

**Report:** Meeting with Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, Rachel Brooking

**Date & time:** 15 June 1430-1530 hrs.

**Venue:** MPI, Auckland Airport precinct.

**Attendees:** Barry Torkington & Ian Steele (NZSFC), Jacob Hore (FNZ), James (Minister's office), Rachel Brooking (Minister), Sam Woolford (LegaSea), Trish Rea (NZSFC).

## Discussion

Overall, a positive first introductory meeting with the Minister. The NZSFC structure, policy development process, and relationship with LegaSea was explained to the Minister. The association with NZ Underwater, NZ Angling & Casting Association, NZ Yachting plus corporate partners, through LegaSea, was also discussed.

Rachel is Associate Minister for the Environment so has regular contact with David Parker. Our team highlighted and appreciated the precautionary fisheries decisions that David Parker had made as the previous Minister. We highlighted the public's appetite to ban bottom trawling.

The Minister acknowledged our advocacy against bottom trawling and whether it was acceptable in areas already impacted by trawling, such as muddy seabed. Her analogy was comparison with historic land deforestation and raised the potential for spatial controls rather than a blanket ban. She also mentioned efforts by commercial fishers to reduce seabird bycatch, the increasing cost of diesel for fishers, cameras on boats and the latest developments around the Kermadec marine sanctuary.

We discussed the first practical step to achieving Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) was to institute B50 as a minimum management target for inshore fish stocks. This would enable stocks to regrow, be resilient to external stresses and provide ecosystem services to ensure a functioning marine system. Productivity of the marine environment was reliant on precautionary decisions for all stocks, including bait fish species which needed extra protections given their importance to the food chain in sustaining other sea creatures, birds and whales.

We also discussed the dysfunctional Quota Management System and how that impoverishes ACE fishers in favour of rent-seeking quota owners. Rachel was interested in [our objections to the Fisheries Industry Transformation Plan](#) (ITP) and newer, more efficient vessels working the coastline. In our view, the ITP was quota owners trying to get public funds to support their operations and meant larger vessels fishing inshore waters.

Rachel was interested in our definition of small-scale fishing and what advantages that might have over existing operations. We explained that innovation comes from small-scale fishers

solving problems at a local level. Small-scale operators tend to live locally, supply fish locally, and can generate more value from each fish caught.

We highlighted the November 2022 [CRA 1 High Court decision](#), and the [Minister's 2021 SNA 8 decision](#), which gave the current Minister added assurance that precautionary decisions can be made lawfully and without challenge. It is encouraging that the Court clarified the Minister must take into account the broader impacts of fishing on the environment and other sea creatures, not just focussing on single species management. There was scope and legal precedent to successfully act in a precautionary manner to make modest, incremental increases to catch limits despite industry lobbying and Ministry advice.

Overall, Minister Brooking was very engaged, without interjection from Jake Hore. Clearly, she is still getting to understand the complexity of fisheries management. Her knowledge of the Resource Management Act processes was obvious. The discussion about B50 was likely the most valuable point raised and will hopefully be confirmed by Labour's adoption of B50 into their policy.