



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



Snapper fishery moving in a healthy direction

Best fishing ever in the Gulf at the moment, Andy McKay tweeted last weekend.

A self-described conservationist, he told his 1474 followers “New Zealand fisheries consistently gets a bad rap but most indicators are heading in the right direction”.

He added: “It would be great to see more people acknowledging the good things that are happening” and pointed to the [Ocean Optimism website](#).

That reference was to an international marine conservation movement that focuses on solutions rather than problems “with the aim of creating a new narrative of hope for our oceans”.

It is not hard to find evidence of healthy local fisheries.

NZ Fishing World magazine in its Nov 8 report said “we might be experiencing some of the best fishing ever in the gulf at the moment, with snapper hard on the chew and now good kingfish getting in on the action too”.

It continued: “At the moment you can expect the fishing just about anywhere from the lower Firth (of Thames) right up to Kawau and everywhere in between and expect to do well.”

Newshub reported last weekend one fisherman saying they had brought home 12 beautiful snapper.

“We didn’t even have to measure them, they were so big,” he said.

Coromandel mussel growers can also attest to the abundance of snapper, struggling with protecting spat from the predatory fish.

They welcome recreational anglers targeting their farms, with one operator describing it as “pest control”.

Snapper are the dominant finfish on the North Island’s upper east coast and recreational fishers are regularly catching their daily bag limit, particularly in the inner Hauraki Gulf where commercial trawling and seining is banned.

That recreational catch is substantial, nearly on a par with commercial.

Recreational fishers took an estimated 2.6 million fish in 2017-18, according to a Fisheries NZ survey.

That is equivalent to 3200 tonnes.

The Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) in the Snapper1 fishery, which extends from Bream Head in the north down to Mercury Bay in the south, is 4000 tonnes.

On the west coast of the North Island, where the TACC has not kept pace with a booming snapper population, the challenge for commercial fishers is to avoid them.

Fisheries scientists aboard the NIWA research vessel *Kaharoa* began a survey of young fish in Snapper1 this week, under a special trawling permit in the inner Gulf.

That will feed into a stock assessment and the likely snapper productivity over coming years.

A similar survey will be carried out in the Bay of Plenty in February.

A 2018 assessment for snapper along the north and west coasts of the South Island showed it had increased substantially in size and was at or above its management target, according to the latest Fisheries NZ stock status report.

The overall fishery was in good heart too, with 95 percent of assessed landings being fished sustainably.

“The 2018 evaluation indicates that by far the majority of New Zealand’s fisheries are performing well,” FNZ scientists reported.

The recreational fishing extremists who advocate banning commercial inshore fishery – never mind the cost to communities and all those who rely on fresh seafood – never seem to be able to catch any fish themselves. Despite the evidence to the contrary, the constant refrain is the Quota Management System is broken and the fish are all gone, hoovered up by the despicable commercial sector.

Spending more time on the water and less time ranting at the keyboard would be a good start to putting some fish on the table.



Precision Seafood Harvesting wins again

Precision Seafood Harvesting (PSH) has won yet another award for its revolutionary fishing method.

At the 2019 Science New Zealand National Awards, held at parliament this week, Plant and Food Research took the 'Research Team' award for PSH, which is an environmentally-sustainable trawl net that minimises bycatch and maximises quality.

The project, funded through the government's Primary Growth Partnership, is a collaboration between Plant and Food Research and seafood companies Sanford, Moana and Sealord and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

The innovative net allows smaller fish to escape and those that remain in the net are in very low water flow and brought onto the fishing vessel alive, where they are placed into tanks suffering less stress and fatigue.

Fisheries New Zealand has approved the method for use by 57 percent of New Zealand's fishing trawlers.

The Plant and Food Research team receiving the award included Alistair Jerrett, Suzy Black, Gerard Janssen, Damian Moran, Erin Bell, Peter Bell, Jason Hamill, Benie Chambers, Annalise Runarsson, Sharon Ford, Igor Ruza, Jacqui Day, Mark Jarvis, Greg Knox, Denham Cook, Therese Wells, Warren Fantham, Belinda Timms and Nicholas Tuckey.



Uncertain future for seaweed start-up

Deer and seaweed aren't the typical roots of a business, but Wairarapa resident Steve Matthews took the two as an opportunity.

Matthews used to watch deer gathering on the beach to feast on seaweed washed up by rough seas. When it came time to retire, he wanted to start a small business and with the deer in mind, The Seaweed Man brand was born.

Matthews forages for the seaweed himself, dries it out and then processes it through a vintage dog-tucker grinder hooked up to a tractor.

The grinder transforms the seaweed into a fine, mineral-rich meal that can be fed to chickens, with the coarser meal used for vegetable patches.

