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## **Frustrated locals call for a trawl ban to reduce carnage**

After nearly two years of negotiations to improve recreational fishing in the Hawkes Bay local fishers have called for more meaningful action to reduce the numbers of fish killed and rebuild fish stocks to abundant levels.

LegaSea Hawkes Bay, representing regional recreational fishing interests, says it is time Nathan Guy the Minister for Primary Industries delivered on his statutory duty to manage fisheries at a sustainable level so locals can fish and provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing. It was also time commercial fishers took their indiscriminate, bulk harvesting methods out of the Bay.

“Our research over the past decade shows there has been a dramatic fall in recreational catch rates for popular species including gurnard, tarakihi, snapper and groper. We desperately need to restore local fisheries but we cannot achieve a rebuild on our own because with our current average catch rate, reducing the recreational daily bag limit will achieve nothing.”, says Brian Firman, LegaSea Hawkes Bay’s spokesperson.

“The MPI and the commercial industry must take responsibility and make a significant contribution to reduce fish harvest in the inshore zone”.

After a robust public meeting in October 2014 the Ministry for Primary Industries organized joint sector meetings, between commercial and recreational interests, to seek mutual agreement on a set of measures to improve the recreational fishing experience.

Wayne Bicknell, a Napier-bred recreational fisherman was impressed that after the 2014 meeting the Ministry committed their Director of Fisheries Management, Dave Turner, to chair the joint meetings. After the first few meetings the Director handed the job over to the inshore manager, Steve Halley.

“It has been very frustrating that the Ministry won’t accept there is a sustainability issue, they merely describe our situation as “local area depletion”. Although Ministry and commercial interests say they are at the table to help, any offerings to date do not include killing one less fish. For our fisheries to rebuild we need to back off for a while. It’s a simple formula, kill less fish and shift the damaging trawling method further offshore. We initially pushed for a trawling ban in waters less than 100m deep, but ongoing discussions have had us consider that no trawlers inside the 50



meter contour would actually make a meaningful difference to our recreational fishing experience”.

Several local commercial fishers have been proactive in trialing innovative trawl methods to reduce unnecessary wastage. Preliminary results are encouraging, however, this alone will not restore recreational fishing to an acceptable level.

Shore based anglers have been hit hardest as fish numbers decline according to Jim Yeoman, President of the New Zealand Angling and Casting Association.

“It’s a sad day when our members’ kids choose not to go fishing because there is such a slim chance of tasting success. I take my hat off to the commercial fishers, Rick Burch and Karl Warr, for their efforts in trying to reduce the mortality of juvenile fish so we can all enjoy a more abundant future.

“The token offerings by other commercial fishers, of net trials, a 3-month exclusion zone around the freshwater springs, not targeting groper on the Lachlan Banks, and more observers on commercial boats are all designed to appease recreational fishers without commercials catching one less takeable fish. Given the recent news of widespread dumping aboard inshore trawlers, these measures fall way short of what is required and are unacceptable.”

LegaSea Hawkes Bay note that MPI’s Dave Turner initially offered to “reach into the toolbox” if recreational and commercial fishing interests failed to reach agreement. LegaSea acknowledges that now is the time for MPI to stretch its arm, apply some resources, and find a meaningful solution for the people of Hawkes Bay.

LegaSea Hawkes Bay