

Media Release. May 24 2007

Kahawai Legal Challenge Supports Minister and Questions Fishing Industry's Commitment to Sustainability

Today the team defending the Kahawai Legal Challenge Appeal has reinforced their support for Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton's proposals to enable more precautionary fisheries allocation decisions to be taken.

They also join The Hokianga Accord, the mid north iwi regional fisheries forum, in opposing the call from the Maori Fisheries Trustee, Te Ohu Kaimoana, to withdraw the Fisheries Amendment Bill.

The Fishing Industry is appealing the High Court decision made by Justice Harrison in March.

The decision confirmed that sustainability comes first. The Minister's next priority is to allow for the public's non-commercial interests to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing - before setting commercial catch limits.

The Kahawai Legal Challenge team supports the Minister's intention to take a precautionary approach. This will help ensure sustainability of the fisheries for the benefit of all of our communities.

Despite industry and political agitation for the proposed amendment to be dropped, the Kahawai Legal Challenge team argues that commercial assets will be enhanced in the long term if 'best practice' management is embraced to ensure availability and abundance for recreational, customary and commercial fishing.

"The fish will not disappear if they are not caught tomorrow. Instead they will grow bigger and by spawning contribute to increased stocks and the success of the species," said Richard Baker of the Big Game Fishing Council, representing the group of recreational fishing organisations and individuals who brought the Judicial Review case on behalf of all New Zealanders, known as the Kahawai Legal Challenge.

"It is short term thinking to say that constraint undermines the value of settlements. Rather than spent for today, fish left in the sea are 'fish in the bank' for the future."

Such improvements to management will ultimately benefit everyone in the country and help maintain the cherished activity of 'fishing for a feed' and the pleasure of fishing enjoyed regularly by over one million New Zealanders

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