



RESCUE FISH

IKA RAUORA

A pathway to fish abundance and
marine ecosystem recovery.



Introduction

New Zealand's recovery and long-term prospects following the Covid-19 crisis will depend on how we collectively respond and manage our natural resources. This is a timely opportunity to address the poor state of New Zealand's fish stocks.

Food security is fundamental for all New Zealanders.

We have become accustomed to bulk exports of our precious seafood for as little as three dollars per kilo, while our people continue to suffer from poor diet related diseases. Our Māori and Pasifika people are most at risk.

A clear majority of New Zealanders have expressed a strong desire for fisheries reform.

As Milton Friedman famously said,

"Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable."

We have to find a workable, affordable policy solution. Now is the time to institute new policies that prioritise te tini a Tangaroa (all the creatures of the sea) so we can restore depleted fisheries, protect our marine environment and rebuild regional economies using their local, natural resources.

LegaSea and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council have developed the Rescue Fish policy package to restore marine abundance so there are more fish in the sea.

Implementing this package means much needed employment, regional growth and innovation opportunities. Rescue Fish will empower our local, small scale commercial fishers and their communities, encouraging them to become stewards of the sea.

The barrier to success is the inflexible Quota Management System for fisheries. The QMS is a system that relies on protection rather than innovation - it has to go. We need to build a new governance structure based on the principles of kaitiakitanga, guardianship of our resources and people.

The Rescue Fish policy finally offers us a pathway to abundance. It may not be the definitive solution, there is much work to do. Rescue Fish has been thoughtfully crafted as a viable alternative to current management and it will help to lift the prosperity and wellbeing of all New Zealanders. With your support we can make this happen.

Scott Macindoe
LegaSea

Bob Gutsell
New Zealand Sport Fishing Council

Rescue Fish summary

Rescue Fish is a holistic solution to address depleted fish stocks and biodiversity loss.

This innovative policy package has been developed by a team of experts with an in-depth knowledge of the issues facing New

Zealand's fisheries management system, and the resulting environmental, economic, cultural and social impacts.

Implementation will make our marine environment more productive, delivering benefits for all New Zealanders.

The problems

- 1:** The Quota Management System (QMS) has created a powerful lobby of commercial interests that block initiatives to rebuild depleted fish stocks.
- 2:** The QMS permits dredging and bottom trawling in inshore waters including nursery areas.
- 3:** Small scale commercial fishers do not receive a reasonable return for their efforts. This encourages low cost, bulk harvesting of fish.
- 4:** No resource rental fee applies to commercial catch, this leads to overfishing of inshore stocks. Kai moana is not readily available in areas traditionally fished by recreational and Māori customary fishers.
- 5:** Wastage from dumping and high grading of fish because fishers cannot access sufficient catching rights to cover all catch taken in mixed, bulk harvest fisheries.
- 6:** Inadequate funding for effective research, monitoring and policing of fishing.

The solutions

- 1:** Dismantle the Quota Management System. Establish new legislation and governance structures so the Crown and Māori can collaborate and exercise guardianship of our fish and marine resources.
- 2:** Ban bottom trawling and dredging from inshore waters and sensitive marine habitats.
- 3:** Reintroduce competition and innovation to commercial fishing. Encourage regional artisanal fishing enterprises and whanau businesses to create jobs and higher value per kilo returns for fish and fishers.
- 4:** Apply a resource rental levy to commercial catch. Reset catch limits so fish stocks can recover to abundant levels, and to restore biodiversity.
- 5:** Multi-species time-limited fishing permits, effort limits, gear controls and mandatory onboard monitoring of commercial catches.
- 6:** Initiate independent monitoring of commercial fishing to enable validation of catches and protect vulnerable seabirds and mammals.



Serial depletion, habitat degradation and productivity loss are all costs that are socialised while the Quota Management System privatises the profits. This has put fisheries on a trajectory to serious depletion.

The need for Rescue Fish

Our fisheries crisis

The management and governance of our fisheries is in crisis. There is widespread concern about declining fish stocks and biodiversity loss in our marine environment.

The Fisheries Act 1996 has not been adequately applied to achieve its primary purpose of sustainable use of fisheries resources to enable people to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being.