Demand for the product has soared, with gardeners and farmers frequently buying from Matthews and some customers using the product on breakfast cereal.

"The organic farmers swear by it," Matthews said.

"It's got 21 minerals out of 22. It's pretty much a one-stop-shop and people can't get enough of it for their gardens."

Matthews plans on keeping the business small, unless new regulations and the costs involved put him out of business, he said.

The "ludicrous" plan by fisheries authorities could place him under the same system for monitoring fishing boats at sea, meaning he will need to carry an expensive "pinger" to allow fisheries authorities to monitor his movements.

The Ministry for Primary Industries is still finalising how the electronic system will work for seaweed gatherers but says the new system will provide real-time, more detailed information and confidence that New Zealand waters are being managed sustainably.



Steve Matthews owns a small seaweed operation at risk of being put out of business by MPI's proposed new system. Photo; Sally Round, RNZ.

United Fisheries' Kypros Kotzikas wins again

At \$49, Ascalabus was a rank outsider at New Zealand Cup Day at Addington on Tuesday.

Owned by harness racing stalwart and United Fisheries patriarch Kypros Kotzikas, Ascalabus was the surprise winner of the cup lead-up race.

Trainer Darren Keast, whose father Jamie was the driver, said he was incredibly grateful to have such backing.

Kotzikas' most celebrated win was the 1997 New Zealand Cup with Iraklis.

Ocean Bounty season three - Hauraki Gulf

A million people wrap their homes around the bays and inlets that comprise the Hauraki Gulf. When it comes to ocean bounty a large population means intense pressure. Join Ocean Bounty host Graeme Sinclair as the crew look at innovation, environmental impact and a way forward.

Tune in this Sunday, 5pm, on TV Three.



News

New research believes Hector and Maui dolphins are often present in the Tasman Sea off Taranaki's coast, *Stuff* reported. The Department of Conservation (DOC) worked with University of Auckland, deploying and analysing acoustic devices placed in various locations along the Taranaki and Whanganui coast between November 2016 and April 2019. DOC's manager of marine species and threats, Ian Angus, said the devices, known as C-Pods, detect high frequency sounds that Maui and Hector's dolphins emit when foraging. The devices were deployed inside the existing area where protection measures were in place. "The results give us further evidence that Hector's or Māui dolphins are regularly present in the coastal waters of Tongaporutu, Taranaki, and visit as far south as Tapuae," Angus said. Visual sightings of these dolphins are rare. The most recent verified sighting was off the Patea river mouth in May 2018. "This research confirms that the dolphins are there, even if we don't always see them," Angus said. "They are very elusive and not easy to see above water, so acoustic devices under the sea are a valuable alternative way of detecting them." Angus said the difference in vocalisation allowed scientists to reliably distinguish Maui and Hector's from other species of dolphins, however, it was not yet possible to distinguish between the subspecies. The next step would be to locate the devices outside the area to verify the dolphins' range.

The owners of Hawke's Bay Seafoods, have had \$4.1 million in properties and \$26,000 cash returned to them, five years after they were seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act, *Stuff* reported. Antonino (Nino), Giancarlo (Joe) and Marcus D'Esposito and their companies, Esplanade No.3 Ltd, Ocean Enterprises Ltd and Hawke's Bay Seafoods; were sentenced in the High Court on February 25 after pleading guilty to 85 fisheries charges. The group were fined a total of \$1,086,673. It was the culmination of a Ministry for Primary Industries prosecution that began with a raid of properties and homes in September 24, 2014. Since that time the Police Commissioner has had restraining orders on four

properties owned by the men and their associates. The Commissioner and the parties have now reached an agreement, the subject of a High Court order made this month, that would release the properties and \$26,000 in cash. The properties released include two in Havelock North, with council valuations of \$1.4 million and \$1.2m, a Napier apartment valued at \$485,000, and a property at Waimarama valued at \$1.1m. The agreement will see these removed from the restraint order on the basis that the parties pay \$318,940, which represents the commercial value of the Bluenose that had been misreported and the pāua received unlawfully in a separate operation. The parties were also required to pay \$15,000 in costs. The sums had to be paid to the Official Assignees trust account by 5pm on November 8. In making the order Justice Jan-Marie Doogue said there was "little doubt that some of the assets were tainted as a result of criminal offending and the respondents and interested parties do not take issue with that". "There is also no doubt that significant proceeds ought to have been recompensed to the State". On October 31, the D'Esposito's paid the fines ordered against them in February (Marcus was fined \$126,639, Giancarlo was fined \$106,686 and Antonino was fined \$86,309). Still outstanding was the \$410,232 fine imposed on Hawke's Bay Seafoods, the \$215,373 imposed on Ocean Enterprises and the \$141,434 imposed on Esplanade No.3 Ltd.

Check out the latest Seafood Magazines

