



Managing New Zealand's Fisheries

*A post-election briefing from
the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council Ltd*

Scorecard

- Sustainability 4/5
- Utilisation 2/5
- Overall 3/5

We're doing relatively well on ensuring sustainability of our fish stocks, but there are too many barriers in the way of utilising our fisheries resources for the benefit of New Zealand.

Overall, our management performance reflects world's best practice – but we have a fisheries management regime that should enable us to do a lot better than this...

What's good...

- ✓ Purpose of the Fisheries Act: "to provide for the utilisation of fisheries resources while ensuring sustainability"
- ✓ 629 fish stocks in the Quota Management System (QMS)
- ✓ Fisheries settlement with Maori achieved
- ✓ A motivated and engaged seafood industry

... and what's not

- ✗ Sectoral frustration and conflict
- ✗ Fisheries and aquaculture management paralysis
- ✗ Misdirected spending
- ✗ MFish "command and control" culture

What needs doing?

Easy

- Better fisheries data and analysis
- Aquaculture law that works
- Decisions based on facts, not emotions
- Redirect spending to productive areas
- MFish culture change towards empowerment and collaboration

Harder

- Sectoral cooperation (clear rights and responsibilities for all)
- Distinguish sustainability from preservation
- Transfer activities and responsibilities from MFish to stakeholders

Some facts and figures (2007/08)¹

432

MFish employees
(plus 57 observers)

1,316

commercial fishing
vessels

2.7

commercial fishing vessels
per MFish employee
(including observers)

\$94.5 million

MFish budget 2008/09

\$35 million

MFish costs recovered from the
industry (levies and user fees)

8,000²

fisheries
regulations

629

fish stocks
in the QMS

MFish can do

20

Total Allowable Catch
(TAC) adjustments and
regulatory amendments
every year

...at this rate it will
take MFish

430 years

to review all TACs
and regulations

In 2004, MFish reviewed³
10 TACs
5 regulations
deemed values
& produced 268 pages of
advice

17 pages per item

In 2008, MFish reviewed
6 TACs
10 regulations
deemed values
& produced 926 pages of
advice

54 pages per item

The Minister of Fisheries
had to read
762 pages
of final advice before making
decisions on Hector's and
Maui's dolphins in 2008

\$1.3 billion

total annual seafood
export value

\$226 million

aquaculture exports

0

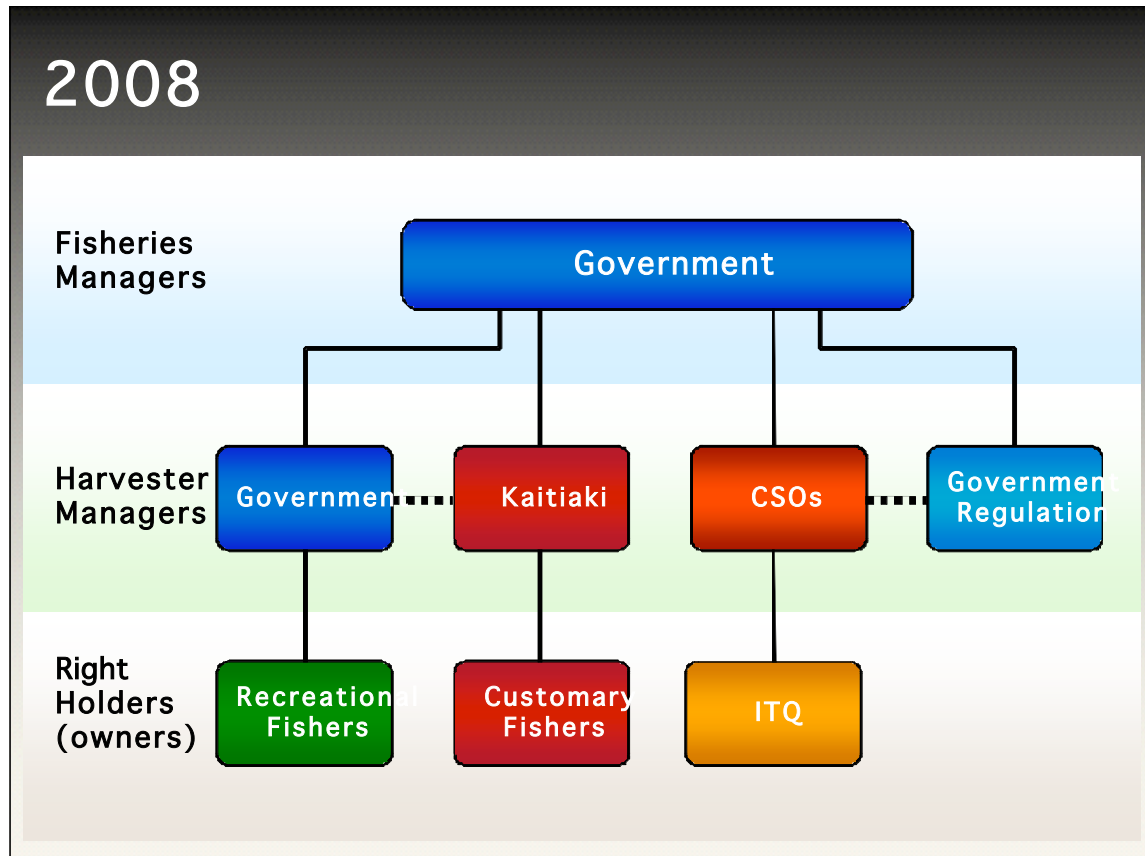
new space approved
for aquaculture under
the 2004 legislation

