



Rebuilding Bluenose

Two years ago the Ministry recommended a BNS stock rebuild plan that included three years of TACC cuts across all stocks. We are now two years into this, with the third level of cuts due to come in from 1 October 2013.

The Minister's decision was met with disappointment from many in our industry (quota owners, LFRs and fishers), who hoped that he would accept 'our / industry's' rebuild plan of three cuts over five years supported by a monitoring programme. Because we were surprised at the stock assessment and decision and felt we needed more data, we also initiated a catch sampling programme (now under Trident Systems).

With the aim of ensuring sound monitoring that will assist in gaining faster TACC responses, we have asked for a special meeting of the Northern Inshore Working Group. This is set down for next week in Wellington, 20 June starting at 9.30am. The main purpose of this meeting is to allow Nokome Bentley's work for Trident on Management Procedure Evaluations (MPE) for Bluenose to be presented to the working group. Similar MPE analysis has recently been used by MPI to evaluate decision rules used for setting the TACCs of GUR 3 and 5 and FLA 3 and 5. This work will help confirm what monitoring the fleet must undertake going forward for us to have the information to rapidly change the TACC for Bluenose in the various QMAS.

In addition, fishers from a number of regions have been reporting to us on the growing strength of their fishery – particularly the last 6 months. To ensure this is considered in setting the TACCs for 2013-14, Fisheries Inshore also has an updated CPUE analysis using recent catch-and-effort data underway. This is looking at catch rates for the last two and a half years since the Minister's decision to cut the TACCs for all bluenose fishstocks. We expect this work to be completed before the end of June. This information will be in time for industry to respond to the expected Initial Position Paper (IPP) on bluenose. The industry response will be developed with the assistance of quota owners, LFRs and fishers. We will let you know when we expect to meet to discuss this. We would expect that our response would not only address what TACC levels we consider to be sustainable for each stock but the other supportive measures for monitoring etc that FINZ members will undertake to provide on-going information to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries.

Climate change puts the heat on inshore fisheries

A recent article in the Australian FISH Magazine (June 2013) draws a direct link between warming of waters through climate change and fish species moving away from traditional ranges at unprecedented rates. While some of these changes are positive; in Australia they are seeing more temperate tropical species swimming south, other species (ie. snapper) will they say, do it tough.

The evaluation of fish stock boundaries is an important consideration in our own QMS; if the changing distribution of species due to warming of waters is going to be lasting then we also need to stay ahead of the game.

Members voice:

The problem with the blue-nose analysis two years ago was that it focused on the CPUE data and some incorrect assumptions were made. CPUE is probably irrelevant for the vast majority of blue-nose being caught – what plays a bigger role is ACE prices and even the timing of Asian festivals.

For example, at that time there were auto liners setting 20,000 hooks that were targeting not only BNS but a variety of species. Because fishers put down BNS as their target it was assumed that all 20,000 hooks should have had BNS on them.

At Lee Fish we have been doing the blue nose sampling independently for two years now. We are unsure what the data is saying but my view is that catches in the last six months are definitely looking up; we will need to pay for an independent review of the CPUE that is grounded against what is happening out on the water and in our markets. We need someone who not only collects data but talks to the various companies and fishers about their practices.

Between us we could tell a very compelling story around the bluenose fishery.



Greg Bishop,
CEO Lee Fish, FINZ Director