

The Bite

News from MFish JULY 2007

COMPLIANCE

Protecting New Zealand's valuable fisheries

FISHERIES PLANS

Working together to get the best value from fisheries

NORTH ISLAND EELS

Rebuilding a fishery

WORKING TOGETHER ON MARINE PROTECTION

Benthic Protection Areas, Marine Protected Areas, Deepwater Research, Hector's and Maui's dolphins

New Zealand Government



Ministry of
Fisheries
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa



Farewell

It is with very mixed feelings that I write this to you. My time in New Zealand has been the highlight of my career and I mean that sincerely. I have been warmly welcomed by MFish staff and, importantly, by the people around the country whose culture, passion, life and livelihood revolves around fisheries and the marine sector. This makes it hard to write my last piece for The Bite. Still, this is a natural point for me to reflect on the past couple of years and offer some thoughts about the future.

New Zealand leads the world in many ways and fisheries management is one of them. The Quota Management System provided an opportunity to manage fishing in a way that is the envy of many countries. An emphasis on sustainability, a word used increasingly in all sectors, has seen good things happen, particularly in areas where we work jointly with other groups and other countries. We achieve way above our population size.

The last nearly three years are marked by huge achievements due to the efforts of our dedicated Ministry people. The beginnings of meaningful engagement by the Ministry with Tangata Whenua, commercial and recreational fishers and environmental interests and our colleagues in other agencies; the establishment of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation; a huge area of the Exclusive Economic Zone dedicated to benthic protection from impacts of trawling; marine reserves, mātaítai and taiapure created; the Ministry and industry working together to reduce the incidence of paua and rock lobster poaching; these are just a few.

More needs to be done. Increasingly, media reports from around the world discuss declining fish stock levels and impacts on the marine environment as well as the livelihood and wellbeing of people. We need strong, healthy fisheries. To achieve that, we must exercise judgement and control over what we take, ensuring best value for all in the short, medium and long-term.

Our vision for the future is that people's respect for fisheries resources, and the environment, continues to grow; that we see fewer cases of poaching and over-exploitation of fisheries and that our ability to share the resource truly sees all New Zealanders realising best value from our fisheries.

Increasing our knowledge and the understanding of fisheries and their environments will help to make this a reality and better information and analysis will move us towards this. In the meantime we will continue protecting the resource for all and increasing the public awareness of the need to respect fisheries and abide by the rules. We will continue to work with all our interest groups to ensure a collaborative sector based on mutual respect.

We are together also building a better Ministry with our organisational development programme aiming to strengthen our organisation and ensure it has the capability to provide leadership to the sector and in nurturing our next generation

of leadership so as to achieve results on behalf of the people of New Zealand. You are a great team and I couldn't have asked for better.

“He aha te mea nui o te ao he tangata, he tangata”

“What is the greatest thing in the world it is people, it is people.”

My best wishes and thanks to everyone who made me feel such a part of this great sector.

Hei kona mai me te aroha.

JOHN GLAISTER

From the Minister



It is sad that Dr John Glaister, for family reasons, is leaving his position as Chief Executive of the Ministry of Fisheries earlier than both he and I would have liked.

John's extensive scientific and fisheries management knowledge, which he developed in his native Australia, has been a great benefit to his staff and the New Zealand fishing sector. His expertise and leadership will be sorely missed. With all the passion, assets and jobs invested in fishing, the Chief Executive's role is challenging, and one that has benefited from John's vision and sound judgement.

John has built on past successes of the Ministry of Fisheries – the solid foundations of the Quota Management System, and the Deed of Settlement with Maori. Over the past 20 years we have achieved sustainable outcomes in almost all our fisheries. The challenge put to John was to maximise the value we all get from our fisheries; look for ways to minimise the environmental effects of fishing; and focus the Ministry on taking more of a leadership role in both fisheries management and aquaculture management.

He has led significant initiatives, including the long overdue debate about increasing the value of our shared fisheries, a

shift towards Government-led objectives-based management and the importance of marine protection.

Under John's direction, MFish is now focusing on working with stakeholders to deliver fisheries plans to maximise the value of each fishery and developing standards to measure the environmental performance of fishing. This ongoing commitment to working together on improving fisheries management will be the heart of objectives-based management and will lead us into the future.

I've enjoyed working with John, his broad knowledge and pragmatic approach, his fair dinkum opinions on trans-Tasman sport, and I wish him well for the future back in Brisbane. He leaves MFish in good heart.

