

PauaMAC 5 update - brief presentation for conference.

Hi thanks Jeremy for the opportunity to address this conference and give you all a brief outline of what's happened so far this year in the paua fisheries down South .

In general terms the fishing season has been unexceptional.

Catch and landing patterns seem in line with previous years. As usual, and in common with other QMAs in NZ, the rate of catch has been dictated by weather patterns rather than market demand or fish-stock levels.

It looks like the catch level reductions of the past few years on Stewart Island and around the Otago/Southland coast have had the desired effect , with catch rates mostly improving . However many divers in both areas are cautious about the level of recovery and maintain that we are not out of the woods yet. A mood of cautious optimism perhaps.

Our third QMA , Paua 5A Fiordland has also been maintaining good catch rates , however some divers are reporting that they are covering more ground to maintain those catch rates and that we need to be looking very seriously at future catch levels. I'll talk more about the Fiordland paua fishery shortly .

The PauaMAC 5 projects work-plan has been a bit slow off the mark this year for one reason or another.

Good progress is now being made on the re-seeding, advocacy, Active management and rights protection projects. Others are proving somewhat problematic. For example we have a Fisheries plan project budgeted and a highly capable consultant ready to proceed with its development but are still awaiting direction from MFish as to what exactly will be required to meet their specifications.

All the more frustrating in that we levied for this on the clear understanding that Fish Plans would be required of us by MFish .

Of the projects perhaps the Active Management Project probably needs an explanation.

At present we consider that MFish has very limited resources to actively manage our fisheries.

While MFish will commission stock assessments where there is concern about a fishstock their major management tool is a TACC reduction.

Industry figures there should be more to fishery management than that.

The Active Management Project is to provide the foundation for a working Fisheries Management Plan. However rather than wait until a Plan is written we decided to try and put in place management changes we consider will make a

positive difference to the health of our fisheries .

It is intended that the PauaMAC will try to have these initiatives underway this Winter, in time for the coming season if possible.

Recognising that each of our 3 QMA's has different characteristics and problems we ran a series of meetings providing divers and quota owners a forum to discuss their view of firstly the state of each of the fisheries they were involved in and secondly what they thought should be done .

The ideas of all involved in the meetings formed the basis of a report which is about to be circulated to all quota owners , quota holders and divers in the region .

Attached will be a questionnaire asking for comments on the work proposed so far and further suggestions.

Feedback will provide us with the do-able projects to be undertaken.

Taking Fiordland as an example.

Concern was expressed that stocks might decline in future years so a package of measures has been suggested.

Firstly a shelving of quota for a pre-determined time to reduce the commercial catch levels.

Secondly it was pointed out that the spawning biomass needed to be protected as Fiordland paua tend to be larger than in other areas and there does not seem to be the same abundance of juveniles .To address this a size limit increase is to be investigated . The new size limit would be that which allowed a n extra years spawning by the fish before reaching takeable size.

Thirdly participants were keen to follow Pau 3 s example and redistribute fishing effort to help reduce risk of serial depletion. This would be done by a similar contracturally arranged subdivision to that done in Pau3.

Fourthly there was support for an increasing re-seeding effort to help fish-stock rebuild. Other options were also mooted but I think you can get the idea of what is planned .

We are very optimistic that the project is a step in the right direction .

Unfortunately we have a couple of issues looming which have distracted time , funding and effort from the business of management .

As you will know DOC has re-launched its proposal for a marine reserve at Nugget Point. This area supports a significant proportion of the Paua 5D catch and so the MAC is opposing it vigorously. We have been closely involved with other Industry groups battling the application and with some success ...DOC Dunedin are finding the whole thing a bit stressful .

Regrettably this is a politically driven issue, Chris Carter wants it come hell or high water, so the local office is obliged to push on regardless .

In anticipation we will be setting out our objection, with legal professional legal advise, to a standard which we hope would support a successful judicial review should that become necessary. We think this is a watershed case for ALL the fishing industry. We consider that our case is very strong and that if we can't stop this one then DOC will have a precedent to impose marine reserves at will around our coast , the effect will be to completely undermine the basis for NZs

Quota Management System ...secure, tradeable quota rights. We have very strong views on how the issue of spatial allocation should be handled , regrettably these are not shared by the Labour government .

So lots going on down South ...but lots more still to do, I would like to congratulate all involved in getting these organisations up and running over the last year and a half ..but particularly the folks in PauMAC 7 who have achieved an extraordinary amount of work in a short time...we plan to crib your work unmercifully ...well done .

Thank you

Storm Stanley