Successive governments have been unable to manage our marine resources in the public interest. Māori are especially disadvantaged by current laws and practices. They are denied the opportunity to have a meaningful governance role in ensuring our fisheries are abundant for today and in the future.

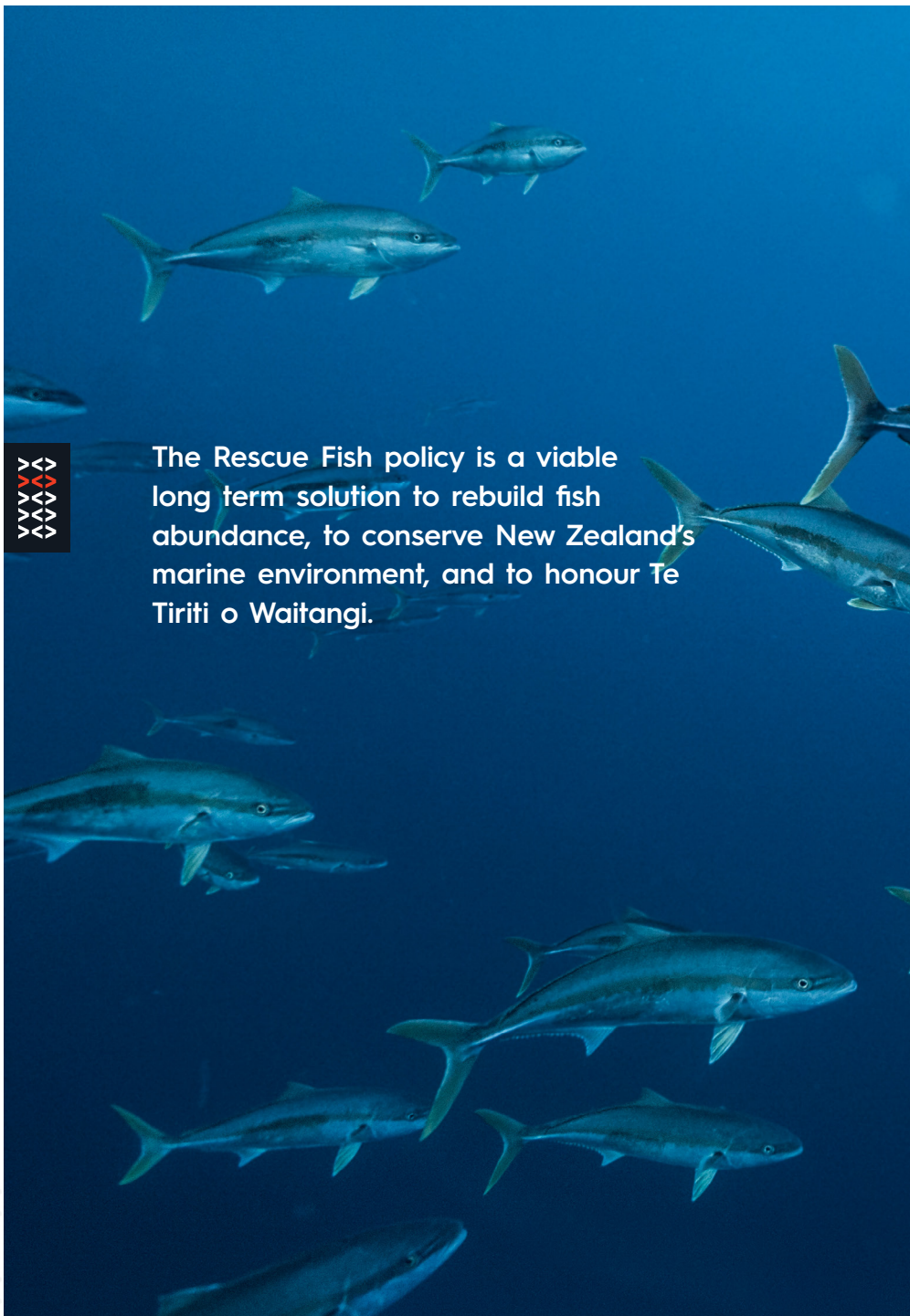
Management has descended into endless discussions about how much fish we can have now while avoiding collapse. There are also debates around Ministerial allocations, which interests ought to be catered for and what issues can be ignored.

