



# THE UPDATE

## Captain's Blog



### **Paua to the people right on**

The focus this week is on far reaching fisheries management reform proposals.

Submissions close on Sunday on the Fisheries New Zealand discussion paper Your fisheries – your say.

Feedback is sought on four main areas of reform, with the most significant being around landings and returns to the sea.

Pretty much everyone agrees the current rules are muddled, illogical, open to interpretation and difficult to apply and police.

The status quo is not tenable but a solution is far from clear cut.

Industry submissions will be covered in next week's Update.

The proposals were developed without reference to the industry and it is essential that there is consultation with stakeholders on legislation to be introduced later this year to accommodate the changes.

We need to get this right.

However an innovative fisheries management plan approved last week with little fanfare could also prove to be far reaching.

Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash has backed a paua industry initiative on the Chatham Islands that includes the whole community.

“I support your efforts to develop a collaborative and effective management plan with iwi, imi, quota holders, locally engaged stakeholders and the Chatham Islands community to restore and maintain the sustainability of the paua fishery,” Nash wrote.

“It is my view that the plan is beneficial in providing more responsive, localised management of the resource, increased stakeholder commitment to management decisions and a more transparent operating environment.”

Under the Chatham Islands Paua (PAU4) Fisheries Plan, the traditional top-down management policy towards fisheries has been turned on its head in favour of building up from a small scale approach.

The plan received 100 percent endorsement in the public consultation process, an unheard of result in this country’s fractious fisheries debates.

The Chathams, designated PAU4, is the country’s most productive paua fishery where nearly a third of the Total Allowable Commercial Catch of 919 tonnes is harvested.

The fishery had never had a stock assessment until last year.

Despite having the country’s best catch rate and very low recreational and poaching pressure, divers felt some parts of the fishery were showing some signs of stress.

That has prompted a dramatic 40 percent shelving of the total catch, now in its second year.

That is a substantial economic hit but quota holders are taking the long view, that it is better to act voluntarily now rather than be forced to make cuts later that could take years to recover from.

An Annual Operating Plan will be produced that will operationalise and implement the overarching Fisheries Plan.

That will include agreement on the annual harvest, restrictions on fishing effort in particular areas, variable minimum harvest sizes and rules, and enhancement of local paua populations through a mix of reseeded, establishment of spawning populations of adults and re seeding of juveniles depending which is appropriate for an area.

Data loggers will continue to be used for all paua gathering. This work should be enhanced by the roll out of Electronic Reporting and GPR initiatives from Fisheries NZ.

The loggers are small electronic units attached to divers’ wetsuits that record effort – number of dives, number and weight of paua taken, location, depth and water temperature.

Paua Industry Council chair Stormalong Stanley sees the Chathams plan as an encouraging precedent for other fisheries where suitable.

“It’s been a long time coming but this is just the beginning of a better approach to managing paua fisheries,” he said.

“We will now look to extend this successful concept, with Marlborough and Kaikoura/Canterbury the likely initial focus.

“We will work with iwi and local communities in these areas to develop plans that consolidate the strong sense of industry and wider community responsibility for the wise stewardship and management of the paua fisheries.

“This is paua to the people in action.”

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## Seafood alternatives spin a web of confusion

Protein is the most resource-intensive macronutrient to produce, particularly animal protein. Raising livestock like chicken, pigs, and cows requires cleared land for them to live on, fresh water for them to drink, and food and medicine to keep them healthy before they are processed. But animal protein is the most efficient way for humans to acquire essential amino acids.

With worldwide consumption of meat increasing, a growing number of enterprises are turning to producing alternatives made from plants.

Replacing livestock protein with plant-based alternatives is undoubtedly good for the planet...but what about seafood? Fish are already the lowest-impact animal protein.

Seafood products such as farmed bivalves and wild-caught pelagics, are the best food you can eat for the environment regardless of macronutrient or animal vs. plant.

Seafood also provides 80 million tonnes of food without occupying any land. To replace that protein with plant-based alternatives would cost the planet about 500,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land - an area of the size of Spain. That's a lot of forest and biodiversity to lose.