My deepest regret is that he won't be around to celebrate the Rugby World Cup being returned to its rightful home in New Zealand, later in the year.

MINISTER OF FISHERIES JIM ANDERTON





Fisheries plans – maximising value in fisheries

Fisheries plans are about working with stakeholders to maximise the value in their fisheries says Russell Burnard, MFish manager regulatory and information.

Developing fisheries plans and fisheries standards are a key part of a shift towards objectives-based management. Fisheries standards will set levels of environmental performance and spell out fisheries management processes. Using both fisheries plans and standards, MFish will work with stakeholders to set objectives on how to best manage each fishery.

MFish has been collating information about the current management of fisheries for the past nine months and will start discussions with stakeholders in July about improving value in fisheries.

“We are keen to remove impediments, where we can, and need to talk to stakeholders about how to do this.”

Russell says all fish stocks have been grouped into 27 fisheries for the purpose of developing fisheries plans in a pragmatic and timely way.

“Writing separate plans for 600-plus fish stocks would take too long! These groupings may change a bit over time but they provide a good place to start.”

“We will be ready to start engaging with stakeholders on six to eight of these plans from July 2007. We are currently sorting out which plans to work on first. MFish staff will be contacting those stakeholders involved.”

“Over the course of developing each plan we want to talk to everyone with an interest in that particular fishery.”

The time it will take to develop a fishery plan with stakeholders will be different for each plan, but we expect most will take a year with some of the more complex fisheries taking up to two years.

For more information go to www.fish.govt.nz and look under fisheries plans on the left of the home page, or phone your local inshore manager or the deepwater team in Wellington.

FINFISH

- Southern finfish (Fishery Management Areas 3 & 5)
- Southern reef fish (FMA 3, 5)
- Challenger finfish (FMA 7)
- East Coast North Island finfish (FMA 2)
- North East Coast North Island finfish (FMA 1)
- West Coast North Island finfish (FMA 8, 9)

SHELLFISH / SEAWEED

- Southern shellfish (FMA 3,5)
- Challenger shellfish (FMA 7)
- East Coast North Island shellfish (FMA 2)
- West Coast North Island shellfish (FMA 8, 9)
- North East Coast North Island shellfish (FMA 1)
- Rock Lobster
- Paua
- Northland Scallops
- Coromandel Scallops
- Challenger Scallops
- Foveaux oysters
- Seaweed

FRESHWATER

- Freshwater General
- North Island Eels
- South Island Eels

DEEPWATER AND MIDDLE DEPTHS

- Deepwater complex
- Middle depths complex
- Deepwater shellfish

OTHER

- Chatham Island (FMA 4)
- Kermadec
- Highly Migratory Species

Shared Fisheries important decisions to make

The management of shared fisheries is important to our economy, our national identity, and to both Maori and Pakeha cultural values.

Fisheries management involves setting the total allowable catch and then allocating it among the customary, amateur and commercial fishing sectors. But there is uncertainty about how to do the allocation – that is deciding which sector gets how much of the available catch. Release of the Shared Fisheries document in October last year started a process whereby management of shared fisheries can be discussed and suggestions made to move forward.

The overall goal of the initiative is to enable increases in value from the use of shared fisheries. In particular the proposals address the need to reduce uncertainty in the allocation among sectors, and give greater recognition to non-commercial values. “The proposals also aim to ensure a better allocation process that is clear and takes into account different fishing values and produce better information about the use of fisheries resources,” says project manager Phil Kirk.

Just over 600 submissions were received on the discussion document. Issues of greatest concern relate to reallocation and improving the certainty of allocation decisions. Across each of the three sectors (commercial, customary and amateur) there is significant although not comprehensive support for change in a number of areas. However, there is no consensus on change on particular issues. “Clarification on how key fisheries are allocated is the core issue that has been preventing progress in the management of shared fisheries for two decades” says Phil.

Consultation has confirmed that there are a number of issues that need to be resolved, including: maximising value in allocation decisions; information on amateur catch; impact on Fisheries Deed of Settlement; scale of reallocation and the need for redress. A number of submissions express the view that the best outcome on a range of issues could be achieved through stakeholder negotiation. These submissions illustrate stakeholders’ willingness to take a cooperative approach to shared fisheries issues.

No decisions have been made yet. The Minister of Fisheries will be reporting back to Cabinet soon.





PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Protecting our native dolphins

New Zealanders need to do all that we can to ensure long term protection of Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

That's the message being sent from the Government and it is echoed by a range of bodies including regional councils and conservation groups.

In response to ongoing human threats to the dolphins, the Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation are developing a long-term threat management plan.

It will focus on what measures are required to reduce all risks (fishing and non-fishing) facing Hector's and Maui's dolphins.

The Government is committed to having the plan finished so that any new measures are in place during next summer.

MFish national manager fisheries operations Jonathan Peacey says they are running to a very tight schedule to meet the Government's timetable.

"It's tight, but we're committed to achieving it – and together we're aiming to release a draft plan for public consultation in August."

"Fishing has been shown to impact on the dolphins. Government's desire to reduce that impact is also clear. Exactly how this will occur, and in what areas, is the subject of the fisheries part of the threat management plan we are developing."

"We are currently talking with regional stakeholders about options to reduce risks. We have circulated an information document that clearly outlines the problem and Government's strong desire to see risks facing the dolphins further reduced."

The Hector's dolphin is the world's smallest, and one of the rarest, marine dolphins. The South Island has around 7200 Hector's dolphins with approximately 5400 of these on the West Coast, a population of over 1000 based around Banks Peninsula and two small populations at Porpoise Bay and Te Waewae Bay, both in Foveaux Strait.

"We're very aware that we need to move quickly to implement any changes but we also need to get the solution right. That means we have to go through a step by step process."

"Identifying the costs and benefits of various options for managing threats to the dolphins is an essential component. Stakeholder input is important in this aspect of developing the plan."

"Once we roll out the draft plan for consultation, we then need to allow time for public feedback with submissions going to both departments. Then we'll provide final advice to the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Conservation."

"Once an approach is agreed, the ministers intend to act quickly to put in place any new fishing related initiatives that are necessary to ensure protection of these dolphins."

The North Island Hector's dolphins, also known as Maui's dolphins are critically endangered with as few as 110 remaining

between Mokau and Dargaville and on the west coast of the North Island.

Hector's dolphins have a low rate of reproduction – just sufficient to replace the population. It is not sufficient to cope with human-caused deaths.

Females need to reach eight years before they can give birth and they then produce around five calves over an average lifetime of 20 years.

The following measures currently protect Maui's and Hector's dolphins:

- A ban on all set nets from north Taranaki to north of Dargaville, out to four nautical miles
- A marine mammal sanctuary at Banks Peninsula
- Recreational set net restrictions from Kaikoura to South Canterbury, and Te Waewae Bay in Southland.



PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Iwi stand together at the top of the South Island

Several years of korero have culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between all eight top of the South iwi and the Ministry of Fisheries.

The iwi see this as a major step towards ensuring the abundance of kaimoana, for which they are renowned, remains.

MFish Pou Hononga (relationship manager) Judith MacDonald says the signing in March before Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton at Blenheim's Omaka Marae provides a solid platform for iwi and the Crown to develop a strategic pathway for fisheries management across Te Tau Ihu (the top of the South Island).

The forum comprises representatives from Ngati Apa ki te Ra To, Ngati Koata, Ngati Kuia, Ngati Rarua, Ngati Tama, Ngati Toa Rangatira, Rangitane and Te Ati Awa.

She says the memorandum will enable the sharing of information and ensure better collaboration on sustainably managing the region's fisheries.

"It will help us to better understand each other and better reflect customary interests," Judith says. With iwi "keen to get some runs on the board", the group is already looking at implementing the South Island Customary

Regulations across the rohe. Without the customary fishing regulations, iwi and hapu can only take fish for important events through Regulation 27a of the Amateur Fishing Regulations.

“The customary regulations give effect to the Deed of Settlement by getting Maori involved in actively managing their customary fisheries. The eight iwi in Te Tau Ihu have already started this process, to their credit. They have come a long way and are almost ready to put in their application.”

“MFish now needs to recognise how long that journey has been and come to the party as well. With eight different iwi living in a relatively small area, it will require a unique resolution.”

Of particular benefit to iwi will be the ability to take up the suite of customary tools available under the customary regulations, such as mātaimai, taiapure and rāhui, and the ability to collect information on customary gathering.

“This will benefit everyone, not just Maori. In order to manage a sustainable fishery, people need to know what is coming out of the water. Iwi have some information already but the implementation of the customary regulations will see better reporting and more accurate fisheries management.”

Spatial allocation is also a major issue in Te Tau Ihu as the area has a long history of aquaculture.

