

# Striped Marlin Workshop 2012

## NZSFC Response to Ministry for Primary Industries

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) believes that the current marlin regulations have been the major reason for the improvement in the fishery over the last 20 years.

The threat from outside the NZ EEZ is growing rapidly, as longline effort in the Southwest (SW) Pacific continues to increase every year.

Yellowfin are gone.

Striped marlin catch by NZSFC clubs, and Catch Per Unit of Effort, has been declining in recent years.

NZSFC will not agree to any measure that will increase the current commercial fishing mortality for marlin in the SW Pacific. In particular striped marlin, which is below any reasonable target biomass according to the stock assessment to 2010.

In the two years since 2010 there has been a significant increase in surface longline effort in the region.

The marlin regulations were the result of negotiations that removed swordfish from the list of non-commercial species. It is now a major target species for surface longliners.

What are commercial fishers offering in return for a major concession from sport fishers on striped marlin? Less waste from their bycatch and....??

Allowing commercial landings (whatever the reason) will only increase mortality in the short term and could eventually lead to substantial summer "bycatch" in the future.

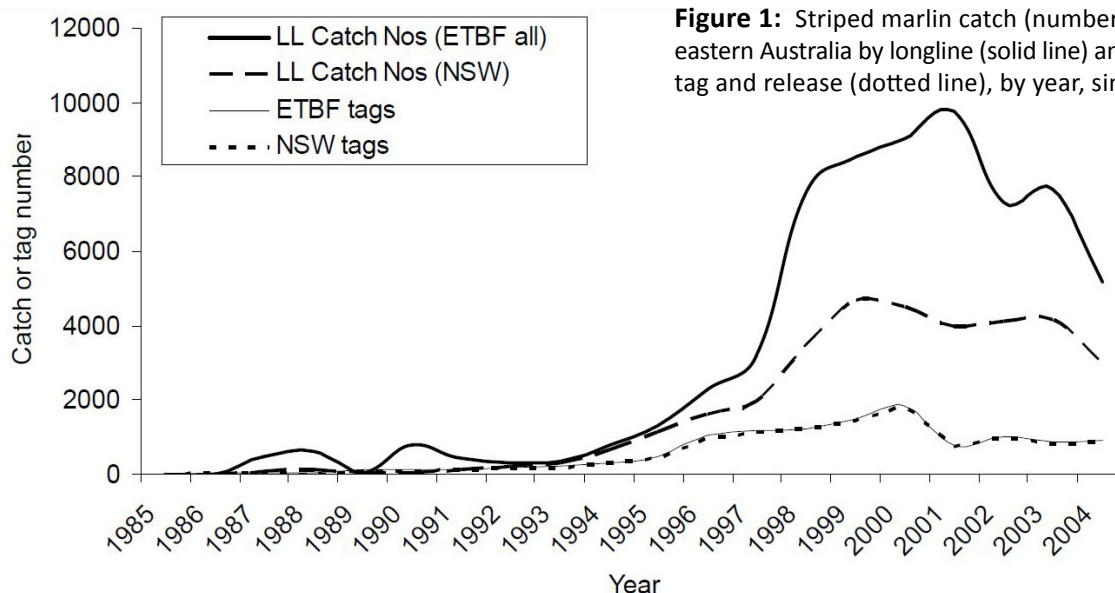
The industry are not interested in landing dead marlin for no financial gain. It is the fact that they are cutting off a \$300 fish that annoys them.

The financial incentive will keep pushing the boundaries of any measure that is used to limit catch if the regulation is removed.

An independent fisheries consultant notes "As soon as marlin catch is landed and sold it becomes an intrinsic part of the commercial catch/benefit, and separating unintended and intended catch is impossible. It's maintaining no landings, or land whatever you catch - there is no durable middle ground."

This is exactly the way striped marlin longline catch expanded in the Australian Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (Figure 1).

We certainly do not want to follow their lead. The NZSFC view is that the marlin regulation must stay. The NZSFC is keen to work with the Ministry and industry on ways of reducing marlin mortality on longlines.



**Figure 1:** Striped marlin catch (numbers of fish) in eastern Australia by longline (solid line) and recreational tag and release (dotted line), by year, since 1985.