Despite this, three companies have emerged with plans to introduce plant-based seafood to the market. Ahimi, produces an alternative to raw tuna made out of tomatoes, while another company Good Catch debuted a variety of 'fish-free' seafood products last month. Both can only be found in select Whole Foods stores in the United States. British company Ima will also begin selling vegan 'salmon' sushi in London shortly.

Although these products offer a good source of protein for vegans and those with fish or shellfish allergies, many of the environmental benefits touted by the companies are greenwashing. While replacing livestock meat with plant alternatives could reduce environmental impacts, replacing seafood probably wouldn't.

Further, the marketing strategy of seafood alternatives perpetuates misinformation about the state of wild-caught fish.

The slogan of Ocean Hugger Foods is “Seafood is awesome, extinction is not” - ironic given that only two marine fish have gone into extinction in the entire course of history. Both were small, endemic species lost to El Niño events, not fishing. Ocean Hugger also claim that 90 percent of large fish in the ocean have disappeared—this is patently false.

A recent interview with Ima founder Jessica Chan said, “Our oceans and fish levels are depleting at such a rapid rate, it's just not sustainable for us to continue eating fish sushi.” Another erroneous statement.

Companies spreading misinformation to sell product is nothing new, but it feels especially objectionable when a business does it to prey on people's good-intentions. Global catch has been stable for decades and fishery management has generally been improving.



Ahimi's alternative protein made from tomatoes.

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## Sustainable seafood makes its mark

Sustainable Seafood Week has taught Australians a thing or two about its fisheries over the last few days, with the launch of a new fish stock app and several stamps highlighting key fish species.

“Australia’s commercial fishing industry is one of the most sustainable in the world and Sustainable Seafood Week is a celebration of Australia’s seafood industry and the well-managed, sustainable fisheries that supply all of our favourite seafood,” said Australian seafood industry chief executive Jane Lovell.

Assistant minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Richard Colbeck released the 2019 Status of Australian Fish Stocks reports last week, followed by the launch of its app called SAFS – Sustainable Australian Fish Stocks.

Consumers can easily browse information from the reports and view a traffic light rating system that indicates how fish stocks are faring. Compiled by 140 fisheries scientists, the summaries are all peer-reviewed and contain information on 120 species (406 stocks).

The app hopes to provide consumers touch-of-a-button access to correct and authoritative information on how sustainable their seafood is. Species will be reviewed and more added every two years.

It’s a good way for consumers to be certain they’re eating sustainable, healthy, world-class seafood that’s both good for the planet and good for them, said Colbeck.

Australia Post has also printed three unique stamps highlighting iconic fish species and sustainable commercial fishing practices.

The idea was to educate the public on marine mammal mitigation measures that the fishing industry typically use.

The first stamp, a large and slender deepwater patagonian toothfish (*dissostichus eleginoides*) features a bird exclusion device in the background and a second stamp, the tiger flathead fish (*platycephalus richardsoni*), is illustrated with a mesh net and the tagline “mesh to reduce by-catch”.

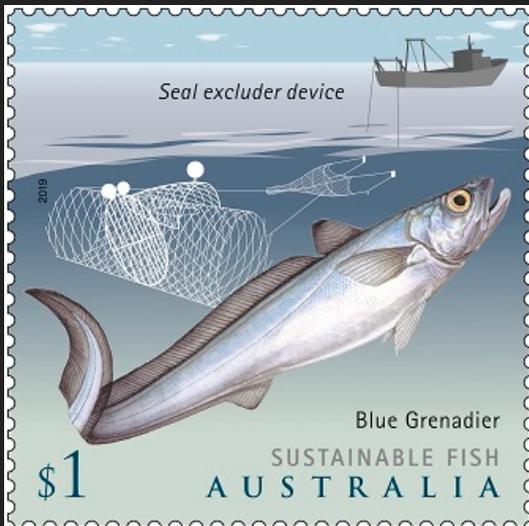
A New Zealand fish, the blue grenadier (*Macruronus novaezelandiae*), commonly known as hoki - is the face of the third stamp. An accompanying Seal Excluder Device pictorial illustrates how seals escape from fishing nets if they're accidentally caught.