“The race for space has seen more than 7000 ha allocated for marine farming. This makes Te Tau Ihu one of the largest marine farming areas in New Zealand. Te Tau Ihu recognise the opportunities that the recent aquaculture reforms can provide and are working with MFish, local bodies and Te Ohu Kaimoana to explore options for settlement.”

Judith is keen to see aquaculture settlement progress in Te Tau Ihu. “This is the region with the largest settlement obligation, and it is important we all work together to find constructive settlement solutions.”



Rebuilding our North Island eel fishery

The Government is considering further reductions to catch limits for the North Island eel fishery, so that there is more certainty that the fishery will rebuild to meet the expectations of all fishery interests.



PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

“Catch monitoring suggests the catch limits applied to North Island eel fisheries in 2004 have not resulted in significant improvements in average size and species composition of the longfin and shortfin catch, says Ministry of Fisheries senior fisheries adviser Dave Allen. “There is also new scientific information that the current harvest of longfin eels in the North Island is not sustainable for the longer term.”

As a result, MFish is consulting with fishers about a range of ways to reduce catch limits in North Island eel fisheries.

“We aim to bring about a clear improvement in the status of our eel fisheries by 2014,” Dave says. “So we are proposing a range of ways that will reduce catch limits and ensure long-term sustainability. We are particularly worried about the long-term sustainability of longfin eel stocks, and so we are proposing tougher measures in that fishery.”

These proposed changes follow MFish’s recent introduction of a 4kg maximum size limit for the commercial take of

eels in the North Island and Chatham Islands. The size limit, particularly relevant to longfin eels, allows large eels to be protected for breeding. This measure now applies on a nationwide basis. The maximum size limit will become increasingly effective as more eels reach a larger average size, as a result of reductions in fishing pressure.

Dave says various factors have brought about a decline in New Zealand eel populations, including the impact of commercial fishing since the mid-1960s and major changes to the environment, mostly in earlier times – flood plain drainage, hydro-electric dams and their turbines, rural drain clearance and water pollution.

Combined, these have meant that fewer large eels leave New Zealand’s rivers each year to spawn.

“If we want these eel fisheries to be here for our children’s children, we have to increase the number of eels escaping to spawn at the end of their life,” Dave says. “It is these big eels that are the future of the fishery.”

Towards this end, the government introduced a maximum size limit of 4kg for the commercial take of eels in the North Island in April 2007. While the limit applies just to commercial

fishers, recreational and customary fishers could observe the same rule – for the sake of letting large eels return to the sea to breed.

Eels are a taonga species to Maori. Large numbers were caught and preserved in past years for eating and trading and are still harvested for cultural purposes (ie, hui and tangi), although at a reduced level compared to historical takes.

At present a recreational fisher can take six eels a day, and is limited to one fyke net. However, unlike commercial fishers, there is no minimum or maximum size limit.

Dave says there is currently little information on the sizes of eel being caught by recreational or customary fishers. And he urges tangata whenua to get more involved in the management of these fisheries.

“Our eel fisheries are hugely important to Maori, particularly from a recreational and customary perspective. But Maori also have significant commercial interests in the fishery,” Dave says.

commercial fishing is currently prohibited in three North Island catchments – Mohaka and Motu rivers and a significant part of the Whanganui. It is also prohibited in several lakes and lagoons, to recognise the special relationship between tangata whenua and places of importance for customary gathering.

“Many issues will need to be considered, including the prospect that Maori from different iwi may wish to fish commercially under the QMS, and that they may prefer to fish only within their rohe,” he says.

“A key part of this process involves identifying those places where longfin eels are relatively abundant, have a good size range in the population, and where growth is considered relatively fast. An area having these characteristics would bring quicker results than closing an area of poorer quality.”

Enabling safe passage of eels around dams is another important issue in the long-term management of this fishery.



PHOTO: SEAFOOD NZ

“We all have a lot of work to do, and I don’t think any of these sectors will be happy until we see the results in the river. We need to continue to look after the resource in the short to medium term, so that the longer term is secured.”

In the meantime, he says, if anyone sees eels trying to get out to sea, spare them a thought and remember they have been waiting for several decades for this big day.

MFish plans to periodically review catch limits and, as more information becomes available, introduce further commercial fishing bans from catchments likely to be refuges for large eels before they migrate to spawn. But Dave says choosing which rivers to close is a difficult process, and one that must be done in consultation with fishers.

