

option4 Update #100

NZ Fishing News May 2008 edition

April 2008

Celebration time!

This Update marks one hundred monthly articles written by the option4 team since August 2000. In addition to the commitment to keep you informed of your right to fish and feed your family, many other tasks relating to fisheries management and marine protection have been undertaken. Most of these processes have been captured online at www.option4.co.nz and are freely available to download and share with your family and friends.

Having ‘scored a century’ it seems timely to reflect on what got over 100,000 amateur fishers so up in arms. It was the Soundings document, released in July 2000.

Soundings was issued by the Rights Working Group comprised of Ministry of Fisheries staff and members of the NZ Recreational Fishing Council. The Group asked for submissions on the future management and rights of all New Zealanders to fish.

Soundings included three options:

- Option 1: Discretionary share (status quo. Described as a weak and vulnerable right subject to erosion).
- Option 2: Proportional share (a fixed share of the available fishery).
- Option 3: Recreational management (proportional share with management control and licensing).

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An affiliation of concerned New Zealanders and fishing advocates created a lobby group to respond to the proposals and developed a fourth option.

option4 drafted a submission, sought input through widespread debate and nationwide meetings. The final, comprehensive submission was presented to MFish in December 2000, including four principles:

1. A priority right over commercial fishers for free access to a reasonable daily bag limit to be written into legislation.
2. An Area Right - The ability to exclude commercial fishing methods that deplete recreationally important areas.
3. A Planning Right – The ability to devise plans to ensure future generations enjoy the same or better quality of rights while preventing fish conserved for recreational use being given to the commercial sector.
4. No licensing of recreational fishers.

Soundings attracted an unprecedented response. Over 62,000 submissions were sent to MFish, of which over 98 percent supported the option4 principles.

The ‘sleeping giant’ of public fishers had awakened.

There have been three major reform processes since Soundings - the Ministerial Consultative Group (2001), the Reference Group (2003) and Shared Fisheries in 2006.

option4 continues to work with many other representative organisations to promote sustainable use of our fisheries and protect your right and that of your children, to fish and harvest food from the sea.

Kahawai Legal Challenge

More latterly option4 has been an integral part of the Kahawai Legal Challenge team. The High Court's clarification that every New Zealander has a well settled common law right to fish has given your advocates the boost to continue with their work.

option4 website

If you haven't already, or if your email has changed, please sign up at the option4 website www.option4.co.nz to receive timely, free news on fisheries management and marine protection issues.

Having a strong collective voice adds power to the effort of the team, both volunteers and contractors, working to achieve abundant fisheries. This would be a celebration in itself.