



Bouquets and brickbats for decisions

A central theme to the four recent management submissions to the Ministry for Primary Industries is the need for more precautionary management of our fish stocks.

The Minister's decisions, announced on March 17th, are a mixed bag, with cuts to commercial catch limits for selected scallop and crayfish stocks, and significant increases in surf clam catch limits around the South Island.

Nathan Guy deserves a bouquet for making a conservative decision in reducing the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) applying in CRA4, the crayfish stock spanning Hawkes Bay to Wellington.

A 50% reduction in the TACC for Coromandel scallops will not constrain ongoing commercial effort as the average landings over the past eight years has been 47 tonnes. There is still no intention to ban the Victorian box dredges, the continued destruction of scallop beds is a serious concern.

A brickbat is appropriate for his decisions on deemed value rates for surf clams in the South Island, and for granting TACC increases of between 94 and 700% for four species of surf clams with little supporting information that these catch limits are sustainable over time.

In our submission we urged the Minister to hold off on any TACC increases until a management and research plan was developed to guide future management of deepwater tuatua, triangle shell, large trough shell and ringed dosinia.

While these species are unfamiliar to many recreational fishers they are an integral part of the foodchain and these stocks have suffered from ongoing, deliberate excessive commercial harvest.

This cynical harvesting strategy over the past few years is concerning local residents in Cloudy Bay, Marlborough. Many of these people are so intimidated by the constant to and fro of commercial harvesters in the surf zone that they no longer feel safe in fishing from the beach.

In his decision letter the Minister refers to the loss of amenity values and says, “these issues are beyond the scope of my consideration as part of the April 2016 sustainability round”.

We disagree and wholeheartedly support the people of Cloudy Bay.

The Minister is obliged to uphold the purpose and principles of the Fisheries Act 1996, to both ensure the fisheries are sufficiently abundant to meet future generations’ needs, and to provide enough abundance so people can provide for their current social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

The people of Cloudy Bay have been ignored in favour of a private enterprise that has cynically over harvested surf clams with no meaningful penalties for exceeding the legal limits. Instead they are rewarded with a catch limit increase, adding another casualty to the litany of mismanaged fish stocks in our fabled “world-leading” Quota Management System.



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.