To increase the numbers of migrating breeding eels,

If fish passage is not provided (such as over hydro-electric dams), eels can be stopped from moving upstream to potential habitats. Safe fish passages are also needed for eels living in upper catchments to be able to reach the sea during their spawning migration downstream.

MFish Taranaki-Wanganui Pou Hononga (relationship manager) Sam Tamarapa is working with iwi and TrustPower representatives on the process for the Patea Dam.

TrustPower aims to capture and transfer migrating elvers upstream, and eels moving downstream to spawn.

“Hapu and iwi have expressed interest in being involved with eel transfers. And it’s a prime opportunity to learn more about when eels migrate, their numbers and size,” Sam says.



Working together for marine protection



PHOTO: NIWA

HYDROTHERMAL VENT, BROTHERS SEAMOUNT, DEEP BAY OF PLENTY

PROTECTING DEEPWATER ECOSYSTEMS

A fishing industry initiative to protect some of our most pristine and exciting deepwater habitats from bottom-trawling and dredging is a significant development in protecting marine eco-systems in New Zealand waters, according to MFish national manager fisheries operations Jonathan Peacey.

In April the Government announced the Benthic (seabed habitat) Protection Areas initiative that will protect 30 percent of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

"The industry deserves a lot of credit, as they took this initiative to the Government. MFish consulted with stakeholders, and as a result of their submissions, amendments were made, and extra areas were added."

Jonathan says the 17 areas in the BPAs cover 1.25 million

square kilometres (equivalent to four times New Zealand's landmass).

"Many of our most striking and fascinating underwater features are in these areas, including cold water corals, seamounts and hydrothermal vents, each of which are specifically noted by the United Nations as vulnerable ecosystems."

"Together with the 19 existing seamount closures (closed in 2000), the BPAs will protect 88 percent of all known active hydrothermal vents and 52 percent of all known seamounts from bottom fishing."

The BPAs will be officially closed to bottom trawling and dredging later this year and fishing companies have agreed not to fish these areas in the interim.

The Government has agreed further protection in the EEZ (between the 12-mile and 200-mile limits) will not be a priority until 2013, but further closures are possible before 2013 should information become available indicating more protection is required.

**New Zealand will now
have protected from
bottom fishing:**



30 percent of its seabed

**88 percent of all known active
hydrothermal vents**

**52 percent of large seamounts
(over 1000m high)**

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE TERRITORIAL SEA

For the short term, the focus of marine protection will shift to the Territorial Sea (from the coast to the 12-mile limit), says MFish manager fisheries policy Mark Edwards.

“Close to the coast is now where the problems are more immediate and most acute – where the risks to marine biodiversity need to be carefully examined, but also where significant economic, social and cultural value is derived from the marine resources.”

The Government released the Marine Protected Areas Policy in January 2006. Building on the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, the objective of the MPA Policy is to: Protect marine biodiversity by establishing a network of Marine Protected Areas that is comprehensive and representative of New Zealand’s marine habitats and ecosystems.

MPAs may include a number of protection tools including marine reserves, special legislation, marine parks, customary management tools, fisheries closures, marine mammal sanctuaries and potentially cable exclusion zones.

MFish and Department of Conservation are working jointly to progress marine protection under this policy and will be working with communities and stakeholders to plan for areas of protection and determine what marine protection tools would be most suitable for those areas.

Mark says the initial collaboration has been focusing on a classification system to define bio-geographic regions and to list the different habitat types within each bioregion.





“The classification system will detail the types of habitats and ecosystems that require protection. Information will also be collected on the plants and animals that reside in the different habitats and the extent to which people use various areas. This will be important to identify the range of marine habitats to protect while minimising impacts on current users.”

At the same time MFish and DOC have been working on a protection standard to identify the extent of effect on marine habitats and ecosystems that will provide for the maintenance and recovery of biodiversity.

Mark says the classification system and the protection standard are necessary for communities and stakeholders working to protect different habitat and ecosystem types in their region. Both documents will be out for public consultation later in June.

As part of the MPA implementation process DOC and MFish are proceeding with four advanced MPA planning processes, the most advanced being the West Coast of the South Island. Other regions where planning will next proceed include Otago/Southland, the sub-Antarctics and the Hauraki Gulf. MFish and DOC are working to prioritise further areas in which to implement the MPA Policy.

DOC Marine Conservation Unit manager Felicity Wong says the review of marine habitats and how they are used, published recently by the South Island West Coast MPA forum, is a great resource for public debate about the state of our knowledge and protection priorities for the coast.

