

Marine Protection and Diversity in Representation

Karli Thomas, Greenpeace New Zealand Aotearoa

Karli has been an active member of Greenpeace for several years. Karli is based in Auckland, but often travels overseas as part of Greenpeace campaigns. She was originally scheduled to talk with the hui as part of a panel discussing alternative marine protection measures. Due to timetable changes Karli was keen to talk about various marine protection programmes and give an “outsider’s” perspective on representation of the amateur fishing sector interests.

Greenpeace International

In terms of marine reserves Greenpeace has a science unit at the University of Exeter, in Devon UK, three ocean-going ships and many advocates around the globe. These resources enable Greenpeace to operate at an international level. People in New Zealand may not always appreciate the effort or notice the impacts of these international activities.

Greenpeace has focused on marine reserves in international waters, the ‘last frontier’ of ocean conservation. On the high seas the only parts that are fully protected are a few ‘postage-stamp’ size areas in the Southern Ocean. There is a triangular area in the Mediterranean Sea, under the protection of a regional treaty, which has little effect.

An example of where Greenpeace’s activities have an impact on New Zealand fisheries is in the Pacific Ocean. There are four pockets of international waters that are bordered by the 200 nautical mile limit of four Pacific countries.

Those areas are key tuna grounds and migratory zones for pelagic fish, but most importantly they are hot spots of illegal fishing. So when Greenpeace are calling for selected oceanic areas to be closed, they are doing it for conservation, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement reasons.

Greenpeace has patrolled these areas four times recently. Last year Karli was aboard Greenpeace’s ship when they discovered a Japanese longliner stealing fish out of the Cook Island’s northern waters. A fleet of three ships was caught illegally fishing. As a result, both the Cook Islands and Tokelau governments were able to prosecute and settle these illegalities.

In a New Zealand context, these Pacific areas are important yellow fin tuna grounds. Yellow fin tuna in Region 3 of the Pacific are overfished, yet this is an important breeding area. It was notable that not one tuna was caught last year during a long-standing Tuna fishing tournament down the East Coast. The impact of activity in the Pacific has an effect on New Zealand tuna stocks.

Karli has also worked on marine reserves in New Zealand and was available to discuss that in more detail with anyone that wanted more information.

Recreational representation

Karli’s initial, formal involvement with recreational fishing organisations occurred in 2002 when she was invited to talk about marine reserves at the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council’s Conference held in New Plymouth.

It was apparent back then that it was easy for commercial interests to engineer a conversation about marine reserves and then leave the environmental and recreational fishing sector representatives to battle out the arguments between them.

In Karli’s view more recent developments such as the Hokianga Accord and the 2030 Alliance initiative have enabled more robust discussions between the non-commercial interest groups, both environmental and fisheries.

An important factor for all the representative groups was to maximise their strengths. To achieve that a thorough analysis was required to determine what resources were available, who is involved, their experience and how that collectively contributes to what the non-commercial interests want to achieve.

In many ways representation amongst the amateur fishing sector was not that different to the environmental sector. There were many groups advocating various issues.

Given the recent discussion to develop a single body to represent recreational fishing interests it was helpful to determine what the objective is.

If an external party is trying to get the better of the non-commercial sector then they will attempt to either marginalise one or more of the various parties, or use the 'divide and conquer' technique.

If people or groups are being marginalised, kept away from influencing policy or other matters, then there was value in retaining the diverse groups.

If parties were being 'divided and conquered' then the parties were probably too diverse and there was a need to find some common ground between the groups.

Compared to overseas, the various environmental groups operating in New Zealand work well together. They do not always agree, but there was value in having people focused on different issues.

Greenpeace works with Environment and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand (ECO), both Clive in Thames and their Wellington-based people, WWF and Forest & Bird.

It would be helpful for the various recreational groups to determine what issues are important, who they represent and what role they fill in the overall scheme.

As with the environmental sector, each group has a different role and varying relationships with industry and government representatives.

Often the environmental group's representatives will talk together before submitting on an issue to ensure that they understand who is doing what, that they do not unwittingly counteract each others' effort, or decide who will take the lead role in a specific issue. If a niche is being filled, they respect that effort and back off if necessary, to avoid 'stepping on each others toes'.

Hui Discussion

Prior to the hui Karli had not heard that three million dollars was being offered as 'bait' to successfully create a one-stop shop for recreational fishing representation. If that was true, then that could be a sign the 'opposition' is trying to marginalise the sector and only address issues with one group so they can claim they have consulted with the entire sector.

Likewise, if groups are being pitted against each other then recreational groups need to determine if they are adequately working together. For example, before the national representatives of the environmental sector have their quarterly meetings with MFish, they meet to share information, determine if all the issues are being covered and who is doing what, to ensure they maximise their strengths and resources.

One of the realities is that tangata whenua have no authority, or ability, to give away their 'mandate' to anyone purporting to represent their non-commercial 'recreational' fishing interests.

From an outsider's perspective, it would seem that the various recreational representative groups have more common ground than differences. So it was possibly a matter of the groups getting together to determine

how they can work collectively on those issues that were agreed, and deal with other issues later. This framework had worked well during the formation of the Alliance¹¹ in regards to the Fisheries 2030 project.

It would be helpful if the various recreational organisations did a ‘stock-take’ analysis to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each group, who they represented and what issues they are best to address.

From an observer’s view, in terms of the Hokianga Accord and the way it had operated throughout the hui, it seemed that the forum was working very well together, formulating policy, and continually self-assessing its strengths and weaknesses, even if those particular terms were not being used. Two examples were how the Accord had already debated and decided on both Te Puna Mataitai and the aquaculture policy.

There will always be differences between the groups, but this does not mean that they cannot work together or that one group is compromised by working with another group that has a different focus.

If an issue was of sufficient importance then everyone’s effort needs to be focused on the issue, not the people or group involved.

¹¹ http://www.option4.co.nz/Fisheries_Mgmt/2030.htm#alt