

NZSFC Fisheries Management Update 23

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Paua campaigners pride of the south

So the rumours are true! All the talk about how steadfast southern folk can be was borne out during the recent paua consultation process. When Ministry and industry suggested the public take a back seat to commercial interests in PAU 5D the crowd literally went wild.

People from Dunedin to Invercargill started a campaign, Paua to the People. Our member club called on the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council to make a submission, which we did.

Even the local Councils submitted against the proposals. The perennial Mayor, Tim Shadbolt, was interviewed on TV advocating for paua to remain in community hands. Go Tim!

Ministry proposals

Around 165km of the Otago and Southland coastline is closed to commercial harvest of paua. Commercial interests want a regulatory change so they can access around 25km of this closed area, ostensibly to 'spread their catch'. Industry estimate there is around 10 to 30 tonnes of paua in these closed areas of PAU 5D.

Without consulting with local recreational interests first, the Ministry for Primary Industries released a discussion paper in mid March with submissions due by 19 April. The Ministry supports the proposed regulation change.

Public response

When the locals heard about the proposals they swung into action. They formed an action group, enabled submissions to be made through a website www.pauatothepeople.org.nz, established a Facebook page and engaged with their local politicians and communities from Dunedin and around the Southland coast.

Our member club closest to this action is Tautuku Fishing Club Dunedin & Haast Inc. At their request the Fisheries Management team swung into action, did some research and submitted on behalf the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council. The main reasons for supporting the status quo and objecting to any regulatory change include:

- Concern that the proposal is a calculated step to gain more quota in the future.
- Paua has limited productivity, this needs to be protected for environmental and public interests.
- Commercial effort will be concentrated in easy-access areas first, where recreational fishers harvest their food.
- Localised depletion is likely and increased conflict is inevitable.
- The fishery must foremost be maintained to provide for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of the community.

There were important factors omitted from the proposal paper. It is critical the Minister is made aware of the government's *Fisheries 2030 Strategy* that includes an objective to "determine the best option for providing non-commercial fishing areas".

There are very few areas in New Zealand where commercial paua harvesting is not competing directly with non-commercial fishing interests. The Minister needs to know that if these closed areas are opened to commercial fishing it will be extremely difficult and most unlikely for him to ever take them back. Inevitably, they will be depleted to the same extent as all the other areas with commercial access.

While the Ministry has taken on the role of actively seeking new opportunities, the Minister, Nathan Guy, has a statutory duty to balance these opportunities against the public interest and the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.

Fisheries management doesn't all revolve around making money for private interests.

The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council supports its members through making submissions and advocating for fisheries to be managed sustainably, to enable people to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing through fishing.

While paua is not a sport fishery, it is important to our members and their communities. People have a shared interest in gathering paua for food, to enhance theirs and other's wellbeing. Whilst these interests may be difficult to quantify, they are genuine and ongoing. Paua to the People!

www.nzsportfishing.org.nz