The stamps are a showcase of well-managed fish stocks.

“For the fifth consecutive year Australia’s Commonwealth-managed fisheries have been given the tick of sustainability,” said Lovell.

“As fishers, our priority is the ocean. We advocate the health, sustainability and future of our ocean. It’s our livelihood and the future livelihood of generations to come.”

The Marine Stewardship Council will be championing seafood for the remainder of the week and encouraging the public to get involved with the lectures, films, workshops and marine centre visits on offer.



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## Remembering Brian Kenton

Brian Kenton, one of the major influencers in the New Zealand fishing industry, has died.

His funeral was in Timaru yesterday.

Brian came from a fishing family in Port Chalmers and began fishing in Timaru in his vessel *Joan* in the late 1950s and then went on to build the vessel *Aurora* with his cabinet making skills.

He was a fierce advocate for the industry and, at 36 was the youngest Federation of Commercial Fishermen president, serving two terms in the 1970s.

He was on good terms with various Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries – Duncan MacIntyre in particular. He kept a log of his catch, long before that was required and it was this information that helped him prove to the Minister that foreign fishing vessels were impacting on stocks. He was also at the heart of the battle to extend New Zealand territorial waters from 12 to 200 miles.

Brian was also an environmentalist joining the fight to keep dogs off Timaru's Caroline Bay beach in order to protect little blue penguins. He was an advocate for developing markets for less-preferred species and was at the forefront of developing a market for barracouta.

Brian is survived by his daughter Di and his two sons Gordon and Andy.



The late Brian Kenton.

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## News

A major shake-up of the fishing sector is still in the consultation phase but already fishers are being accused of trying to rig the system in their favour, *Radio NZ* reported. Forest & Bird said changes intended to encourage more sustainable methods could be manipulated to the point where the system doesn't change at all. Katrina Goddard from Forest & Bird said fishers at consultation meetings had expressed fears that undersized fish would be counted as part of their quota, meaning they would have fewer good-sized fish to sell. According to Goddard, fishermen suggested being allotted a larger quota to maintain their catch of saleable fish – something she said would destroy the entire rationale for the new rules. "Where's the incentive to change? This whole consultation is meant to drive change in the fishing industry so that we see better fishing technology. If there's no economic impact because the commercial industry is going to be given more quota, then it really doesn't add up." Fisheries Inshore New Zealand chief executive Jeremy Helson said reducing the number of fish they could make a living from could send many out of business and there needed to be a transition to the new system. "How you make that transition is an open question. What's required really is to measure that juvenile fish mortality and then once you've got a robust estimate of that, then you can think about how to adjust your catch entitlements accordingly." Allowing fishers to land bigger catches would have wider benefits, he said. "What we'll have instead is more fish being landed, we'll have less fish being returned to the sea and we'll have more selective and better fishing occurring. I think it's an improvement on several fronts, provided we can get the details right." Katrina Goddard said Fisheries New Zealand appeared to be on board with the call for an increase in quotas and had been telling fishers as much at consultation meetings, although Andy Hill denied those claims. "What we say through those public meetings is we encourage people to put those views down in writing."

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has ruled that Greenpeace must take down a series of billboards reading: "Ravensdown and Ballance Pollute Rivers - #TooManyCows". The billboards, which were installed on arterial routes around the country are the first tactic Greenpeace has rolled out in its new campaign to ban synthetic nitrogen fertiliser. In its decision, the ASA accepts the scientific basis of the ads stating that the "increased use of fertiliser has played a part in the intensification of dairying in New Zealand, and there has been increased pollution as a result". But the advertising body ruled against the billboards, stating that "targeting individual companies is provocative and taking advocacy a step further than is necessary". Greenpeace campaigner Gen Toop has warned if the decision is upheld it could have a "chilling effect" on environmental and social advocacy. "Civil society must be able to hold individual companies to account, especially when they are responsible for environmental destruction, like Ravensdown and Ballance," said Toop. "The public have a right to know the names of companies that are polluting our environment." Greenpeace has lodged an appeal against the decision.

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