“DOC and MFish are looking forward to applying this approach now to the Otago/Southland coastal area and working with a second forum that will soon be established there.”



DEEPWATER ECOSYSTEMS – FILLING THE KNOWLEDGE GAPS

While planning for MPAs in the EEZ is on hold until 2013, the preparatory work needed for the deepwater MPA process is continuing, says MFish chief scientist Pamela Mace.

The Government is in the middle of a \$4.7 million project to learn more about sea-bed habitats and animal communities on the Chatham Rise (east of New Zealand) and Challenger Plateau (west of New Zealand). The project, led by MFish is a joint effort with National Institute of Water and Atmosphere, Land and Information New Zealand, and DOC.

The Chatham / Challenger project is the first step towards filling this knowledge gap. It involves three voyages to map and describe the types of habitats and communities found in soft sediments between 200m and 1200m depth on the Chatham Rise and Challenger Plateau.

“These areas were chosen because they are strongly contrasting areas in terms of plankton and fish production – the Chatham Rise is hugely productive while Challenger Plateau is less so. The marine life on the sea-bed is likely to mirror this.”

The second voyage which took samples from the seabed and extensively photographed the biological communities across the Chatham Rise sea floor was completed in April. Scientists will be analysing the data from this and the next voyage to the Challenger Plateau in June, over the next two years, to determine habitat and community variation within and between the two areas.

The project will also provide some assessment of the effects of fishing along with natural drivers on biodiversity and the structure of seabed communities. This will enable Government to evaluate the need to build on BPAs in offshore areas.

Although the data analysis will take some time, a description of the voyage and photographs from the seabed can be seen on the MFish website www.fish.govt.nz under ‘Environment’.

Pamela says the project will extend what we have learnt from research on deep water seamounts that have fragile ecosystems that are particularly vulnerable to fishing to those found in soft sediments in depths and sediment types where our largest offshore fisheries are found (e.g. hoki, hake, ling and silver warehou).

“Information collected during the project will be used to produce ecologically based habitat maps that will guide future decisions around marine protection and fishing in our offshore areas.”

APPLYING WHAT WE LEARN OUTSIDE THE EEZ

Promoting New Zealand's approach to fishing and environmental management on the world stage is supported by MFish manager international Jane Willing.

“New Zealand recognises it has a role to play beyond our EEZ, both in promoting sustainable management and minimising the environmental impacts of fishing,” says Jane.

New Zealand has been very active in recent discussions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and has called for an immediate interim prohibition on bottom trawling in unregulated high seas areas.

“We have a lot of expertise in managing fisheries in a sustainable way inside our EEZ and we advocate for similar management on the high seas, where no single country has jurisdiction. It's important we show leadership in this area.”

New Zealand is also an active player in the negotiations to establish a South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). This organisation will regulate fishing practices for the high seas in the South Pacific. Countries involved in the negotiations recently agreed on a set of interim conservation and management measures, including to control bottom trawling and its impacts.

“SPRFMO will regulate the high seas fisheries on our back door step. New Zealand has worked hard to promote interim measures to address the impacts of bottom-trawling.”


“With managing all high seas areas, it is a case of cooperating with all the other countries that are located in, or fishing in, the area. While we advocate strongly for sustainable fishing and minimising environmental impacts, we are one voice among many, and don't see all we promote reflected in agreements. However, we continue to work with like-minded fishing nations to improve management of high seas fishing.” 



PHOTO : NIWA

SEA URCHINS , *DERMECHINUS SPECIES*,
RUMBLE V SEAMOUNT, KERMADEC RIDGE



PHOTO : NIWA

SOFT CORAL, *ANTHOMASTUS ROBUSTUS*,
RUMBLE V SEAMOUNT, KERMADEC RIDGE



Compliance – vital for sustainable fishing

Whether you're fishing for fun, employing your customary rights or fishing to make a dollar, complying with the rules is essential for protecting New Zealand's valuable fisheries.

And it's because compliance plays such an important role in the future of our fisheries, that the Ministry of Fisheries is committed to a compliance strategy that targets a range of issues.

"The compliance strategy covers all aspects of fishing – including recreational, customary and commercial fishing", says MFish national manager fisheries compliance Steve Stuart.

Given the vast New Zealand coastline, MFish has 10 District Offices and eight sub-district offices spread from Kaitiaki to Invercargill, including an office on the Chatham Islands.

