

## **NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 29**

New Zealand Fishing News magazine, DECEMBER 2013 edition



### **Your vote does matter when it comes to snapper**

Reactions ranging from outrage to stoic have been aired since Nathan Guy released his decision, in September, for snapper within the area from North Cape to the eastern Bay of Plenty. The Minister has made a political decision in response to unprecedented public pressure, but that exposure was insufficient to sway him or his Ministry to retain existing recreational controls.

While the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council rejects the regulatory changes no legal action is planned.

On the flip side, all the 500 tonnes of snapper made available, on paper at least, was added to the recreational allowance not the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC). This is good news for people aspiring to have a more abundant fishery.

### **Snapper 1 decision**

People are perplexed that the Minister has reduced their daily bag limit, from nine to seven, and increased the minimum legal size (MLS) from 27 to 30cm, while the commercial catch limit of 4500 tonnes and 25cm MLS remains intact. This decision was announced on September 17<sup>th</sup>, and was based on the recommendations by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). The new limits will apply from April 2014.

The NZSFC rejects the new management controls for recreational fishers on the basis that –

- They represent a significant reduction in people's access to snapper in some areas, while there is no change to the TACC
- MPI's predetermination to reduce recreational catch, to appease commercial interests
- Our proposal for a 550 tonne increase to the recreational allowance was not included as a future management option offered to the Minister prior to his decision
- The new minimum size limit will increase release mortality associated with recreational catch
- There are no targeted measures to improve snapper abundance in the collapsed Bay of Plenty fishery.

Thousands of submitters called for meaningful measures to address the waste caused by bulk harvesting, trawling and Danish seining, and to rebuild the snapper fishery to double its current level.

The Ministry and industry have committed to a range of initiatives to significantly reduce wastage and juvenile mortality.

Adequate monitoring will be required to ensure these measures are implemented effectively and produce the promised results. Otherwise this snapper decision will be just another strand in a string of broken promises, made since the early 1980s, to rebuild our fisheries and enhance recreational fishing.

### **Snapper not just an Auckland issue**

A critical outcome of this review was the acknowledgement that any decision made for snapper would have had management implications for fisheries beyond Area 1.

In our view, successful application of a fixed, proportional allocation for recreational fishers would have meant ever-decreasing bag limits in a broad range of fisheries, and have devastating effects on people fishing for food in west coast trevally, South Island blue cod and trumpeter from Taranaki to the Wairarapa.

Between now and next year's election it is vitally important that we, individually and collectively, hold Nathan Guy responsible for both protecting public access in our fisheries and fulfilling his statutory duty to manage fisheries sustainably to meet the needs of future generations.

Those needs are dependent on the juvenile fish that are spawned today being available in years to come.

Damaging bulk harvesting commercial fishing must be banned from sensitive inshore areas and unrealistic commercial catch levels must be cut. These issues can be addressed, but only if we wield our political clout.

Thousands of people said they would not vote for National if an adverse snapper decision were made. The mixed outcome proves we can influence decisions.

Make an appointment to see your local MP to discuss your expectation of having fish for the future, and your disgust in predetermined processes run by the Ministry seeking to take fish away from our kids and theirs.