¹ All statistics taken from www.fish.govt.nz or otherwise supplied by MFish

² An estimate, frequently quoted by MFish staff, but probably higher than the true number of active regulations

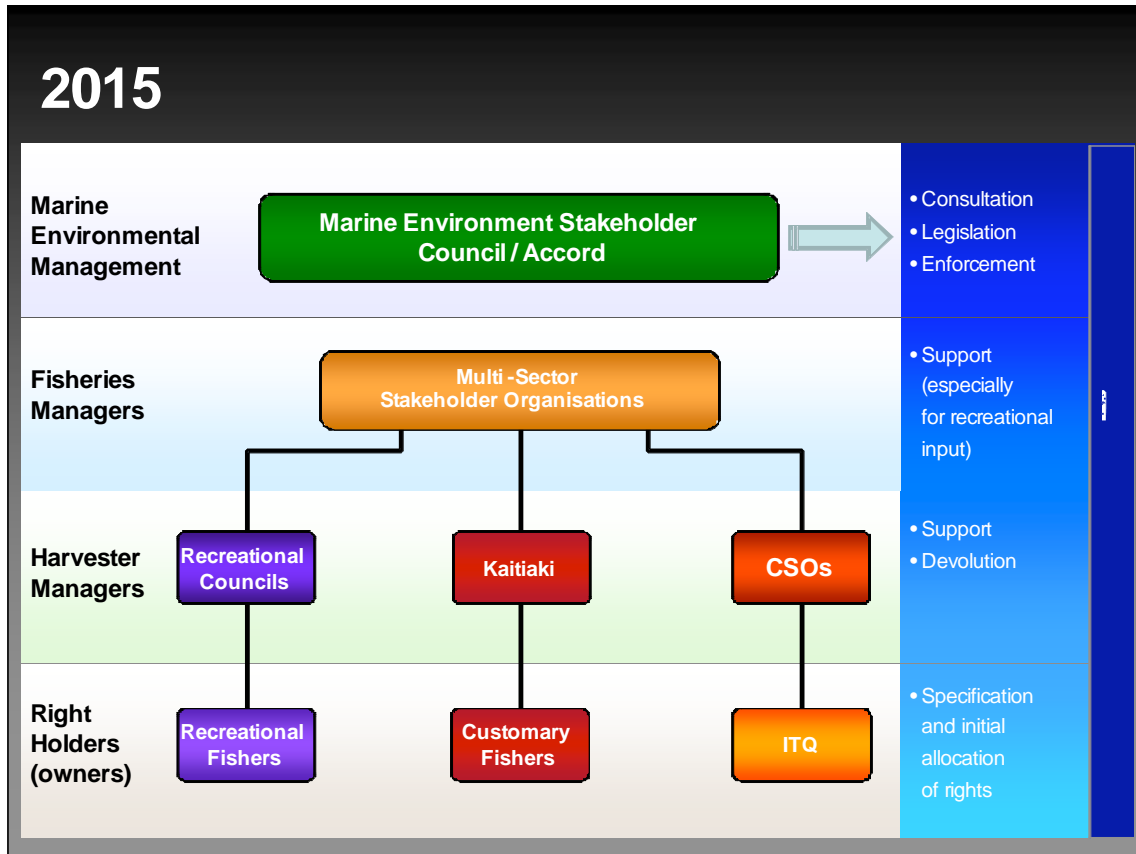
³ Annual review of stocks and regulations for the 1 October fishing year

How our fisheries are managed today



- The government (MFish) is the sole fisheries manager, and is looking to expand its role even further through MFish led fisheries plans and standards
- But in reality, MFish struggles with standard functions such as regularly reviewing TACs and maintaining its regulatory load – let alone developing new regulations, removing redundant ones or managing fisheries responsively. MFish productivity is declining. The volume of advice provided to the Minister is escalating – but without commensurate benefits for fisheries management
- Sectoral “harvester managers” are in various stages of development. Some commercial stakeholder organisations (CSOs) are well equipped to manage the activities of their harvesters; kaitiaki are also getting there. But there are no recreational harvester managers, so the government has had to step in to fill that role, and still maintains a high degree of regulatory control over all the sectors
- The result is *management paralysis* – a system that doesn’t let harvesters get on and manage their own activities, but instead requires them to demand more and more services from a government agency that will always have limited resources, no matter how big and costly it becomes. We have a management log-jam which is generating massive frustration and stripping value from our fisheries
- More of the same is not going to help. The solution lies in the opposite direction...