There is 180 compliance staff on the job – 150 of which include full-time fishery surveillance officers, fishery investigators, and analysts.

Then there are 160 honorary fishery officers who are actively working in the recreational sector – offering voluntary assistance to the public in complying with amateur fishing regulations.

KEY FOCUS AND STRUCTURE OF COMPLIANCE

The over-riding goal is to get all fishers following fisheries rules by encouraging high levels of voluntary compliance and creating an effective deterrent.

MFish promotes voluntary compliance via television, brochures and pamphlets that explain the rules, educational programmes and fishery officers spreading the word on the beachfronts to over 20,000 recreational fishers they come in contact with each year. Liaison and training programmes are delivered to support kaitiaki and tangata tiaki to comply with customary fishing regulations.

To reinforce the voluntary compliance messages Steve says there is also a need to create effective deterrents to those who contemplate breaking the rules. That means prosecuting people and putting them before the courts where they can be subject to very large fines and forfeiture of their fishing vessel, equipment and fish.

“To achieve all that we do, we have to take a multi-layered approach and be very strategic.”

“With that in mind, we changed our structure in 2005 to create separate surveillance and investigative units. We spent a lot of time assessing the risks and developed sophisticated information systems to better inform our organisation as to where to target our resources.”

“We have a Compliance Working Group with fishing industry looking at ways to make our activities the most efficient and effective.”

“All this allows us to focus our resources on high priority areas where we can have the greatest impacts.”

POACHING/BLACK MARKET ACTIVITY

“One of our key focus areas is poaching and black market activity,” says MFish manager surveillance services Dean Baigent.

He says paua and rock lobster are two highest priority species.

“They will always be high priority because they are very accessible to the public – particularly paua which you access from land – you don’t even need a boat. Both also fetch a high price for little effort.”

“We continue to receive reports that New Zealand paua is exported overseas on the black market.”

In response to this, an anti-poaching campaign was set up, including the establishment of the 0800 4 POACHER phone line. This campaign was set up on advice from the Compliance Working Group and has received huge support from paua and rock lobster industries. It has resulted in a steady flow of information that has contributed to a substantial reduction in the illegal take, but poaching continues to be an area of concern.

“It’s a multi-headed beast. Once you take out one group – another steps in, and so it keeps going.”

“Our ultimate aim is to disrupt the complete black market supply and distribution chain.”

In March and April alone, MFish broke up poaching and black market operations around the country, including in Whangarei, the East Coast, Wellington, Kaikoura and Christchurch.

Paua detector dogs are now also in operation. They are working at border exits and have already sniffed out a number illegal paua exports.



CATCHING PAUA POACHERS IS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR MFISH. FISHERY OFFICER SCOTT BERNIE WITH HUNDREDS OF POACHED PAUA ON THE WELLINGTON COAST.

QUOTA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND SURVEILLANCE

Retaining integrity of the Quota Management System is also an important aspect of compliance. That includes vessel inspections to ensure that fish is being accurately recorded and reported, analysis of commercial fishing returns and attending stakeholder meetings to provide advice – and to ensure stakeholder expectations are clearly understood.

Dean says to give an idea of surveillance activity on any one day around the country, MFish averages 10 patrols either on the water or in vehicles conducting a mix of random and targeted checks of fishers or poachers.

“Further to the 20,000 recreational inspections we conduct annually, we inspect over 1,200 commercial fishers as well as commercial dealers in fish or licensed fish receivers. In many cases interaction with fishery officers is the only contact some fishers have with us so it’s an important role in terms of influencing fishers’ expectations and perceptions of MFish.”

UPCOMING INITIATIVES

While there is still an existing need to focus on paua and rock-lobster, there also continues to be emerging threats to other fisheries, which MFish needs to turn its attention to.

An emerging priority on the agenda for next year is shellfish, including pipis, cockles and mussels.

“We’re seeing particular concerns in the Auckland region. It seems that where there’s a pattern of a growing population, there’s also a pattern of a depleting shellfish fishery. That’s something we really want to address further to see if there are steps we can put in place to stop this pattern occurring.”

Project Protector is another initiative due to kick off soon. This involves the several government agencies using seven navy vessels, and airforce planes to patrol New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone.

Monitoring New Zealand’s fisheries will be a big part of that and Dean says plans are now well advanced to establish how MFish can use these vessels to their best advantage.

