

NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 15

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Voluntary model beats compulsory taxation

One of the unique features of living in New Zealand is our freedom to fish. At anytime we can take the kids fishing for food, have fun together or simply to replenish our spirits.

Our rights and interests in fishing have legislative support, have been confirmed in the positive Supreme Court Kahawai ruling, and by numerous management decisions.

In the past 55 years the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has not won all its advocacy battles, but we are committed to continue advocating for our members, supporters and the public's wider fishing interests.

Future Search

A Future Search meeting is being held in February 2013 to discuss recreational fishing interests, to find solutions for a "better fishing future". The NZ Sport Fishing Council has been invited to be one of the 70 participants in Nelson.

Currently, the NZSFC is unconvinced that major reform of recreational interests is required, or desirable. Nor have we given up on the public's ability and willingness to voluntarily stand up for themselves and their fishing future, particularly when their interests are under threat.

In the last three years the NZ Sport Fishing Council has initiated its own search for the future. This includes a name change, developing a strategic plan, earning SPARC recognition as a National Sporting Organisation and broadening our involvement in fisheries management and policy development.

Irrefutably the issues have become more complex, requiring professional input, time and money from the recreational sector. The NZSFC has funded engagement in different management, science and policy forums. Notwithstanding that our reserves, built up over 50 years, were spent underpinning the Kahawai Legal Challenge.

Leaving a legacy

If we are to preserve what we already have, and pass a legacy of abundance onto our children, we need a more robust funding stream.

But, before we go down the path of reforms, building new bureaucracies and finding creative ways to tax us to fish, we want to find a very Kiwi, simple and effective answer to ensure our kids enjoy an abundant future.

In the past six months the NZSFC and its allies have invested heavily in developing LegaSea. See www.legasea.co.nz or the LegaSea Update.

For the price of a couple of beers or two packets of softbaits, per annum, the public can support the effort to achieve 'more fish in the water for future generations'.

Abundance is the bottom line

David Carter, the Minister of Primary Industries, is legally bound to sustain abundant fisheries so we can provide for our wellbeing.

He has a supportive Fisheries Act and confirmation from the Supreme Court that he can manage fisheries at stock levels that provide for recreational interests.

In 2010 Phil Heatley decided to manage northern kahawai at higher stock levels so numbers could increase, they would be easier to catch and to better provide for recreational interests.

Abundance is already increasing in some areas - a heartening sign that the Kahawai Legal Challenge has been successful in influencing management decisions.

Future challenge

Foremost we must continue to hold the Minister responsible for providing abundant fisheries.

Secondly, the NZ Sport Fishing Council will not put years of hard work and public confidence at risk by committing to a Future Search process that has no clear outcomes or benefits for recreational fishing. Because realistically, there is no crisis in recreational fishing that warrants the wholesale change in fishing rights being promoted by those initiating Future Search.

Our immediate future lies in committing to the success of LegaSea. And that's just a simple \$20 from people of this generation who want to stand up and fight for abundance, for future generations of Kiwis.