

The workshop wrap up

The first Fisheries Inshore New Zealand workshop had a great turn out with representation from major industry players and independent fishermen alike. With so many challenges our industry is currently facing, there was much ground to be covered in such a short time. To follow is a brief summary of each of the workshop sessions.

Fish Stocks – problem TACCs and what to do about them

Invariably stocks are seen as problems because the TACC does not change in a timely way following changes in the fishery. The workshop recognised that there is room for improvement and that responsive TACC changes up or down in response to natural variation in stock abundance should be routine.

Timely TACC changes are often inhibited by a lack of stock monitoring information and it was recognised that there needs to be good routine monitoring, that is effective and efficient.

With good monitoring, TACC change can be responsive and can be focussed on meeting quota owner objectives for the fishery, including how best to manage co-occurring mixed stock complexes fisheries.

Fisheries Inshore New Zealand is proposing to undertake a regional discussion process to identify stocks would benefit from immediate action, but also undertake a stocktake of all stocks to underpin the development of a longer term monitoring and management plan with the aim of supporting more responsive management.

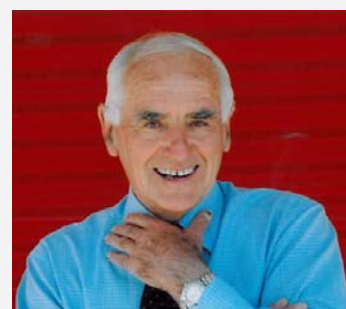
If we want to really make progress towards a more nimble system of setting TACC the next stage is for quota owners regionally to clarify what the objectives are for a fishstock (or complex) and the frequency they consider the market will want reassurance of sustainability so the appropriate monitoring regime can be put in place by industry.

Members voice:

There is a real need for locally based observers. The nature of our work is so changeable depending on the weather.

It's not uncommon for observers to travel to regional areas, only to find the weather means vessels can't go to sea and then have the additional expense of spending time in a motel waiting for the weather to clear.

In the past locally based observers haven't been used because they can be perceived to be too 'friendly' with local fishermen.



*Charles Huffleft,
Director FINZ*



Electronic Observers – cameras on inshore vessels

Workshop attendees recognised that electronic observers (cameras on fishing vessels) is a tangible way to demonstrate the sustainability of our inshore fishing practices. The lack of traditional inshore observer coverage has failed us and there was good agreement that we needed to look towards new technologies for cheaper options that offered greater coverage on more vessels.

It was agreed that Fisheries Inshore should work collaboratively with government, fishing companies, Seafood New Zealand and regional fisher groups to scope the issues around data ownership and viewing rights, data storage, purpose of filming, respecting privacy and the need to build confidence in the system.

Discards and MPI 'minimum economic size'

The nature, issues and policy regarding returning unwanted fish to the sea (discarding) in both international, but particularly in a national context, was discussed. It was proposed that there are always valid reasons for some fish to be returned to the sea rather than landed but that accurate reporting was the key to good fisheries management and reduction of costs and potential waste.

Various tools to improve management of discards were outlined but emphasis was placed on looking at improvements in the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) regulations to allow for a more broad range of considerations to be taken into account when such limits were set. This would mean that policy and rules could more closely align with the real operation of the fishery and markets. Such changes to the MLS would need to be considered and agreed between MPI and industry and would require greater levels of verification to ensure accurate reporting.



Maintaining access to our fish and our fishing grounds

This session considered how best to respond to the range of programmes and plans where other interests are seeking to reduce our access to our fishing grounds or our share of the catch. These include; Marine Protected Areas

programme, pipelines / cables, minerals exploration and mining, mataitai, taiapure and s 186 closures, recreation only zones, aquaculture and spatial planning by councils to 'manage' these interactions eg Hauraki Gulf spatial plan. The session also considered the increasing pressure on fish stocks from greater recreational fishing.

The key conclusion from the session is that at an industry level, better information on where and what we fish with a greater level of detail is needed so that we can positively engage early. This will enable assessment of any impacts so the wider community is better aware of what is at stake and we can jointly promote constructive shared solutions.

Ensuring a light environmental footprint

This session looked at the increasing scrutiny being placed on how we fish and any potential impacts. It recognised that the prevalent attitude of the community currently appears to be "industry guilty until proven innocent" rather than what industry would want of "trust us, we know what we are doing".

In part this arises from industry not having coherent programmes that demonstrate our consistent performance – our sector has had very low levels of observation compared with others. The session looked at management plans for Hector and Maui dolphin, the National Plan of Action on Seabirds and Sharks. In all cases it was agreed that we should have active programmes that assist in demonstrating that our fishers and quota owners are carrying out best mitigation practices for all of these and we should also encourage the government to undertake systematic collection of appropriate information on the protected species so that safe operation is achieved.



INSIDE THE LAW

This workshop served as a timely reminder of the number of pressures industry face across a number of fronts, including:

- Inclusion in the Fisheries (Foreign Charter Vessels and Other Matters) Amendment Bill of a number of “other matters” that would significantly impact on operators of inshore vessels.
- Maritime New Zealand’s proposed replacement of the SSM framework with a Marine Operator Safety System (MOSS), with implementation now delayed until 1 July 2014, and greater emphasis the ‘fit and proper person’ test for key personnel, including a new focus on charges or convictions for offences under the Fisheries Act or regulations.
- Consultation on an overhaul of the seafarers qualification systems and operational limits.
- DoC’s proposed Regional Coastal Plan for the Kermadecs and Sub-Antarctic Islands that would prohibit ship-to-ship transfers of heavy fuel oil in the within 12nm of those islands and, after a five year transition, a ban on carriage and use of heavy fuel oil.
- A re-assessment by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of substances approved as anti-fouling paints, which includes proposals for withdrawing approval for some paints, limiting the duration of approval on others and introducing new controls for use, application and disposal.

And the beat goes on... the Ministry for the Environment is now consulting on proposed amendments to the Resource Management (Marine Pollution) Regulations 1998 to give effect to changes made to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. The proposed amendments would extend prohibitions on discharge of garbage to all substances including paper, rags, glass, metal, bottles, and crockery and cargo residues, and allow discharge of food waste only if ground into particles of 25mm and discharged beyond 3nm from shore and 500m from an offshore installation.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Primary Industries is considering whether he should concur with the Minister of Conservation’s approval of the 17-year old application for a Marine Reserve near the head of Akaroa Harbour. The application was turned down by the previous Minister of Conservation in 2010 on the basis that it would unduly interfere with recreational fishing, but given another life as a result of judicial review proceedings bought by the applicant environmental NGO. The application faces the continuing opposition of local customary, recreational and commercial fishers and aquaculture operators, and we can only hope that the Minister will refuse concurrence and make it clear this approach to Marine Protected Areas is no longer appropriate in the 21st century.

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