The current regime is not delivering the economic, cultural and social potential that New Zealanders aspired to when the Quota Management System was introduced.

Symptoms of a failing quota system

In 1986 New Zealand adopted the Quota Management System to better manage commercial fishing. Thirty years later we have not achieved the goals of resource sustainability and economic efficiency promised by its introduction.

The bulk of New Zealand's commercially caught fish is still exported at low prices, with little or no added value. Regional ports have lost many family fishing businesses. 78% of all quota is now owned by 10 entities. These quota owners capture the bulk of the profits, reducing the returns to the hard working fishermen and women.



The Rescue Fish policy is a viable long term solution to rebuild fish abundance, to conserve New Zealand's marine environment, and to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

A pathway to abundance

Rescue Fish requires the Government to buy back existing quota. This will enable catch reductions to be applied so depleted fish stocks can be rebuilt to abundant levels. It will also mean we can ban destructive, indiscriminate bulk harvesting methods from inshore and sensitive nursery areas. Rescue Fish will enable Māori to have a meaningful co-governance role.

The principles of Rescue Fish

1. All Fisheries laws will comply with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
2. The living marine resources of Aotearoa New Zealand remain the property of the people and cannot become the private property of private companies or individuals or sold abroad.
3. All fisheries must be biologically, economically, and socially sustainable.
4. To the greatest extent possible, commercial fishing rights will be granted in line with the principles of a market based system. The legislation will prevent private sales of licences or fishing rights.
5. Catches will be landed in New Zealand and to the extent possible be processed here for added value.
6. Only New Zealand owned and registered companies, or private New Zealand citizens, paying taxes in New Zealand and complying with all relevant employment and maritime law will be able to participate in New Zealand's commercial fisheries.
7. Within the inshore zone (12 nautical miles or 200 metre depth, whichever is more distant from shore) commercial fishing vessels may only be operated by the owner of the fishing permit.

Steps to abundance

Rescue Fish requires the Crown to buy back existing commercial shares in the inshore fisheries at fair value. The combination of the initial buy-back and an equally large ongoing revenue stream from selling fishing permits with attached resource rentals means this would be at least fiscally neutral to the Crown over the long term¹.

How does the Government make it happen?

- 1:** The Crown will buy-back all existing commercial quota shares in the inshore fishery at fair value. Estimated buy-back cost for the inshore fishery is between \$0.76 billion and \$3.1 billion, with a mid-point of \$1.67 billion.
- 2:** A new Fisheries Act will include explicit criteria to guide catch allocation decisions and encourage innovation. Priority will be given to Māori customary and public fishing.
- 3:** Effort limits and gear controls will apply to commercial fishing. Bottom trawling and dredging will be banned from inshore waters.
- 4:** Fixed term commercial permits will be leased, time limited and have a resource rental attached. Rental payments to the Crown will apply to landed catch. Iwi will receive an agreed percentage of the rental revenue.
- 5:** Independent electronic monitoring and cameras on all commercial vessels will help officials monitor and validate catches, and help protect vulnerable species such as seabirds and mammals.
- 6:** Decentralise commercial fishing effort to encourage local participation and promote regional economies. This will help to discourage inefficient investment and effort.

“Discarding is a systemic failure of the current system and something we have not been able to get on top of from day one of the Quota Management System.”

D. Turner. Director of Fisheries Management. MPI. 2014



Public support for reform

Over 400,000 tonnes of fish are caught and sold each year without incurring a resource rental tax, after the resource rental levy applying to fish was abandoned in 1994. There is widespread public recognition that this resource rental needs reinstating.

Recent research shows that many people want the Government to reform fisheries. New Zealanders support the Government to buy back the existing fishing quota and to implement reforms so commercial fishers pay a resource rental fee for the fish they harvest.

70%

of New Zealanders think reform is needed².

73%

of Māori think reform is required³.

Resource rental income from commercial fishing could be used to effectively monitor fishing and to give Māori a meaningful return for their Treaty Settlement fishing interests.

