

option4 Update #151

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A new era in fisheries advocacy

In August 2000 a diverse group of people met in the NZ Fishing News lunchroom to consider the month-old 'Soundings' public consultation paper. This attempt to reform our recreational fishing interests was the result of a Joint Working Group made up of the Ministry of Fisheries and the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council. option4 was a spontaneous public response to the threats posed by Soundings.

Soundings offered three options for the future management of public fishing. The public had to choose one.

But, all three required the public to play second fiddle to commercial quota shareholders who sought to establish ownership to a proportion of the Total Allowable Catch and reduce the public's catch for their benefit!

The public needed another option, and the option4 Principles were promoted to represent those interests.

Today, those who make up the option4 engine-room are clear; it is now time to fully commit to the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, which has been at the heart of option4 since day one.

Consequently, this will be the last option4 Update.

In future, the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council will coordinate the experience and institutional knowledge gained from more than a decade of hard-fought advocacy.

Kahawai Challenge

It was the NZ Sport Fishing Council that spearheaded the five-year Kahawai Legal Challenge, which achieved a Supreme Court decision clarifying the Minister's discretion to manage fisheries for the benefit of non-commercial fishers.

The Minister exercised his discretion last year when he decided, for the first time, to manage kahawai in Area 1, between East Cape and North Cape, in a manner that would enable the stock to grow well above BMSY, the minimum stock level required to produce the maximum sustainable yield.

We look forward to seeing the kahawai stock increase under this harvest strategy and applaud the Minister for making this decision that favoured recreational interests, in spite of strong industry opposition.

Reform unacceptable

There is increasing political pressure to maximise the commercial returns from our fisheries and marine environment at the expense of our non-commercial fishing interests.

With its national structure and mandate, regional organisation and management team in place the NZ Sport Fishing Council is determined to fend off any reforms that do not include clear and definable outcomes that will deliver significant benefits to all members of the fishing public. It is not on the Council's agenda to accept privatisation of our fisheries or being squeezed into the quota management system by way of a proportional share.

The public's access to the fisheries, via the recreational and customary allowances, must be allowed to grow as the population and values change.

The NZ Sport Fishing Council is developing a robust voluntary advocacy model and firmly rejects any suggestions of compulsory licensing and being forced to give up rights to a public resource. This policy reflects the principles that have underpinned and sustained option4 over the years.

The current rumblings around the need for a statutory body, licensing etc, have all the hallmarks of another Soundings process with its vague and undeliverable promises. Ask the hard questions.

We must be ever vigilant against the re-birthing of the Soundings agenda.

Public fishing interests

Inshore fisheries still need to be restored to abundant levels so people have access to enough fish to feed their family. Sustenance fishing is an important aspect of the NZ Sport Fishing Council's advocacy as most members have an interest in both inshore and offshore fishing.

Clearly, the NZ Sport Fishing Council is committed to ensuring that important inshore fisheries remain in the public domain. This is evidenced by their input into a multitude of fisheries management issues, legislative reform proposals, spatial discussions and national policy development.

Submissions have also been made regarding aquaculture, customary fishing evolution, commercial fisheries and improving capture methods, marine protection, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, regional forums and national advisory panels.

In the past six years the NZ Sport Fishing Council has been wholeheartedly involved in the Hokianga Accord, the mid north iwi customary fisheries forum, and a number of mataitai applications.

Many hearts beating as one

It has been eleven intense years of learning, submitting, relationship building and fundraising. We want to thank the many supporters and contributors who have made this advocacy possible. You know who you are – your decision to stand up for yourselves is something all New Zealanders can thank you for.

The NZ Fishing News team rate special mention - your support, patience and wisdom are legendary, kia kaha.

We would also acknowledge the visionary leaders of Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua who have stood so firmly beside both option4 and the NZ Sport Fishing Council in our darkest hours.

The Chesters Plumbing Supplies Fanatical Fishos contest has agreed to swing in behind the NZ Sport Fishing Council. Fantastic.

And, Black Magic's 'option4 lure' promotion continues to support the popular Hiwi The Kiwi programme.

The option4 website will remain live indefinitely, and indelibly, as a record and repository of fisheries management and marine protection process over the last 11 years.

One final request

We ask that all of you who have contributed and supported option4 over the years to now visit www.LegaSea.co.nz and sign up. This is where you can continue to stand up for yourselves in a most tangible manner.

It is your precious financial contributions that will enable the high quality advocacy that the NZ Sport Fishing Council intends to deliver in the future – please contribute – your help is vital.

It has been a privilege for the option4 team to serve the public of New Zealand on such a fundamental level – thank you for your confidence and encouragement. See you at www.LegaSea.co.nz