



Craypots – creeping death on our coastline

For young and old crayfish are a taonga, a treasure, so recent Ministerial decisions to keep some stocks at all-time lows to meet export orders is abysmal.

Nathan Guy announced his decisions for the future management of crayfish on March 20th and these have been effective since the beginning of April. His decisions will not dent the numbers of commercial crayfish pots littering popular coastal areas.

Crayfish retail up to \$150 per kilo so many Kiwis do not buy crayfish. Our only alternative is to catch them ourselves but that task just got harder, especially off the east coast.

Management Area 2, from northern Waipu to the eastern Bay of Plenty is prime crayfish territory, yet it has the lowest catch rates in the country – so low that recreational fishers can only take around 30% of their annual allowance. Not much will change.

In Area 3, from East Cape past Gisborne to Hawke Bay, recreational fishers catch on average the smallest fish, at 580g per crayfish. No improvement is expected as quota has just been increased by 15%.

LegaSea was hopeful the Minister would be astute enough to ignore the commercially biased advice he was given and make a bold decision.

Nathan Guy had the opportunity to impose a meaningful quota cut and double the stock size in Area 2, while being conservative in Area 3.

Instead, the Minister only reduced Area 2 quota by 15% and increased Area 3 quota by the same margin, spurning any opportunity to improve recreational fishing.

Any hopes we had of restoring crayfish abundance in a reasonable timeframe have been dashed. The new Area 2 Management Procedure will be in force for the next five years, unless the fishery collapses – a real possibility.

Gisborne woes continue

Commercial fishers around Gisborne in Area 3 have become dependent on undersize crayfish to fill their quota, via a government-sanctioned loophole.

Increasing quota by 15% means more of these small crayfish will disappear

offshore, and recreational fishers will continue to struggle to find a legal size fish to take home.

Bright spot on the West coast

The west coast fishery (CRA9) from the Kaipara across the Strait to Westland seems to be the healthiest fishery in the country. It has reasonable numbers of large crayfish and these fulfil an important role in the marine ecosystem.

Guy's CRA9 decision is pleasing and ought to maintain the fishery in a healthy state for the foreseeable future.

Fundamental change required

Guy has made his intentions clear. Export dollars are more important than rebuilding the fisheries, addressing the risks to the marine ecosystem, or our fishing interests.

Many people will now be looking closely at each party's fisheries policies and other decisions in the lead-up to the September election.

Make no mistake, the election is won and lost in the upper North Island where around two million people live and work. Fishing and diving are popular family activities. Make your vote count.

ENDS

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