

Sea Change Fisheries Roundtable Meeting

WINTEC, Thames, 13 October 2014

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

Attendees

Commercial:	Laws Lawson (AFL & TOKM), Jeremy Helson (Sanford), Dave Moore (Leigh Fisheries)
Charter operators:	Megan Andrews (Thames-Coromandel Charter Association)
Non-commercial:	Barry Torkington (NZSFC), Trish Rea (NZSFC/Hokianga Accord).
Customary:	Laurie Beamish (SWG member).
Environmental:	Clive Monds (Environmental), Barry Weeber (Environmental)
Technical support:	Victoria Jollands (Fisheries Analyst, Inshore Fisheries), Graeme McGregor (Fisheries Analyst, Inshore Fisheries), Richard Ford (Science), Laura Furneaux (Acting Team Leader, Inshore Fisheries)
SWG members:	Alan Proctor, Dave Kellian (group co-leader), Raewyn Peart (group co-leader), Katrina Goddard.
Duration:	5.00 hours
Next meeting:	Auckland, 5 November.

Introduction

Roundtable members were briefed on progress of the Snapper 1 Strategy Group, by Barry Torkington and Dave Moore, and given three presentations throughout the day. Information shared in two presentations, on economic value and SeaSketch, was fairly low quality and not helpful for advancing recreational interests.

The overview of monitoring and management of Hauraki Gulf intertidal shellfish, flatfish, mullet and freshwater species was interesting and again highlighted the impacts of poor land management practices, including run-off.

Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) members remain optimistic this Roundtable will be able to provide a summary of issues and potential solutions for SWG use by December. Slow progress and the lack of focus means any substantial outcome by December is unlikely. It was mentioned during this meeting that other Roundtables had requested an extension of time and meetings into early 2015. An extension to this Roundtable is unlikely to produce any useful results. A SWG report is due in June 2015.

Discussion

Barry Torkington and Dave Moore advised the **Snapper 1 Strategy Group** is struggling for momentum. If a plan is to be done well it will take longer than the Minister's timetable of September 2015. There is little synergy between the Snapper 1 and Hauraki Gulf spatial plan processes. The Strategy Group is concentrated on Snapper 1, although wider consideration of the ecosystem is required, and this Roundtable has a much broader focus, beyond snapper, management from the land to the sea.

Environmental interests noted they had been "banned" from participating in the Strategy Group process. Recreational interests had raised the issue of environmental participation several times. The Minister had decided on group participation, and excluded non-fishing users.

Laura Furneaux discussed current **monitoring and management of some shellfish, flatfish, grey mullet and freshwater species**. There is speculation that the Auckland Council may withdraw funding ongoing monitoring of shellfish sites. MPI is a "lean government department" and does not have funds to support many community programmes.

From a community perspective MPI provided poor support for local initiatives, compliance response and

research. In some areas and stocks there had been a cycle of abundance, depletion and then closure. There was little baseline information before these cycles occurred.

There has been a dramatic loss of habitat and productivity inshore. The major threats to our nearshore environment are land-based so the Auckland Council could do better by focusing on its core role of managing land use.

Graeme McGregor presented information from a 2012 Auckland Council report¹ that **assessed economic activities in Auckland and the Hauraki Gulf**. Tourism was most valuable, marine recreation 2nd most valuable and recreational fishing was 3rd, valued at \$81M, compared to \$41M of commercial fishing activity. He also discussed some results from the 1999 SACES valuation of recreational fishing.

Much of the detail presented by Graeme was subjective and not considered a true representation of catch or value for recreational or commercial interests. MPI had been advised it would cost \$100s of thousands for a comprehensive valuation of recreational fishing.

It was not clear if fish was worth more in or out of the water. Two reports were due soon that might better describe the intrinsic value of fish left in the water. MPI would advise when those reports were available.

Graeme McGregor gave a brief overview of selected, historic **fishing restrictions in the Hauraki Gulf** before Richard Ford went on to describe the Sea Sketch tool depicting these closures and other information.

Sea Sketch is an online tool specifically designed for use when developing marine spatial plans. When objectives are agreed, *“the data held in Sea Sketch can be analysed. Reports can be generated evaluating the costs and benefits of a spatial proposal against the objectives”*. Currently there is very poor representation of productivity hot-spots in the Gulf or commercial fishing activity. It was important to know the location of historic and current nursery areas so these can be protected.

Given the information presented at this meeting, Sea Sketch seems a clumsy system that will both struggle to produce anything valuable for fish stocks or take account of the full range of non-commercial values and interests in the Hauraki Gulf.

Next meeting will discuss healthy habitats.

¹ Towards an Economic Valuation of the Hauraki Gulf: A Stock-take of Activities and Opportunities. November 2012.