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Fishing Freedom is Priceless

A feature of this summer's fishing has been the number of grandparents and parents taking their kids fishing. At various times wharves, rocks and shoreline have been schools of activity as these youngsters learn the art of fishing and story telling. Unsung heroes such as Bill Hohepa, Graeme Sinclair, Bruce Duncan and countless others have spent a good part of their lives giving this country's kids the gift of fishing and a lifetime of enjoyment.

It is this experience and freedom that all New Zealanders have a right to and what many fishing advocates are looking to preserve and protect as we delve into the shared fisheries debate.

The Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) released the Shared Fisheries public discussion paper at the end of October and announced a submission deadline of February 28th 2007. MFish held seven public meetings around the country and as far as we are aware, have not organised their own hui to speak to tangata whenua specifically about the Shared Fisheries process. Despite protest, the Minister of Fisheries, Jim Anderton, and MFish have been adamant that the submission deadline cannot be extended because Cabinet decisions on reforms need to be made by mid-2007. This is so legislation can be passed well before next year's election.

A team of twelve made up of option4, New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council, Hokianga Accord, Ngapuhi and Ngati Whatua personnel produced a Preliminary View of the Shared Fisheries discussion document and distributed that on the 15th of December. The Preliminary View is highly recommended reading. It has been broken down into sections and is online at <http://www.option4.co.nz/sharedfisheries/preliminaryview.htm>

"The People's Submission"

Whilst the Shared Fisheries discussion document offers some solutions to current issues it still does not adequately address the core issues that affect non-commercial fishing, both recreational and customary. Most importantly it offers no real incentives for commercial, recreational or customary fishers to conserve fish, provide abundance for future generations or give any certainty that people will be able to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being.

Using the Preliminary View as a basis and the feedback received the team is now working on developing a draft submission. It is expected the draft submission will be finalised by mid-February in preparation for the deadline several weeks later. "The People's Submission" will then be released and accompanied by a booklet designed to offer an alternative management strategy to achieve the goal of "More fish in the water" – "Kia maha atu nga ika i roto te wai".

Your Freedom

Over a million people fish every year and the friends and families of those people enjoy that kaimoana. The self-esteem kids get from catching their first fish, their biggest fish and the companionship they enjoy to make lifelong friends cannot be measured in dollar terms.

Thomas Jefferson said many years ago, “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance”. We need you to defend the freedom we all treasure, own and enjoy. Don’t let them take it from you or your children. That freedom is priceless.

Visit <http://www.option4.co.nz> to register your details and find out more or call 09 8186205 if you want to get involved.