When Māori are not fishing with a permit for customary purposes, fishing to feed the whanau is categorised as recreational fishing. Total recreational catch is estimated to be around 10,000 tonnes per annum. In shared (mostly inshore) fisheries recreational catch represents around 19% of annual harvest. Nationwide, recreational fishers spend around \$946 million every year on their fishing⁴.

“New Zealanders want their fisheries reformed.”

New Zealanders are concerned:

77% of New Zealanders think fish stocks within the 12 nautical mile territorial limit are becoming less abundant.

69% of New Zealanders think not enough is being done to stop dumping of unwanted catch by commercial fishers.

67% of New Zealanders support the Government doing further work to reform fisheries, to make sure they become abundant and commercial fishers pay a resource rental.

57% of New Zealanders support banning bottom trawling that destroys habitats and targets small fish in the inshore fishery.

54% of New Zealanders agree that commercial fishers should be required to have their catch independently monitored, including cameras on their vessels.



Pathway to success

The Government will only act if there is a clear demand for reform from mana whenua and the public.

LegaSea and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council already know there is strong and widespread support for reform amongst voters from across the political spectrum.

Engagement with politicians and officials at a local and national level is ongoing.

We will continue to work with mana whenua to achieve better understanding of the need for reform of governance structures and fisheries management.

We have received support from our LegaSea Partners, aligned organisations, a range of environmental groups, the tourism sector, hospitality industry and many philanthropic supporters.

Engagement with commercial fishers and regional communities is essential as reforms will, at last, provide opportunities for local management and growth in regional small scale commercial fisheries.

Rescue Fish seeks to ensure that New Zealand receives the highest value for its fish. Benefits of reform will also be shared amongst the commercial, tourism, charter and recreational fishing sectors.

Petition

We have created a petition in support of Rescue Fish which we are urging all Kiwis to sign.

Sign the petition



About Rescue Fish

This Rescue Fish policy package results from years of research, professional participation in scientific assessment of fish stocks and consultation with recreational, commercial and Māori fishers. It is also informed by independent research of the views of Māori and New Zealanders overall, and visits to other countries using or abandoning quota management systems. The research was completed or commissioned by the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea.

During the project research phase a series of interviews were conducted in New Zealand and overseas.

Locally, interviews were recorded with Drs. Liz Slooten and Steve Dawson of Otago and Dr. Glenn Simmons of Auckland. Interviews were also completed with recreational, commercial and customary Māori fishing interests.

Interviews with the overseas experts were completed between 2018 and 2019. These included Jim McIsaac, Richard Williams, Art Davidson, Tasha Sutcliffe, Dr. Evelyn Pinkerton and Dr. Daniel Pauly from Canada; Rob Southwick, Dr. Seth Macinko and Dr. Daniel Bromley from the USA; Arthur Bogason, and Drs. Thorvaldur Gylfason, Niels Einarsson, Thorolfur Matthiasson and Catherine Chambers of Iceland; Hans Ellefsen and Hogni Hoydal, Minister of Fisheries, from the Faroe Islands, North Atlantic.

We are grateful for the generous contributions of these experts in their field.

Toitū te marae a Tāne-Mahuta, Toitū te marae a Tangaroa, Toitū te tangata.

*If the land is well, and the sea is well,
the people will thrive.*

References

- 1 They that go down to the sea in ships. The case for reforming the New Zealand fisheries management system. Report by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research. July 2019.
- 2 Horizon Research "Future of Fisheries" survey January 2019, 1,046 adults. At a 95% confidence level the maximum margin of error is +/- 3% overall.
- 3 Horizon Research "Fisheries Policy. Māori and the future of fishing" survey June 2019. 1000 Māori 18+ years. At a 95% confidence level the maximum margin of error is +/-3.1% overall.
- 4 Holdsworth, J; Rea, T; Southwick, R. Recreational Fishing in New Zealand – A Billion Dollar Industry. Produced for the New Zealand Marine Research Foundation. March 2016.



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To effect change **we need to stand together** and show the Government how much we care.

[Read the full policy](#)

[Sign the petition](#)

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