

#### **option4 Update #140**

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#### **What will it take for MFish to listen?**

Four years of effort, consistent measurements and almost 9000 anglers, yet the Ministry of Fisheries will not accept the Hawke Bay boat ramp surveys results. Would you go fishing for 0.09 groper or 0.66 snapper per day? Or spend two days to catch three gurnard? Not likely.

If these dismal catch rates are not enough to attract the Ministry's attention, then what will it take for them to listen?

For more than a decade locals have expressed serious concerns about the state of the Area 2 fisheries, between East Cape and Wellington.

But resolution seemed a long way off, so in 2006 Colin Murray and a team from the Hawke Bay Sport Fishing Club initiated a boat ramp survey to collect data from returning anglers. The project runs from October to April, wind, rain or shine.

Average catch rates are not great, as noted in the table opposite. At these rates it would take more than ten days to catch one groper and almost three day's fishing effort to catch two snapper.

These results are from fishers vying for competition prizes so there was minimal incentive to under-report their daily catch.

Colin and his club colleagues have dedicated over 600 hours of their own time to this survey and the team has confidence in the results because their surveyors enjoy the trust and appreciation of local anglers.

Great effort goes into surveying 17 species, landed and released, including:

- ⇒ Angler numbers
- ⇒ Boat numbers
- ⇒ Target species
- ⇒ Non-target species
- ⇒ Angler and boat details

In total the four-year project has cost MFish zip. But just because MFish has not provided any support does not invalidate the results.

By casting aside the survey results as anecdotal the Ministry has successfully alienated a committed bunch of individuals whose mission is to achieve 'more fish in the water'.

And to say local Hawke Bay fishers are frustrated is an extreme understatement.

Taking another approach, the Hawke Bay-based fishers combined efforts with all other NZ Sport Fishing Zone 5 clubs to respond to the recent management proposals for Trevally 2.

In response to their assertions that trevally catches were declining, the Ministry advised the Minister, “MFish notes that it is difficult to draw the conclusion of a ‘steady decline’ from three data points”. Notwithstanding that MFish regularly uses much less information to draw conclusions on the state of our inshore fisheries.

MFish also notes that there was an increase between the 2008-09 and 2009-10 season; from 0.08 to 0.11 trevally per person, per day. But this still requires nine day’s fishing effort to catch one trevally!

Not only is MFish being selective about what information is acceptable; it is being totally dismissive of people who genuinely want more abundant fisheries.

There is a proven need to rebuild the Area 2 fisheries so the Minister can fulfil his statutory obligation to manage fisheries sustainably, to enable people to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being.

A good start to the restoration process would be to have a Ministry who was more honest about the rate and reasons for the ongoing, excessive commercial catch in this same area, but then that is another story.

[www.option4.co.nz](http://www.option4.co.nz)

**Break-out box**

Year	Anglers surveyed	Competition days	Fish per angler day				
			Snapper	Gurnard	Tarakihi	Trevally	Groper
2006-07	1691	16	0.94	2.19	0.44	0.15	0.23
2007-08	2700	17	0.85	1.55	0.36	0.10	0.09
2008-09	2352	17	0.94	1.98	0.43	0.08	0.07
2009-10	2252	13	0.66	1.42	0.48	0.11	0.09