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From Recreational fishing organisations: New Zealand Sport Fishing and option4

Kahawai for all New Zealanders

Recreational and customary fishers have battled for years to ensure fisheries managers leave more kahawai in the water and make sufficient allowance for non-commercial fishing interests. There is guarded hope the recent kahawai management proposals will provide these outcomes and more value for the nation.

New Zealand Sport Fishing and option4 endorse the Ministry of Fisheries' overall intention, to manage an inshore fishery to increase the benefits for amateur and customary fishers.

President of NZ Sport Fishing, Richard Baker, is cautiously optimistic, but both groups consider the Ministry could have been bolder in reducing the commercial targeting of kahawai.

"Recognition is finally being given to the high value of kahawai as part of our marine ecosystem, as a customary food for Maori, and as a recreational catch with tourism potential."

There is disappointment that MFish propose to reduce the commercial allocation by just 3% (30 tonnes) a year in the area from North to East Cape, while recreational allowances are reduced 46% (780 tonnes) and customary allowances by 60% (285 tonnes), based on a revised estimate of recreational catch.

Mr. Baker and the recreational sector's fisheries scientists believe there is significant uncertainty in some of the estimates used in the Ministry's advice.

"The Minister needs to be acutely aware of the assumptions underpinning the Ministry's advice and he must apply the precautionary principle where information is uncertain."

Scott Macindoe, option4's spokesperson says, "It is unacceptable that our kahawai stock is depleted by bulk fishing methods for so little return to the national economy. The industrial purse seining of kahawai, to feed crayfish and cats, needs to be limited to bycatch levels only."

In a landmark case recreational fishers challenged the Ministers 2004 decisions on kahawai quota and allowances in the High Court, and won. Subsequent Appeal and Supreme Court hearings clarified a number of contentious points of law and overturned some of the earlier rulings.

In 2009 the Supreme Court decided the Minister has wide discretion when providing for customary, recreational and commercial interests.

Before exercising his discretion the Minister, Phil Heatley, will consider submissions from the public, industry and Maori interests.

New Zealand Sport Fishing and option4 encourage all fishers to describe their experience of kahawai over the years and what they value most in submissions to the Ministry of Fisheries by 13 August 2010.

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Contacts:

Richard Baker – President, New Zealand Sport Fishing
021 869889
Richard.Baker@nzf.co.nz

Scott Macindoe - Spokesperson, option4
021 622463
ScottM@wilmac.co.nz

Background information

<http://www.option4.co.nz/kahawai/kahawai.htm>