

‘Fishaway’ for the future



Portia Barcello (left) and Anna Jones with their *Fishaway* device.

Innovative fishing device captures the attention of MFish and the media.

A fishing invention, designed by two 12-year-old Blenheim students, is helping to revolutionise the world of fishing.

Portia Barcello and Anna Jones from Bohally Intermediate School have developed *Fishaway*, a device that allows blue cod, or undersize fish, to be returned to the water without attracting shags.

The pair came up with the invention when they were out fishing and noticed shags swooping down and catching fish when they were released.

As a result of the newly-implemented temporary ban on blue cod fishing in the Marlborough Sounds, they recognised the need to be able to safely return fish to the water.

“We saw the shags getting the blue cod when they were released and we thought we could come up with something to solve that problem,” says Portia.

To remedy this the girls set about constructing the *Fishaway* prototype, which consists of a long tube of marine-grade material, supported by five steel rings secured with cable ties. Handles and floats are attached to the device.

When released into the water, *Fishaway* expands two metres into the water. Because the material is dark, fish can swim to safety without being seen by shags.

While out fishing with Portia’s dad, the device was tested three times to assess its efficiency.

“In the first test we caught 20 fish and released 10 fish using *Fishaway* and 10 without,” says Portia. “All 10 fish survived with the *Fishaway* and only two survived without it.”

The girls say they have received lots of interest from fishers about *Fishaway* and are hoping to someday produce it for public use.

As for a future career, Portia says she’s not really sure yet, although she hasn’t ruled out science. “I quite like inventing things and I’m working on more ideas,” she says.

MFish Inshore Fisheries Manager in Nelson, Scott Williamson, says *Fishaway* is exactly the kind of innovation and forward-thinking that is needed to secure the future of blue cod, and other fish species.

“It’s such a simple device, easy-to-use, not expensive, and makes a real difference to the survival of blue cod. I take my hat off to Portia and Anna on this wonderful invention,” he says.

The girl’s efforts were recognised last month at a school ceremony organised by MFish, where they were presented certificates of achievement and a book voucher each. 