

Hokianga Accord Update #23

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Common aspirations for healthy fisheries

One of the pleasing aspects of the mid-June Hokianga Accord hui was the commitment to develop the relationship between non-commercial fishing interest groups and environmental organisations.

That is because when it comes to matters relating to the sea there are some common aspirations amongst mid north iwi, amateur fishers, and the established groups of Greenpeace, Forest & Bird and the Environment Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand (ECO).

Since the Whitiara hui the Accord's working group has been busy developing a joint vision and goal from the non-commercial sector. These were included in a combined letter and an alternative management strategy sent to the Minister and Ministry of Fisheries a week after the hui.

Joint vision:

“Healthy and abundant oceans with more fish in the water, providing all New Zealanders with access to kai moana and our future generations with the opportunity to enjoy a healthy ocean and sustainable fisheries.”

Fisheries 2030 proposals biased

This collective response was to counteract the Ministry of Fisheries' vision and goal specified in the *Fisheries 2030* proposals, which focuses on maximising economic benefits while having little regard to the social and cultural aspects associated with having healthy, abundant fisheries.

The *Fisheries 2030* proposals are based on a report commissioned by the Ministry. After consideration by the government, Cabinet directed MFish to work in collaboration with tangata whenua and fisheries stakeholders to build on the report and confirm a shared direction and plan of action.

Despite several meetings where our concerns were expressed the 'draft' report maintains its original focus and is even being used to guide MFish direction and decision-making, such as the Ministry's recent restructuring programme.

There is now considerable concern amongst non-commercial environmental and fishing interest representatives about the significant bias in the reporting, the *Fisheries 2030* programme's intended purpose, and the switch from consultation to mere 'engagement' to seek sectors' views. It seems this process is designed to achieve a preconceived agenda.

No consensus for reforms

The Hokianga Accord agreed it could not stand back and let the *Fisheries 2030* process be pushed through without making a substantial contribution. The recent hui provided an ideal opportunity to discuss the proposals in more detail and more importantly explore ways to collectively respond.

Of significant concern is the potential for MFish to use the *Fisheries 2030* proposals to justify amendments to the Fisheries Act that will change the nature of existing fishing rights.

Replacing current non-commercial fishing rights with an 'allocation' and trading rights will have the most effect on people who are reliant on catching fish to put food on the table.

While Maori have statutory rights to fish for customary purposes, most of the time we fish to feed our whanau we do so under the Amateur Fishing Regulations.

So any proposals that seek to change this most basic right of all New Zealanders to fish for food needs to be clearly stated and widely debated.

Currently there is no consensus to reform legislation to enable trading of area or fishing rights. Our non-commercial fishing rights and interests are not for sale.

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