

Sea Change Fish Stocks Roundtable Meeting 7 Report

RAYC, Auckland, 3 & 4 December 2014

A report for the NZ Sport Fishing Council, Hokianga Accord & non-commercial interests
By Trish Rea and Barry Torkington
9 December 2014

Attendees

Commercial: Laws Lawson 1st day (AFL & TOKM), Jeremy Helson (Sanford), Dave Moore (Leigh Fisheries), Robyn Garrett (CRA2), Alan Riwaka (TOKM).
Charter operators: Megan Andrews (Thames-Coromandel Charter Association)
Non-commercial: Barry Torkington 1st day (NZSFC), Trish Rea (NZSFC/Hokianga Accord).
Customary: Laurie Beamish (SWG).
Environmental: Clive Monds (Environmental), Barry Weeber (Environmental).
Technical support: Victoria Jollands (Fisheries Analyst, Inshore Fisheries), Laura Furneaux (Acting Team Leader, Inshore Fisheries).
SWG members: Alan Proctor, Dave Kellian (group co-leader), Raewyn Peart (group co-leader), Laurie Beamish, Nick Main (SWG chair).
Duration: 5.50 hours
Next meeting: Working Group meeting – standards development late Jan 2015.

Introduction

This was the last meeting of the Fish Stocks Roundtable (RT). Nick Main, chair of the Stakeholder Working Group (SWG), outlined the process after the RTs feed their conclusions back to the SWG. A SWG report is due in June 2015. Any aspects requiring attention arising from the SWG work will be referred to the appropriate agency for action. Several members were not present on the 2nd day of this 2-day workshop so the majority of work was completed on the first day. Selected members will participate in a January workshop to develop standards for existing and developing fisheries.

Discussion

NZSFC provided the background material for discussion around high level goals, objectives and strategies. This material was sourced from the Council's FMA1 and SNA1 policies. (Refer Appendix One).

Diversity and resilience of the ecosystem is compromised by low abundance. The goal was to restore abundance of many species, not just single species.

Industry was interested in what changes were required to achieve the proposed exploitation rate of no greater than 8% for low productivity stocks such as snapper. Industry debated whether snapper was a low productivity stock. In their opinion snapper is a medium productivity stock as per MPI's Harvest Strategy Standard (HSS).

It was debatable if the HSS covered the minor inter-tidal species, such as periwinkles and small sessile creatures – referred to by the group as the "little things".

Members agreed on a vision:

"Fish stocks in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park are Productive, Diverse and Abundant."

Wording of the goals and objectives were debated for most of day one.

NZSFC suggested the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, namely sections 7 & 8, contained wording appropriate for use in this context. It would be helpful to develop a goal to give effect to this legislation. The Chair suggested the Sea Change process was underway because existing legislation had not been given effect. The Sea Change outcome would apply to the whole Gulf not just the fish stocks within those boundaries.

Tangata whenua were concerned that the “little things” need to flourish not just the QMS species.

Members were split into two workshops to discuss the key issues. A range of issues was discussed, not all were agreed. Discussion covered:

Abundance	Productivity	Diversity
<p>Targets – consistent with HSS or better.</p> <p>Monitoring – <u>cost effective monitoring</u> of broad range of species in Gulf.</p> <p><u>Finer scale reporting</u> of set netting and other methods not currently reported.</p> <p><u>Charter boat reporting of snapper catch.</u></p> <p>Balance – species relationship, rebalance species mix through targeted programmes.</p> <p><u>Slot rule for recreational fishing</u> – finfish and crayfish.</p>	<p>Habitat – <u>Inner and Outer Gulf</u> strategy.</p> <p><u>Inner Gulf</u> – impacts of land use, discharges, sedimentation.</p> <p><u>Outer Gulf</u> – restore hard, biogenic habitat. Fishing standards. Monitor cable zone for habitat restoration. Non-fishing impacts. Opportunities for restoration projects, seagrass, mussels.</p> <p>Juvenile mortality/wastage - Analyse activity within 100m contour to reduce footprint ie. Restrict bottom trawling, scallop dredging commercial & recreational.</p> <p><u>Spawning closures</u> – may not be supported by science, but popular measure for public buy-in of plan.</p> <p><u>Standards</u> – Fishing standards to apply to all methods in Gulf. Review current closure areas and fishing methods if still appropriate, including hook types for recreational fishing.</p>	<p>Vulnerable species – consider impacts on non-target species.</p> <p><u>Ban set netting</u> on all reefs, shallow reefs or retain current off-shore reef closures.</p> <p><u>Ban harvest of all species</u> unless on the list of approved species to take – shift from status quo.</p> <p><u>More responsive management</u> regime to address concerns about new species being targeted.</p> <p><u>Ban spearfishing on reefs</u> and harvest of reef species.</p>

Options and implementation

Practicality

Economic impacts

Stewardship

Outstanding issues

There were important issues requiring further consideration –

- Displaced effort – needs consideration before any measures are applied only to the Hauraki Gulf.
- Eastern Coromandel – needs to be considered part of the Inner Gulf for any targeted measures.
- Economic value of fishing – how society values fishing, potential for public funding to support changes in fishing gear, methods or areas.
- Recreational parks – A revised Marine Protected Areas Bill is being considered and a recreational park is one aspect of that legislation. It includes a range of different protections including factors around “enjoyment” and recreational values. A discussion document is expected in the New Year. Public feedback will be sought. Compensation of \$20M had been mentioned in the Government’s pre-election media release. Members’ feedback on this initial proposal was cynical at best.

Next steps

A workshop will be held in late January to develop standards for existing and developing fisheries. The workshop will consider standards around bottom impacts and wastage. Members involved will be Jeremy Helson (Sanford), Trish/Barry (NZSFC) and Megan Andrews (charter). Robyn Garret (CRA2) & Barry Weeber (Environmental) will assist and review.

Appendix One

Fish Stock Round Table – meeting 3rd December 2014.

High level Goals and Objectives

The Goal, Objectives and Strategy are drawn from the SNA1 and FMA1 policies of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council.

Goal. To restore abundance, diversity and resilience to the Hauraki Marine Park ecosystem.

Objectives:

1. Rebuild fish stocks to levels of abundance that comply with the New Zealand Harvesting Strategy Standard and its Operating Guidelines.
2. Identify, protect, and where necessary restore spawning, nursery and juvenile habitats.

Strategy:

1. Appropriate abundance is achieved by adopting an F based exploitation strategy. Monitor and maintain an exploitation rate no greater than 8% for low productivity stocks and act in a precautionary manner when setting associated species F rates.
2. The critical nature of particular habitat types as nursery areas, and the connectivity of different habitats and areas, is becoming better known. While there is imperfect understanding of these functions enough is known to signal that maintenance of these critical areas underpin productivity and stock size, and therefore yields.
3. While from a fisheries management sense fishing spawning aggregations is considered benign except for the catch, ecologists are now questioning the consequences of disrupting spawning aggregations. The strategy should consider the costs and benefits of protecting spawning aggregations from fishing.
4. The loss of hard shell bottom throughout the waters of FMA1 in waters less than 100m depth is widely accepted. Repeated disruption from bottom contact fishing methods alters the benthic structure from hard to mud bottom. Restoration of the benthos to restore juvenile habitats is of primary importance to any strategy for SNA1 and associated species. Removing trawl and Danish seine from waters shallower than 100m is essential if the continuing loss of productivity is to be reversed.