

## **Sea Change Fisheries Roundtable Meeting**

### **Marine Rescue Centre, Auckland, 1 September 2014**

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

### **Attendees**

Commercial: Laws Lawson (AFL & TOKM), Robyn Garrett (CRA 2), Jeremy Helson (Sanford)  
Charter operators: Megan Andrews (Thames-Coromandel Charter Association)  
Non-commercial: Barry Torkington (NZSFC), Trish Rea (NZSFC/Hokianga Accord).  
Customary: Laurie Beamish  
Environmental: Clive Monds (ECO/Thames)  
Technical support: Laura Furneaux (Senior Fisheries Analyst, Inshore Fisheries), Victoria ? (MPI)  
SWG members: Alan Proctor, Dave Kellian (group co-leader), Raewyn Peart (group co-leader).  
Duration: 5.00 hours  
Next meeting: Leigh, 24 September.

### **Introduction**

A range of agencies and stakeholders are working together to produce a marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf by September 2015. A Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) was established in December 2013 to develop the plan. Roundtables have been established to gather input from a wider group of people into specific topics. Outcomes from the Roundtables will feed into the SWG discussions. This was the third meeting of the Fisheries Roundtable that expects to meet regularly until December. The scope of the Fisheries Roundtable is specified as:

1. Enhance marine life and fish stocks in the Gulf.
2. Lift the productivity of the Gulf to support greater recruitment, growth, and quality of fish stocks – through all stages of the fish life cycle.
3. Achieve greater overall value from fish stocks (economic, recreational, customary and ecological value).

### **Discussion**

Co-chair Raewyn Peart introduced Alison MacDiarmid and Matt Pinkerton, NIWA researchers who would present results of surveys conducted in the Hauraki Gulf and northeastern coast.

Laurie Beamish gave a history of **Ngai Tai customary use of the Tamaki Strait**, inner harbour and Umupuia Beach. Historically kaitiaki were active in managing harvest of kaimoana in the inner harbour. Laurie has been a commercial fisherman for many years. He highlighted that land use practices and deforestation in particular has had the greatest affect on inshore water quality, the lack of shellfish and abundance of fish.

Megan Andrews operates a **charter vessel out of Coromandel** and is part of the Thames-Coromandel Charter Association. Most of the operators fish within the aquaculture farms on the western side of the Coromandel Peninsula, several take trips to Great Barrier, a Kennedy Bay operator fishes the eastern Peninsula. **Around 90% of the catch is snapper**, other take includes kingfish, trevally, kahawai, john dory. Gurnard are rare. Around 90% of their customers are from Auckland or Hamilton, fishing in groups. They host a small number of overseas tourists. Collectively around 17,000 people took a charter trip last year. A rough estimate is an average of three snapper per person, people rarely catch or take their daily bag limit (DBL). The new DBL has not had much influence, but the concern is the mortality associated with released fish under the new size limit of 30cm. Charter operators want released fish to survive, and they encourage their clients to not take their limit. Megan's vessels mainly operate in 6-10m, no more than 30m.

NZSFC advised there was research data on the **survivability of released fish**. Group organisers agreed that information would be collated and made available to Group members.

Alison MacDiarmid and Matt Pinkerton from NIWA, and others, had worked on a project '*A long view – the impacts of humans on New Zealand marine ecosystems since first settlement*'. Results had been published. Focus on two areas, the Catlins Coast, Otago, and the greater Hauraki Gulf, encompassing all of the Marine Park area. Because of NZ's short history it was possible to estimate original population size and harvesting habits.

**Mussels were so prolific in the inner Gulf** it was estimated they could filter the Firth of Thames water in a day. Nowadays, even with the mussel farms, it's estimated that same filtering would take a year.

**NZSFC cautioned against using catch history** as the basis for the stock models. There was a lot of misreporting and underreporting from the 1930s onwards. The stock declines described in the models are probably greater than current information suggests. Alison and Matt welcomed any new information from group members.

Matt acknowledged the **stock models were based on constant recruitment**, yet it is well understood that recruitment changes over time. Matt and Alison acknowledged the modelling is based on assumptions and these could change when new information was available.

It was encouraging that **diversity remains intact**, there is a full complement of species; it is the distribution and abundance that has changed over time.

Group agreed **land use run-off was having the major affect** on the nearshore environment. This included deforestation, farm run-off, road spill and human-induced waste.

There needed to be some **standard measure of marine health**, to encompass the species that are not harvested by people, because even these had declined in nearshore waters.

NZSFC advised there was sufficient existing legislation to address the identified problems, there was a lack of political and public will to apply such precaution to managing our natural resources.

Industry suggested there might be a need for designating areas for different uses, such as ports and commercial operations, separate recreational and commercial fishing areas and no fishing areas.