



## Hit and miss report on the Quota Management System

The Quota Management System (QMS) is a success in some areas, a miserable failure in others.

That is according to an Environmental Defence Society (EDS) report into inshore fisheries released this week, *Voices from the Sea*, written by its policy director Raewyn Peart.

There had been some notable successes, for instance snapper stocks have increased, she said.

But the current status of most inshore stocks was unknown and the system was so unwieldy a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) review can take as long as eight years.

There are more than 400 inshore stocks, which are not being actively managed.

There was a marked loss of institutional knowledge within the Ministry for Primary Industries, the system was now largely reactive and there was only a sketchy legislative and policy framework.

“After more than 30 years of the quota management system we still don’t know enough about most of our inshore fish stocks to make informed decisions – we are flying blind,” the report says.

“Where the system has most grossly failed is in protecting the marine habitats essential for future fish production, as well as for the health of our marine environment more generally.

“There are multiple examples of the marked decline of fisheries and in some cases total collapse, linked to habitat degradation and loss.”

The Challenger scallop fishery in Tasman and Golden bays, paua and blue cod stocks in the Marlborough Sounds and kina barrens along the Northland coast were given as examples.

“This is the element of our research that I found most alarming, because such habitat changes can be very difficult, if not impossible to reverse.”

However, the report shows a misunderstanding of the QMS. It was set up to preserve stocks that were being overfished, it is not a mechanism for dealing with heavy siltation and other land-based impacts on the marine environment. That is the responsibility of the Resource Management Act and one that has not been well discharged—to the detriment of inshore fisheries.

Pearl also took issue with the structure of the commercial fishing industry, with quota being largely controlled by three corporate entities, but did not give weight to the collective nature of iwi ownership.

While there is much to agree with in the report, it makes sweeping generalisations about the fishing industry – ie, all inshore boats are old, skippers are frightened to speak out for fear of losing catch access, no innovation since 1992 (Precision Seafood Harvesting, larger net mesh, international marketing, anyone?), draws on selective and anonymous interviews – and completely ignores the impact of recreational fishing, the missing part of the QMS jigsaw.

When as much as half of the snapper catch in the Hauraki Gulf is caught by the ever expanding Auckland recreational sector and several hundred charter vessels are de facto commercial fishers, all unmonitored, how can it be argued they are not a factor in assessing the health of fisheries and setting catch limits?

However, there is no argument the QMS, and our wider fisheries management system, cannot be improved and Pearl deserves credit for highlighting contentious issues, if not for some of her statements.

She was also a key contributor to another recent study into the QMS, initiated by the American-based The Nature Conservancy, titled: Learning from New Zealand’s 30 Years of Experience Managing Fisheries under a Quota Management System.

That study presented New Zealand’s QMS as an international example that “offers lessons relevant to many other countries that are contemplating fishery reform efforts”.

Curiously, Pearl makes no reference to the Nature Conservancy report, neither in the text or the references.

Instead she has opted for alarmist “we stand to lose our fisheries for good”, which if not arrant nonsense, certainly lacks scientific rigour.

Some of the concerns raised in the EDS report – lack of research, inflexibility, poor policy settings - have been canvassed by industry for a number of years. But an independent statutory inquiry under the Inquiries Act, as proposed by EDS, is not the answer.

Most of the remedies are known and lie within the existing Fisheries Act.

There has already been extensive consultation under different names. The previous Government launched its review in 2015 by initially seeking views that

were to be summarised in responses called “What We Heard” and “What We Think” (neither of which made it beyond the MPI bureaucracy).

What did finally emerge was the Future of Our Fisheries, which lacked any coherent vision and was instead a shotgun approach to addressing “issues of the day”. If we really want to improve and future-proof our fisheries management system, let’s dispense with the populism, the uninformed comment, and management by anecdote.

All yet another review would do is provide a stage for rehearsal of entrenched positions and bog the process down for another two years. Applying some genuine expertise to advance the solutions we know exist would be a far more productive approach.

Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash, in launching the book, said he was learning fisheries management was a very complex topic, likening it to Middle East religion and politics.

He said there needed to be change and he was keen to implement it, without being specific.

The challenge for all parties is to deal with the acknowledged shortcomings of a system that has served us well but one that all agree can be improved.

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**SAVE THE DATE**

The 2018 New Zealand Seafood Industry Technical Day and Conference will be held at Te Papa, Wellington.

August 1 to August 2, 2018

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### **Playbook launched for OpenSeas**

OpenSeas, the number one source for New Zealand seafood information, has released a playbook on the programme.

The guide provides a general overview of OpenSeas and how it can be used to support local seafood businesses. The opportunities for applying the programme are endless and the playbook is a great tool to get people started.

[Click here](#) to download the guide or learn more

# OpenSeas<sup>NZ</sup>

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## **Gold Stars for King Salmon**

The Global Aquaculture Alliance has awarded New Zealand King Salmon (NZKS) a fourth star for responsible aquaculture production.

It is the world's first king salmon producer and the first salmon producer in Australasia to achieve four-star status.

The accolade was awarded to NZKS following an audit of its major feed supplier, Skretting.

NZKS will now offer four-star Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) salmon.

"Put into restaurant terms, this is the equivalent of earning a Michelin star," NZKS managing director Grant Rosewarne said.

"New Zealand King Salmon is an ambitious company that never rests on its laurels and is constantly working to become even more economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable."

Four-star is the highest designation in the BAP third-party certification program, indicating that a product originates from a BAP-certified feed mill, hatchery, seafarm and processing plant.

"We're absolutely thrilled with this certification, because it further recognises more than 30 years of hard work and investment in growing the world's best salmon," Rosewarne said.

"It is also particularly pleasing to be the first king salmon producer in the world to receive the four-star certification. The aquaculture industry is a competitive one, but we've always been confident we are amongst the best and this is clear proof.

"Our business is showing impressive growth, with sales up by around 30 percent year on year. We're working hard to supply the increased demand from customers at home and in offshore markets such as the United States and Japan.

"We are focused on plans that will allow us to expand our operations while lifting environmental standards. This will enable a continued contribution to our local communities in the top of the south, as well as to New Zealand's export successes.

"A certification like this confirms our leadership status in NZ's maturing aquaculture industry."



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### Quote of the day



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### News

The Transport Accident Investigation Commission will investigate the fire that engulfed the fishing vessel Dong Won 701 at the Port of Timaru early this week, The Timaru Herald reports. Chief investigator of accidents Captain Tim Burfoot said a team of three had been sent to look at how the fire began. "The fire is reported to have broken out in the vicinity of the vessel's accommodation," he said. "The fire burned all Monday night and into Tuesday, so damage to the vessel is expected to be substantial."

For the first time in more than 150 years, a New Zealand sea lion breeding colony has been established on mainland New Zealand. The annual pup count on Stewart Island has revealed 55 new-born pups this season, and now that the numbers have been consistent for several years, it can be declared a breeding colony. DOC marine science advisor Laura Boren said it is an exciting development for the endemic sea lion. "A new breeding colony is huge news for New Zealand sea lions. Sea lions have been showing signs of recolonising on the mainland, but it has been slow going," she said.



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### **Ocean Bounty**

Once described as being in a state of collapse, what is the real orange roughy story? Ocean Bounty joins scientists on a voyage assessing orange roughy stocks in areas that have been closed for up to 15 years and also talk to a man whose boat sank beneath him one miserable night miles offshore on the roughy ground. Fishbone chef Darren Lovell discusses the delights of orange roughy and author Tim Pankhurst backgrounds his tale of redemption, *Roughy on the Rise*. Tune in to Three at 11am on Sunday to check it out.



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