



2024 President's Report - NZ Sport Fishing Council

Around the country, it's been an interesting year—one of change and challenge. Within the community, we have well and truly moved from the Covid era to the 'cost of living crisis' era. Just when we thought we were turning the corner on the cost of living, we are now seeing more and more redundancies announced each day across the country.

Closer to home, this continues to put pressure on our fishing families and communities around New Zealand, specifically on our clubs and their members.

We've also witnessed a change in central government following the election result in late 2023, with new policies aimed at supporting industry and business throughout New Zealand. This support extends to commercial fishing and aquaculture, including the recent automatic 20-year extensions on all marine farms in New Zealand.

Most club members support a balanced approach to the economy and employment. However, we are starting to see a noticeable erosion of environmental protections. This conflict between economics and the environment will continue to play out in the future, making it crucial for us to have a voice at the table on issues that are important to us. We will need to prioritize and strategize, as we don't have the resources to fight every battle.

Adding to this, the invasive weed *Caulerpa*, along with various fisheries management issues around New Zealand and proposed restrictions in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, means that access to, and the continuity of, our wonderful marine environment are under increasing threat.

I extend a huge thanks to everyone who has assisted with the many challenges related to the marine environment over the past year—whether you are a volunteer or in a paid role, whether you contribute at the club or national level. The strength of NZSFC, LegaSea, and the broader team is at its best when there is consistent national support for regional issues through club voices.

The New Zealand that many of us grew up with is changing rapidly. Regulatory, societal trends, social media, and fishing/boat technology are all evolving. An aging population, coupled with migration, is increasing the need for succession in our clubs and NZSFC. We need to continue attracting new people to clubs at all levels—fishing, committees, social aspects, etc. Volunteer input is essential for the running of our clubs, and NZSFC is strongest when clubs are strong and aspiring contributors integrate and assist at the national level. NZSFC's development is only possible with club growth and development.

For those contributing as volunteers and wondering when it might be time to 'move on' and fear being 'put out to pasture,' I would encourage you to view this as an opportunity to mentor someone new and continue your own growth in a new role that previously didn't exist.

New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Inc.

(Previously New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council Est. 1957)

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As clubs, we have identified that the succession of various roles—including weighmasters, committee members, recorders, NZSFC Club Delegates, and others—requires shared knowledge and collaborative planning between clubs and NZSFC. This collaboration can bring many benefits, including new approaches such as shared resources at a zone level between clubs for volunteer and paid expertise.

It was wonderful to see increased awareness of the youth aspects of NZSFC, including the development of the Youth Ocean Trust and Youth Nationals. The growing momentum of the youth sector has resulted in a record number of applications for the Annual NZSFC Junior Angler Award—so many worthy applicants, but ultimately there can be only one winner.

This bodes well for clubs and NZSFC, especially with planned youth goals, including the creation of a new 17-24 year old committee, which will work with the existing NZSFC Junior Committee (16 years old and younger) and the (adult) Youth Committee. These goals, including the creation of the Youth Ocean Trust, are expected to significantly boost youth participation throughout New Zealand. A positive spark for our clubs.

Clubs and NZSFC need to continue evolving, particularly in how we ‘do business.’ This means utilizing the precious volunteer time and passion effectively and seeking the best ways to achieve results.

Furthermore, club members supporting the ‘Council of Clubs’ through the annual payment of affiliation fees is essential to facilitate volunteer input. However, affiliation payments from club members without corresponding club contributions in terms of time and volunteer input can be somewhat futile.

To remain sustainable, clubs need each other—as a Council of Clubs. A fundamental commitment to the concept of the ‘Council of Clubs’ requires both time and effort to match the level of financial support through affiliation fees. To be effective, time input from clubs must align with any financial contributions.

Lastly, it has been a great honour to serve NZSFC as President again this past year. The role provides incredible opportunities for personal growth, including development of fishing and fisheries knowledge, and building social circles and connections across New Zealand. It’s a role that requires substantial support, and my thanks go to everyone who has supported me in this role—you can’t do it alone.

Not everyone aspires to be NZSFC President (not everyone is that crazy 😊), but what is needed—and what is available—is a role that you individually can perform to support and serve your club, regardless of the role’s size or duration. Your contribution makes a difference in ensuring a better future for the next generation.

My final words are a vote of thanks to everyone who supports us as a ‘Council of Clubs’ in fishing, planning fishing, and ultimately ensuring the future of recreational fishing—our way of life. This extends to all our Clubs, friends, family, sponsors, and stakeholders around New Zealand. A special thanks to our volunteers and paid staff within NZSFC and LegaSea— for working with an incredibly passionate group at sometimes crazy times of the day and week, specifically including Mike Plant and Helen Pastor.

Tight Lines



Ian Steele

President - New Zealand Sport Fishing Council