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15 August 2024

Submission: Oppose the request for Ruapuke mātaītai reserve, Foveaux Strait, Southland.

Submitters

1. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (**NZSFC**) is a recognised national sports organisation with over 37,000 affiliated members from 48 clubs nationwide. The Council has initiated LegaSea to generate widespread awareness and support for the need to restore abundance in our inshore marine environment. Also, to broaden NZSFC involvement in marine management advocacy, research, education, and alignment on behalf of our members and LegaSea supporters. www.legasea.co.nz.
2. The New Zealand Angling and Casting Association (**NZACA**) is the representative body for its 24 member clubs throughout the country. The Association promotes recreational fishing and the camaraderie of enjoying the activity with fellow fishers. The NZACA is committed to protecting fish stocks and representing its members' right to fish.
3. The New Zealand Underwater Association (**NZUA**) comprises three distinct user groups including Spearfishing NZ, affiliated scuba clubs throughout the country and Underwater Hockey NZ. Through our membership we are acutely aware that the depletion of inshore fish stocks has impacted on the marine environment and the wellbeing of many of our members.
4. Collectively we are *'the submitters'*. The joint submitters are committed to ensuring that sustainability measures and environmental management controls are designed and implemented to achieve the Purpose and Principles of the Fisheries Act 1996, including "maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations..." [s8(2)(a) Fisheries Act 1996].
5. The submitters have previously supported Māori customary management controls where there has been a clear purpose to restore abundance and productivity of the marine environment.
6. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We look forward to positive outcomes from this process. We would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Helen Pastor secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.

Discussion

7. The **submitters oppose the application** made by Topi Whānau, Whaitiri Whānau, and Te Rūnaka o Awarua for a mātaītai reserve around the Ruapuke Island Group, Foveaux Strait, Southland.
8. Fisheries New Zealand (**FNZ**) advised of the application on 9 July, with submissions due by 19 August 2024. A process to consult with locals on a similar mātaītai application during 2023 has been withdrawn.
9. This current process is the first of [two consultations](#) regarding this application. A public meeting was scheduled for 25 July in Bluff, no report of that meeting is available publicly.
10. The submitters support the local fishers and the Southern Sport Fishing Club Inc. in making their own submissions in response to this application.
11. The application seeks to –
 - a. Permit commercial fishing for crayfish and finfish, with harvesting of butterfish and moki limited to spearfishing;
 - b. Permit commercial harvest of oysters, pāua and kina;
 - c. Gain authority via the granting of the mātaītai to:
 - i. Develop bylaws to control non-commercial harvest of seaweeds, shellfish and finfish; and
 - ii. Develop bylaws to define recreational daily bag limit reductions, method restrictions, area closures and potentially increases in the minimum legal size limit applying to certain species, and recreational reporting of catch.
12. The submitters acknowledge that recreational interest in fishing around the Ruapuke Islands has increased over time due to safer boats, weather forecasting and improved technology. However, the Ruapuke Islands are the only safe anchorage between the mainland and Stewart Island so any area closures to fishing will jeopardise the safety of the crew aboard recreational vessels. Given the nature of weather, tides and conditions in Foveaux Strait, this is an unacceptable risk to human life.
13. The submitters have supported previous mātaītai applications on the basis that there is a genuine attempt to engage with the community and collaborate on improving the marine environment for the benefit of all. This application and potential, proposed bylaws are clearly biased towards supporting ongoing commercial harvest while seeking to constrain recreational harvest.
14. The application advises that best available information will be used to inform any new bylaws, including the recent assessment of pāua stocks by the University of Otago. This assessment report has not been made available publicly so we are unable to comment on that aspect.
15. No evidence has been produced that demonstrates the need for prohibitions on recreational harvesting shellfish or finfish. Nor is there any evidence to support bag limit reductions, method restrictions, area closures, size limit increases and recreational reporting, as mentioned in the application. [At p.7]
16. We understand there is considerable use of holding pots by commercial fishers when

harvesting crayfish. Also, that there are resident quota holders on the Island that fish the local area, so any application from people with commercial interests, that seeks to restrict recreational harvest, needs to be treated with due caution by the Minister.

17. Fishing in Foveaux Strait, Southland, is not for the faint-hearted. It's an exercise that takes planning, family support, and sharp senses for monitoring the weather and forecast. Every fish taken from Foveaux Strait and around the Ruapuke Islands has a story attached and maybe even someone's blood, sweat and tears to get that fish home to the family. These fish are prized for their eating quality and the social value that comes with sharing time on board a boat with family, your children and mates. Money can't buy what is attached to these fish.
18. If there is an issue with the level of recreational harvest then surely it is incumbent on FNZ and local interests to initiate discussions with local recreational fishers to see if agreement can be reached on matters of mutual interest. This pathway has been successful in establishing Te Puna Mātaitai in the Bay of Islands, and numerous s186A 2-year temporary closures around the country. The submitters have participated fulsomely in these successful outcomes because it has engaged the community and generated ongoing interest and support for the use of a Māori customary tool to manage the local marine environment.

Recreational reporting

19. It is in vogue to suggest that recreational fishers ought to report all of their catch. However, the [research](#) into the accuracy of current self-reporting regimes find them to be readily manipulated and riddled with errors.
20. Self-reported catch has a poor record of accounting for total fishing mortality. It is the Minister who has a statutory duty to account for total mortality in a fish stock when setting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC). There is no statutory support for a reporting regime to apply to recreational harvest.
21. The submitters recently developed a paper, [The delusion of using phone apps to accurately record fish catch](#). We suggest the applicants and submission readers review that document before proceeding with any initiative that may include recreational reporting.
22. Moreover, as the research shows, without a robust means of validation self-reporting generates a huge database of expensive, poor quality data. It has been tried overseas and we must learn from their experiences.
23. Currently in New Zealand recreational catch for most species is estimated by a programme known as the [National Panel Survey \(NPS\)](#). This large-scale multi-species survey is conducted about every five years and uses a statistically sound suite of techniques to measure participation and catch by area and fishing method, over 12 months. The programme has widespread support and is considered by international peer reviewers to be the best methodology available for the purpose. The results of the 2022-23 NSP are expected to be available later in 2024.
24. **We recommend** the Minister reviews the results from the 2022-23 NPS before approving any process to constrain recreational harvest around Ruapuke Island and the wider Southland area.
25. **The submitters reject any proposal to impose a reporting regime on people fishing to feed their family.**