

Speech notes for an address to the “Tikapa Moana – Hauraki Gulf State of the Environment Report Seminar”

Prepared for and delivered by Scott Macindoe - 9/8/2011

### **Mihi**

E nga mana

E nga reo

E nga iwi o te motu

Rau Rangitira ma.

Tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

My name is Scott Macindoe. Tamaki Makaurau and Aotea are my homes, Kawau is my place of rest and restoration and the Tikapa Moana is my cathedral, the place I feel most comfortable and proud to take my manuhiri

I am privileged to be able to offer you this insight on ‘valuing the catch’ on behalf of the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, the Hokianga Accord and various other non commercial fishing groups. This whakaaro is focused on the values and interests that the public have in recreational fishing in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and some of the ways we see that the environmental health of the Gulf can be maintained and enhanced.

Recreational fishing in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park provides the perfect complement to a modern thriving city as it approaches the 2 million citizen mark. The exceptional natural features of the Park, it's islands, waters, and diverse marine life, form a backdrop of contrast to the increasing stresses of modern life and is the perfect getaway, right at the door.

### **Valuing the catching**

Catching the fish – for some the thrill of the chase, for others the quiet satisfaction of successfully targeting an elusive species using esoteric methods. For many, simply an evening on the jetty or rocks casting a line, feeling that tell tale tug, the sudden rush of line hissing through the guides. What about the quiet dawn dragging the net with your wife, tui singing in the background, seeing those first few piper jumping the cork line signaling a bucket full of the finest delicacy soon to grace the table. Hard to beat the thrill of reaching over the side to relieve the diver of a weighty bag of kina, scallops or crayfish. Nothing can compare with the sensation of taking a deep breath, diving down and wrestling a good sized crayfish from its crevice, bursting to the surface clutching the animal to your breast – the mammalian instinct to forage and provide fully sated in that moment.

Yes, the catching is good. Infinitely varied and invariably satisfying. Good for the soul and good for the spirit.

## **Matauranga and manaakitanga**

Today I would like to focus on the all important matauranga, the knowledge, comprehension and understanding of preparing to go fishing or diving or gathering. The tides and seasons, the moon and the weather. And then the cleaning and the giving, those priceless manaakitanga opportunities.

**Matauranga** - 'Mātauranga Māori in a traditional context means the knowledge, comprehension or understanding of everything visible or invisible that exists across the universe.'

**Manaakitanga** - *"Behaviour that acknowledges the mana of others as having equal or greater importance than one's own, through the expression of aroha, hospitality, generosity and mutual respect. Displaying manaakitanga elevates the status of all, building unity through humility and the act of giving"* As described by Professor Whatarangi Winiata - 2005

Long before we actually catch the fish we find ourselves under the boat, scraping, sanding and painting. Learning how to change a fan belt, doing the oil change, wiring up a piece of the latest technology, splicing a rope, spooling our reels, tying some traces, sharpening our hooks, salting some bait, mending a net.

Yes, there is much to do and learn. You won't spear many flounder with a flat battery. Regulators need servicing and that tear in the wet suit needs yet another layer of Gaffer tape – endless. Sometimes in the company of a regular crew, often at the last minute as you rush to get ready to catch a small window of good weather.

Today I seem to spend more time studying the 7 day weather forecast on the internet than I do with a hook in the water. But I am getting better at predicting the weather – ask my surfing son.

Don't you love quizzing the guy selling the bait – where are they catching, how deep are they? Is he fair dinkum or does he tell everyone that place?

So much to learn and re learn. How often we leave the ramp with a cunning plan that goes out the window as soon as we come across a flock of wheeling, screaming gulls and terns. Who can ignore the dive bombing gannets – bugger the burley trail, grab the soft bait gear. And on and on it goes – an endless kaleidoscope of preparation.

And now the catching has happened – the real deal commences – ice and plenty of it. Slurry those beauties and then re pack them in fresh flake. Maximum mana enhancement – that's what my mate calls a 40 litre chilli bin with half a dozen well iced snappers, a couple of kahawai and a layer of scallops on top. By the time he hits home his wife tells me there's only a couple of little ones left. He can't help himself! His manaakitanga obligations and instincts have kicked in strongly, seeing him give away the finest and fattest to the oldest and most deserving. Nothing maximises mana better than that, the unconditional gift of fish.

