspects we can really leverage from.

When you look at fisheries decisions made over the past years (and we provide input into almost all proposals that effect recreational fishers) the full decision for snapper 1 was influenced by the voice of recreational fishers more than any that we've seen in a very long time.

Many people stepped forward to stand up for their rights, and for all intents and purposes this was the game changer in the decision ultimately made. We drew media attention to this issue, so that people knew what was going on and then it became a political issue. With a united voice the court of public opinion can make a difference, and did with snapper 1.

From past experience working in the fisheries management clogs, this decision was different. Proportional allocation was disrupted and turned on it's head. This puts fire in our bellies, and vigor in our step to push forward with snapper 1, and also bring to the fore other issues that are effecting areas around the country. These including the

sustainability of crayfish nationally (with focus on the Gisborne region), Paua and Blue Cod in the South Island, Gurnard in the Hawkes Bay and more.

Given the political nature of fisheries, especially given the election next year, LegaSea will seize this opportunity to effect change and intends to work with all political parties, to develop strong fisheries policy to ensure that decision makers have clear frameworks that balance cause and effect of fisheries decision, on the people of New Zealand and on our marine resources, and not just economic outcomes.

A full report of the decision and outcomes is on our website at www.legasea.co.nz/sos or check out our facebook page www.facebook.com/legasea

As the public outreach brand of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council we support and promote your interests for better management of our precious fisheries resources to ensure that there will be abundant fisheries for future generations of Kiwis. By making a modest monthly contribution of \$5 or more (that's one coffee or less than a bag of bait) we can apply the resources required to effectively lobby for better fisheries and management practices.