

NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 19

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NZSFC ready and waiting for 2013

A mixed bag of results and proposals are likely in 2013, if the last six months is an indicator.

In 2012 the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has been involved in national fisheries and aquaculture issues, spatial planning for the Hauraki Gulf, and developing our own management policy for snapper with further species-specific policies to come.

All this activity and the steady progress of LegaSea offers hope that the team will have the necessary resources to respond to an expected review of Snapper 1, between North Cape and Cape Runaway, and other issues in 2013.

Potential for change

It has become common practice for controversial policies and legislation to be given effect a year out from an election. This is exacerbated if the incumbents are losing traction in the polls.

Considering the political and economic climate, and National's overt support for fishing industry and aquaculture development, 2013 may well see another flurry of enabling legislation to fast-track commercial ventures.

In anticipation of any controversy the NZ Sport Fishing Council has embarked on an ambitious project to develop foundation policies.

These will promote achievable and affordable actions to increase abundance of fish and improve the marine environment. Realistic rebuild timeframes for depleted fisheries are essential, as is the need for all fishers to reduce the mortality of young fish through smarter fishing practices.

At the September AGM the NZ Sport Fishing Council approved a policy for Snapper 1.

Subsequent requests have been received for Gurnard 2 (Cape Runaway to Wellington) some Rock Lobster fisheries, and Hapuku-Bass.

Bag limit changes

Another priority is to discuss with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) the principles supporting amateur daily bag limits. There have been several recent, major reductions to daily bag limits unsupported by principles or adequate consultation with the recreational sector.

In August 2011 the NZ Sport Fishing Council distributed a Discussion Paper to the Ministry and regional recreational fisheries forums, *Setting of Maximum Amateur Daily Bag Limits*.

No substantial reply was received so the Paper is now with senior MPI managers for their timely response. The principles underpinning bag limits must be understood and discussed before any further changes are made.

As a minimum, we must be consulted and given reasonable opportunity to respond to any proposals that seek to reduce access to our fisheries.

Regional forums

MPI has recently reviewed the regional recreational fisheries forums and membership. The NZSFC has representatives on several forums. While there is much debate about the value of participation, the Council recognises that these forums are useful for promoting a more principled approach to fisheries management.

Marlin management review

The NZ Sport Fishing Council, with some support, was instrumental saving marlin from foreign tuna longliners in New Zealand. In the early 1990s regulations were implemented to prohibit commercial fishers from landing and selling marlin.

Last month the Ministry hosted a meeting to review marlin management.

Longliners want to keep those marlin that come to the boat that are unlikely to survive.

The NZSFC is advocating for a total ban on both the importation and sale of marlin in New Zealand.

Internationally there is a trend towards more protection for marlin stocks.

While there might be a small amount of waste from commercial fishing, three quarters of marlin are released alive. Under current legislation there is no incentive for commercial fishers to catch or keep marlin.

As we have experienced with swordfish and shark fins, as soon as there is a buck to be made there are some operators that will exploit that opportunity.

The longliners need to get over it, respect the law, stick to catching tuna and leave the marlin alone.