

NEW ZEALAND'S ONLY DIVE MAGAZINE

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# DIVE



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# FISHERIES SYMPOSIUM GREAT SUCCESS

By Roger Grace.

In April, a symposium was held to explore the future of recreational fishing in New Zealand. The symposium was promoted and organised by Legasea and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC), and was held at the Lifeway Centre in Snells Beach, north of Auckland. The venue provided accommodation and meals, needed for a conference of about 100 participants.

An impressive lineup of New Zealand and international speakers covered topics such as the economy of recreational fishing in New Zealand; estimating recreational harvest; the value of the kingfish sport fishery; reconstructing the commercial catch since the 1950s; and comparing the economic value of commercial and non-commercial catch.

Key international speakers included Dr Daniel Pauly from Canada, who is a world-player in the field of fisheries and marine protected areas; Dr Evelyn Pinkerton from Canada who is an expert in the field of co-management and governance of fisheries, and what is successful and what is not; and Rob Southwick from the United States, who has been intimately involved with assessments of recreational harvest surveys in New Zealand.

Local experts included Glenn Simmons, John Holdsworth and Bruce Hartill, and Barry Torkington acted as MC, adding his expertise to the discussions as appropriate. Several panel discussions and question and answer sessions provided ample opportunity for the symposium participants to engage fully in discussions of all issues.

Dr Pauly discussed the impacts of fisheries and global warming on marine ecosystems, and noted that although there is a lot of talk about the desirability of ecosystem-based management, in practice it does not happen. He also pointed out the phenomenon of 'industrial capture', referring to industry

tending to take over fisheries research and management, which should be more directly under the control of Government.

Some interesting figures on the value of recreational fishing were presented. Clearly snapper tops the list at NZ\$403 million, followed by kahawai at \$254 million, blue cod \$119M, kingfish \$79M, and trevally \$71M. Game fish came in at \$225M.

It was also interesting to note that in a warm year, snapper recruitment can result in some 21 million juvenile fish being added to the population, whereas in a cool year this number can drop to only three million.

I was impressed by the balanced mix of participants at the Symposium, having expected it to be heavily weighted with fishermen. But there were almost as many 'greenies' there as keen fishermen,

though of course there is a big overlap with many actively partaking in recreational fishing.

As at most gatherings like this, informal discussions, catching up with old colleagues and acquaintances and meeting new people in the field are just as important as the formal presentations.

Although there was talk around the desire to improve abundance of fish stocks as a key to recovery and improvement of recreational fishing, there was very little discussion on how to achieve this and no strategy as such put forward. Perhaps that is a topic for a future symposium.

Toward the end of the Symposium, however, a resolution was unanimously passed, to the effect that "we will strive towards a rebuild of the inshore fish stocks". That is certainly a good place to start. 