What fish does make it home is now in for a complex and highly evolved process. Only the gills and guts are discarded. The roes, sperm, liver, heart, heads and frames, skin and ribs cages – all have a place and a purpose. Take your time, take one fish on and finish it

to the last utilisation stroke and then move on to the next with a knife and board dripping clean. Feel that knife; it's an extension of your hand. Ever so gently remove that perfect roe with reverence and joy. Fire up the smoker, boil those frames, and fry the livers – such a complete experience – like who needs the catching after all. Certainly not the cat that's rubbing back and forth across your legs in ecstasy

These are the values and the constant learnings, the sharing and the giving – the values that can under no circumstances be discounted or ignored. It is the knowledge that must be nourished and handed on. Priceless.

### **How can the environmental health of the Gulf be enhanced?**

NZ is moving incrementally towards international standards for managing fish stocks, and is almost there with the interpretation of Maximum Sustainable Yield in the latest version of the Operational Guidelines for New Zealand's Harvest Strategy Standard released only last Thursday

(Available on the MFish web site at <http://fs.fish.govt.nz/Page.aspx?pk=113&dk=22846>.)

For stocks such as snapper the target biomass is 40% of the unfished biomass, i.e. the snapper stock should not be reduced below this level. 20 years ago scientists were telling us that reducing stocks to less than 20% delivered the greatest sustainable yield.

What is significant about the 40% figure, you may wonder. Well, non-commercial fishers, both Maori and Pakeha, have for the last two decades complained and pleaded with Governments to recognise and correct the severe loss of fish available to be caught in the near shore waters. The recreational fishing lobby has adopted the catch cry “more fish in the water”

If 40% of the biomass is left in the water, fishing success will improve markedly for the public, and the opportunities for social and cultural well being will be enhanced. This can only be a benefit for the health of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and the ability of the Park to deliver tangible benefits to the public and their visitors.

We applaud the Ministry of Fisheries on finally arriving at interpretations more consistent with international opinion, and when factors are added for interdependence of species, uncertain and incomplete information about our fisheries, we anticipate that the targets for stocks within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park will have 40% biomass as a minimum.

### **Kahawai Legal Challenge**

The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act formed an integral part of a legal action that lasted 5 years. This case centered around the state of the kahawai fishery and became known as the Kahawai Legal Challenge. The High Court, Appeal Court, and finally the Supreme Court, all heard pleadings and the final result was last year's decisions made by the Minister of Fisheries.

Of significance for us in this room today is that the Courts found that the Minister was required to “*have regard to*” sections 7 and 8 of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act when setting the TAC, and to have “*particular regard*” to the HGMPA when setting the TACC.

Section 7 confirms that “the interrelationship between the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments and the ability of that interrelationship to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands are matters of national significance”.

It gets better; section 8 requires that the natural, historic and physical resources of the Gulf, which contribute to people’s enjoyment, are maintained and enhanced. Our duty is to find ways of ensuring those objectives are complied with and hopefully exceeded.

Some important lessons have been learned. The first is that the Minister, when setting a Total Allowable Catch (TAC), has in mind what stock size will provide a reasonable fishing experience for non commercial fishers. In other words, if he allows only a small total catch he will leave a lot of fish in the water, and this abundance is what will enable the public to enjoy successful fishing experiences. If he allows a large total catch by setting a high Total Allowable Catch, the public may, by and large, be unable to catch many fish at all, and those they do catch will tend to be smaller fish.

The second important lesson is that the Minister is able to choose what level of catch he allows for; he is unfettered by anything except reasonableness – he must be rational. The level of abundance in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and elsewhere, is directly in the hands of the Minister.

Last year we saw that the Total Allowable Catch for kahawai was to allow a stock, estimated to be around 50% of its unfished size, to increase in size even further, for the purpose of providing abundance to meet the public’s needs. This was a first for Aotearoa and sets a precedent for Ministers making future decisions about abundance in our valuable inshore fisheries.

The third and final point for today is that there is no need for further delay, further research or legislative amendment; the Minister has the tools, and the powers to use them, **right now**, to restore abundance to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. He just has to follow the kahawai model and set stock targets at around the 50% level of unfished biomass. Once the target is set the strategy to achieve it will become self evident.

All that is missing is the will to embrace the current international best practice in maintaining diversity and abundance by resetting stock targets.

It’s been a long hard learning for us – I am filled with hope and optimism for the future. Hope that we now have the will to collectively do the right thing for those who follow us.

Mauri ora