

option4 Update #111

NZ Fishing News February 2009 edition
January 2009

Abundance is the Key

Since mid-2000 option4 has broadened its understanding of the issues affecting fishing success and fish abundance is the key.

Initially the team's focus was on developing realistic alternatives to those proposed by the Minister and Ministry of Fisheries in the *Soundings* discussion document. The three management options revolved around licensing and the public accepting a proportional share in depleted fisheries.

No amount of licensing revenue could compensate for being locked into a fixed proportion of the available catch. This was particularly offensive given MFish's policy of allocating fisheries according to diminishing historical catch.

Instead of being our interests being 'allowed for' first and any remainder becoming the commercial allocation, over time management had changed and non-commercial fishers only had access to the leftovers, after bulk commercial exploitation.

A positive outcome of better understanding management processes and the difficulty of effecting change has been the connections made with Maori. Depleted fisheries affects non-commercial fishers, both customary and amateur.

Early catch-cries of 'fish free forever' have developed into "more fish in the water/kia maha atu nga ika ki roto i te wai". The Hokianga Accord is manifestation of Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua's commitment to work collectively with option4 and the NZ Big Game Fishing Council for the benefit of all non-commercial fishing interests including environmental, customary and amateur.

Importance of fishing

Use of the sea by New Zealanders for non-commercial purposes is unique by international standards. Easy access and our temperate climate contributes to this popularity.

Fishing has fostered large networks with clubs, neighbours and families all sharing many common experiences and gaining social outcomes from exercising their rights to fish for food and recreation.

Economic benefits

A large industry is based on amateur fishing. Boat builders, tackle manufacturers, distributors and charter vessel operators are just a few of the people who benefit from having abundant inshore fisheries.

An MFish-sponsored study in 1999 revealed the total value of recreational fishing expenditure in Aotearoa was estimated to be \$973 million!

This was money spent per annum on just five species – snapper, kingfish, kahawai, blue cod and crayfish.

While the report's authors urged caution using these figures it does give an indication of the potential benefit to the country of having access to healthy fisheries.

Cultural qualities

Cultural aspects encompass both historic and contemporary use, including traditional food gathering practices and more modern recreational fishing activities.

Abundant fisheries and diverse aquatic ecosystems that people can easily access add to the nation's wellbeing.

An independent survey conducted in November 2007 estimated 31 percent of our population participated in amateur fishing. While this percentage may fluctuate from year to year fishing is a major factor in many people's lives.

Advantages of fishing

Aside from the financial gains associated with non-commercial fishing many more people enjoy the benefits of increased family time, lifeskills passed from one generation to the next and learning more about the environment.

Giving kaimoana to someone who has not enjoyed a feed of fish for a long time is a real Kiwi privilege. The recipient's twinkling eyes and irrepressible excitement is worth far more than anything money can buy.