

Paua to the People movement outraged that protection of our national treasures is still not guaranteed.

14 June 2013

The Ministry for Primary Industries and the Minister, the Hon. Nathan Guy, this morning announced the postponement of a decision on whether to keep commercial paua fishers out of four areas of pristine Southern coastline historically closed to them.

Ex-commercial paua diver and Paua to the People Spokesman Hamish Forrester says “We followed their process, we did exactly what was asked of us. Two options were presented; keep the areas closed to commercial fishing, or to open them. 2,718 people said keep them closed, 22 said open them. We were under the impression that a decision would be made, this has come from leftfield.”

He goes on to say “Ample evidence has been provided that recreational and customary people are using these areas. MPI gave us a guarantee that if we provided this evidence, then these areas would stay closed to commercial paua fishing.”

We are relieved that areas of Otago and Southland will not be opened for commercial fishing, for now. We are concerned that reason has not yet prevailed, and that these areas remain at risk.

We are confused with the outcome to defer the decision. We have well and truly proven to the Ministry that the areas proposed to be opened are in fact well used by recreational fishers and local maori, and that allowing commercial paua fishing in these areas would have significant negative impacts on all other users.

Former All Black Kees Meuwis says “Over 99% of submitters have voiced these areas should remain closed to commercial paua fishing. We are outraged that a decision still hasn’t been made to protect these.”

Paua to the People is a movement entirely run by volunteers who have taken time off work and from family to protect the future of the paua fishery.

“We represent recreational and customary paua fishery stakeholders. What more information does the Minister think can be provided?” says Mr. Forrester.

By contrast, the commercial paua fishers are part of a multi-million industry and seem prepared to use the huge resources at their disposal to devastate a national treasure.

The Ministry has recognized the huge role that Paua to the People are playing in protecting the future of the Southern paua fishery, but have been given no assurances that it will be a level playing field.

We are committed to this cause and will continue to work hard to build upon our initial victory and ensure that this southern paua treasure remains protected for all New Zealanders.

Further information and comment:

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