



Media Release – for immediate release

28 March 2014

Unfair snapper rules take effect

Recreational fishing advocacy group LegaSea is calling on amateur fishers to comply with the new snapper bag and size limits that will come into effect on April Fool's day, even though many believe they are unfair.

From April 1st the individual snapper daily bag limit will be seven, down from nine each. The minimum legal size increases from 27 to 30 centimetres. These new recreational limits apply between North Cape and the eastern Bay of Plenty. Commercial fishers can still take 25cm snapper and their total catch limit remains unchanged at 4500 tonnes.

Richard Baker, spokesperson for LegaSea says, "Many recreational fishers are concerned the measures they are being asked to take will simply not achieve conservation and enhancement of the fishery, especially when the fish they throw back may die or can be harvested by the fishing industry".

"There is no evidence of any meaningful changes to commercial behaviour. The same trawlers responsible for high juvenile and bycatch rates are still ploughing the snapper fishery", continues Mr Baker.

As a long time rock fisherman Baker acknowledges shore-based and harbour fishers will be most affected because there are more small fish inshore.

"Shore based fishers usually catch small snapper, and often rely on taking those fish home for a feed at the end of the day.

"These are the people who are wondering why it's okay for people to buy and eat snapper between 25 and 30cm but it's not okay for New Zealanders to catch them to take home. In many overseas countries, including Australia, these tiny snapper are not permitted to be taken from their own waters."

Snapper stocks in the Bay of Plenty are considered to be severely depleted and the new regulations will hit locals hard.

While recreational fishers do not deliberately target small fish, concerns are high that snapper returned to the water may be mortally wounded, creating unnecessary waste.

Adam El-Agez is based in Mount Maunganui and was the LegaSea spokesperson during last year's Save Our Snapper campaign.

“Last year LegaSea highlighted issues around how many fish were being wasted, dumped and discarded by the commercial fleet. Some locals are disgusted at having to limit their take-home catch when they can see commercial trawling and the Danish seine fleet from their kitchen window.

“What’s more, there has been no change to the bulk harvesting methods that legally slaughter millions of juvenile snapper under 25cm only to get shovelled back into the sea. These fish are not accounted for in the quota system”, continues El-Agez.

Parents who take their children fishing from the shore are struggling to explain why the baby snapper they saw in the supermarket last week is okay to eat, but the one on the end of their line is not all right.

LegaSea is advising families to learn new fishing and handling techniques to improve the survival rate of snapper less than 30 cm they will have to return to the water after 1 April 2014.

Ends

Richard Baker
LegaSea spokesperson
021 869889

Adam El-Agez
LegaSea campaign coordinator
021 318575

Background information

LegaSea promotes fisheries management practices that will allow for ‘more fish in the water’. www.legasea.co.nz

LegaSea brings together the energies and resources of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and other groups and individuals seeking to protect and conserve New Zealand’s marine resources for future generations.

An estimated one million Kiwis enjoy fishing. Protecting our marine environment, our fisheries and public access is vital to maintaining our Kiwi lifestyle, and our national wellbeing.

LegaSea was launched in February 2012 to facilitate the people working together, raise public awareness, promote education, and to provide an opportunity for people to unite in action, to stand for and protect our precious marine resources for our people, our communities and for the future.

LegaSea campaigns

Crayfish and Scallop campaign 2014
<http://www.legasea.co.nz/crayscallop>

SOS Save Our Snapper
<http://www.legasea.co.nz/snapper1.php>

Hands off our marlin
<http://www.legasea.co.nz/marlin-feedback.php>