Where we need to be in 5 - 10 years



- The only way out of the log-jam is to empower a series of multi-sector stakeholder organisations to manage fisheries
- This requires all harvest sectors to have properly mandated, well organised and resourced representative bodies to manage their interests
- Clearly defined rights and responsibilities for all harvesters will help all sectors to share a sense of responsibility for the well being of our fisheries
- With rights clearly allocated among harvest sectors, the harvester managers themselves will be in the best position to resolve fisheries management issues and to make tradeoffs between their various interests. Stakeholders are closer to their fisheries than a government agency – they naturally have a strong interest in achieving outcomes based on relevant, timely information and advice
- Hand in hand with the empowerment of stakeholder organisations to manage fisheries, is the realignment of government to a set of more appropriate roles, as shown on the right of the diagram
- A marine environment stakeholder council or accord (with representation from extractive and non-extractive users of the marine environment) can play an important role in informing the fisheries management framework.

Seafood industry positions on some key current policy issues

Further details on the following policy positions can be provided on request.

Legislation

- ✓ *Aquaculture*
The priority for aquaculture development is to improve the legislative framework, following on from the joint industry/government review of the legislation.
- ✓ *Fisheries Act*
The Fisheries Act – particularly its purpose and principles – is fundamentally sound and does not require major amendment. Some fine-tuning can provide for more flexible, innovative fisheries management.
- ✓ *Emissions trading scheme*
The seafood industry should be treated like other traded-exposed sectors and receive a 90% allocation of carbon credits for the period of transition to 2030.

Fisheries access and management

- ✓ *Fisheries plans*
The MFish-led fisheries planning process is not working. It should be halted and replaced with improved co-operative governance arrangements. Industry and other sectors are frustrated at having to participate in a time consuming talk-fest that raises unrealistic expectations but does not deliver improvements to fisheries.
- ✓ *Fisheries standards, including the Harvest Strategy Standard (HSS)*
The HSS has far-reaching implications for fisheries management but it does not have the support of industry. It shifts decision making risk from the realm of management to that of science, placing greater dependence on an already insufficient science base. The HSS should be withdrawn until agreement is reached on how best to achieve the dual objectives of utilisation and sustainability. The HSS is indicative of broader concerns with the constraining effect of fisheries standards on utilisation.⁴
- ✓ *Shared fisheries*
Management issues in shared fisheries, including any proposals for spatial separation, can be resolved only by negotiation and agreement among mandated sector representatives. Better information on non-commercial catch is a priority. The current multi-sector policy development process for shared fisheries should continue.
- ✓ *Mataitai reserves & customary fishing*
The industry supports the need for government to provide for customary fishing, but this should not be at the industry's cost. The customary fishing regulations require review, particularly in relation to the significant commercial displacement and uncertainty associated with the rush to establish mataitai reserves.

⁴ For further information see SeaFIC submission on Draft Fisheries Standards. 26 April 2007, and SeaFIC submission on Harvest Strategy Standard for New Zealand Fisheries, 14 March 2008

Environmental issues

✓ *Marine Protected Areas*

The MPA Policy and its implementation require urgent review in order to provide a rational, risk-based approach to MPA planning. Concerns include a focus on marine reserves instead of the full range of protection tools, a “divide and rule” regional approach with no national overview, and a presumption of the benefits of protection rather than a dispassionate selection of representative areas of biodiversity.

✓ *Protected species interactions*

The industry supports a collaborative, risk-based approach to managing interactions between fishing and protected species such as marine mammals and seabirds. Management measures should be justified by science, not emotion, and should focus on vessel-specific best practice approaches that support industry responsibility.

Administering the legislation

✓ *Cost recovery*

The cost recovery rules require urgent review as they are inconsistent with statutory criteria and not aligned with the strategic direction of fisheries management. Current levels of cost recovery cannot be justified. The Joint Working Group that was set up to address this issue should be reinstated so that progress can once again be made.⁵

✓ *Deemed values*

Better integration of decisions on TACs and deemed values is required. Consistent with the recommendations of the Deemed Value Joint Working Group, a portion of deemed value revenue should be returned to quota owners to compensate them for catch taken without reference to commercial harvest rights.⁶

Improving service delivery

✓ *Fisheries research services*

In spite of promised improvements, MFish’s research planning processes are still not driven by agreed management needs. Industry is paying for too much “nice to know” science, while “need to know” information on stock sustainability remains under-funded. Fisheries funds continue to be diverted to undertake protected species research that is properly the responsibility of the Department of Conservation.

✓ *Observer services*

The MFish monopoly on the provision of observer services needs to be removed in order to enable cost-effective service provision.

⁵ For further information, see Cost Recovery Report to the Minister of Fisheries from the Cost Recovery Joint Working Group. December 2007

⁶ For further information, see Report of the Crown/Industry Joint Working Group on Deemed Values to the Minister of Fisheries. 18 May 2005