There is also an increasing need to address compliance issues relating to New Zealand obligations under international fisheries agreements. This involves monitoring New Zealand vessels and citizens fishing on the high seas and cooperating with other states particularly in the South Pacific.

WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

The upshot of all this activity doesn’t mean that MFish has everything covered though. Steve says the biggest challenge comes back to a numbers game.

In particular, he cites 15,000 km of coastline with over 1000 commercial fishing entities, numerous licensed fish receivers, hundreds of thousands of recreational fishers and lack of capacity to reach everything.

“Even with the use of Defence and MFish assets this is an immense undertaking which is why we invest so much energy into promoting voluntary compliance and educating the public about the rules.”



COMPLIANCE INTERNAL STRUCTURE

Surveillance: Fishery Surveillance Officers on the ground in uniform that directly monitor and inspect fishing activity across all sectors. This could be overt (in view) or covert (hidden) activity (100 staff).

Investigations: High level investigations into serious fisheries offences. Investigations are generally directed at the commercial or poaching and black market sectors and can involve very long protracted prosecutions. The group also involves a special operations unit specially trained to undertake long term special investigative projects (43 staff).

Information Management: Provides information and intelligence for decision making and undertakes analysis of data for the surveillance and investigation units. Essentially this unit drives priorities and focus of operational staff. The unit also runs the Communication Centre to monitor the health and safety of fishery officers (19 staff).

Business Support: Provides financial services and advice, ministerial servicing, training and development and health and safety services to the Compliance Business (7 staff).

Prosecutions: Made up of solicitors who provide legal advice and support for front line operations, review prosecution files and who appear in court on the Ministry’s behalf (11 staff).



Becoming a master of snapper

Encouraging students of marine science to have solid backgrounds in mathematics and statistics was the driving force behind the new joint Ministry of Fisheries and National Institute of Water and Atmosphere (NIWA) graduate scholarship in quantitative fisheries science.



The first winner of the award was Auckland University student Oliver Hannaford who is studying a Master of Science in Statistics degree, developing mathematical models of the west coast snapper fishery to use in assessing the health of the snapper stock. "I'm deeply grateful for the scholarship," Oliver says. "I'll be able to concentrate fully on my research without having to worry about the future. And it's really encouraging to see the Government investing in students."

Effective management of fisheries requires reliable predictions of what kind of impact different management options will have. The snapper fishery on the west coast of New Zealand is an important natural resource that has a long history of

commercial and recreational fishing. It has the second highest reported catch for snapper in New Zealand. The fish stock was last assessed in 2005.

Minister of Fisheries and Associate Minister of Tertiary Education Jim Anderton was on hand to present Oliver with his cheque. "The contribution of skilled marine scientists to sustainable fisheries is invaluable. There is a world-wide shortage of marine scientists with strong mathematical and statistical backgrounds. Such skills are essential to fisheries science so MFish has initiated this scholarship programme as a first step towards filling the gap."

The scholarship Oliver won is worth \$20,000 over two years.

Young artists inspired by the sea

Colour and imagination collided with vision and skill in the Ministry of Fisheries' school art competition.



THE WINNING ENTRY FOR THE SENIOR SECTION BY RIAH KING-WALL OF KATIKATI.

The theme was *Guardians of the Multitudes of Tangaroa*, with the competition part of Seaweed 2007 and an MFish initiative to build awareness amongst school students of fisheries issues and the importance of their sustainable use.

Over one hundred entries were received from around the country and after two rounds of difficult judging, two lucky winners emerged.



MERVYN MERUMERU TRAVELLED DOWN FROM AUCKLAND TO MEET MINISTER OF FISHERIES JIM ANDERTON AND ACCEPT THE WINNER'S PRIZE FOR THE JUNIOR SECTION.

Riah King-Wall from Katikati won the senior section and Mervyn Merumeru from Point Chevalier, Auckland, took away first prize for the junior section.

Part of the prize included a visit to Wellington and a presentation by the Minister of Fisheries, Jim Anderton, who said that it was positive to see young people thinking about New Zealand's natural resources.

"This art competition is about looking to the future – it helps encourage tomorrow's fishers to think about how we will ensure there are fish for them, with care and management of the resource."

The Minister applauded the standard of the artwork and the time and care that had gone into the entries.

"I am impressed by the obvious creative talent in these artworks, combined with an awareness and appreciation of fisheries and the marine environment."

The regional and national winners art was then generously displayed for the month of March by the Museum of Wellington City and Sea.

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