



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



"Just add water" approach not the way for MPAs

Marine Protected Areas, the holy grail of the international environmental movement, are not the most effective way to safeguard species and ecosystems.

That is the view of visiting US economist Dr Gary Libecap, who has just completed a four-month residency at Canterbury University.

He called for a more flexible, incentive-based, inclusive approach to achieve lasting conservation, drawing on 40 years of academic research, 100 peer reviewed journal papers and case studies of MPAs in the Pacific Ocean.

Worldwide preservation and conservation of the marine environment has never been more topical, or more urgent than it is now.

Libecap, a Distinguished Professor of Corporate Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara, does not question the concern about marine conservation but he does take issue with the method.

He told a seminar last week at Chapman Tripp's Wellington office, co-sponsored by Te Ohu Kaimona and the Law and Economics Association of New Zealand, that this country could be a world leader in delivering 100 percent sustainably managed fisheries and ocean resources with less contentious, collaborative support.

But that would not be by unilaterally declaring sanctuaries such as the Kermadecs, which was potentially in conflict with the Treaty of Waitangi, the 1992 Maori Fisheries Settlement and the Quota Management System.

An alternative template was to restart with meaningful inclusion of Maori, other quota holders and additional parties and define objectives in measurable ways.

That should include updates and timelines, a cost/benefit analysis and potential compensation.

MPAs did not take account of fish migration and other marine ecosystem changes and are only as durable as the political will to maintain them.

He advocated incentives to collaborate in ecosystem protection as part of marine fishery controls, as introduced in Canada and the US.

That would include defining a Total Allowable Catch for key ecosystem attributes, distributing tradeable shares amongst QMS holders and curtailing fisheries if agreed limits were exceeded.

He said New Zealand was the gold standard in terms of fisheries management and could build on that in marine protection.

He cited a New York Times editorial (March 20, 2018) headed Bigger is Not Better for Ocean Conservation by Luiz Rocha of the California Academy of Sciences that was critical of the “just add water” approach to marine protection.

It argued that countries should create MPAs only where they can make a real difference in safeguarding marine life.

Some were placed where there was no evidence of threat, Libecap said.

And some were based on faulty assumptions such as the Channel Island reserves in Santa Barbara, where lobster fishing was banned to control sea urchins and improve kelp stands.

Five years later it was found reef character and tides were the key influencers, while those fishers forced out received no compensation.

He quoted Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom’s work on governing the commons.

She found trust and proportionate sharing of benefits and costs were critical elements of successful MPAs, whereas meaningful involvement of indigenous communities or locals was rare.

“The socio-economic effects are missing,” Libecap said. “How do these affect people?”

The UN global objective is 10 percent of the ocean surface locked up in MPAs by 2020, tripling to 30 percent by 2030.

Coverage at the end of 2017 was about 6 percent.

This was made up of 14,688 fully protected areas covering about 23 million square kilometres, ranging in size from just one square kilometre to the largest at 1.5 million.

New Zealand has 44 MPAs, all relatively small, although 30 percent of New Zealand’s huge Exclusive Economic Zone, the world’s fourth largest, is designated as Benthic Protected Areas, where bottom trawling or dredging is prohibited.

Green light for Precision Seafood Harvesting

After seven years of trials, Precision Seafood Harvesting has finally been given approval from Fisheries New Zealand.

A Modular Harvesting System, PSH can now be used in North Island inshore fisheries, specifically, snapper, tarakihi, trevally, red gurnard and john dory, with certain conditions. Approval to use PSH in deepwater hoki, hake and ling fisheries was granted last year.

Ten of Sanford and Moana's inshore vessels have been trialling the technology under a special permit and now those crew will be able to transition to full-time employment of it. Additional vessels are expected to adopt the new technology too.

The \$48 million project began in 2012 as a joint venture between the Ministry for Primary Industries, Moana New Zealand, Sealord Group and Sanford Ltd.

Based on science from Plant & Food research, the new technology offers commercial fishers a new way to fish.

PSH does away with traditional trawl nets, landing fish alive and in better condition. Its flexible PVC liner with 'escapement holes' allows undersized fish to escape before they are brought on board the vessel. Fish are held in a low-velocity water flow state and are still swimming when they are landed on board. Fish that are returned to sea also have a much better survival rate.

PSH governance group member Greg Johansson said this new way of fishing means better quality fish, less waste and long-term benefits for the sustainability of New Zealand fish species.

"The aim of the programme when it began was to deliver longline quality inshore fish, like snapper, at a lower cost, resulting in higher value for same volume harvested.

"We're not just designing a new way to fish, we're also designing new ways to handle fish on board to maintain their condition right through to the fish counter."

Moana New Zealand's quota and resource manager Nathan Reid was part of a team of fisheries scientists and experts who explored the initial alternatives to trawl methods.

"For the past 100 years, we've had limited visibility of what is occurring inside the trawl net.

"Now we're developing underwater monitoring and 'remote release' technology so fishing crews can monitor what they have got in real time and safely release all the fish inside if a marine mammal, like a dolphin swims inside."

Once the technology is in commercial use, fishing crews tend to build on and improve the work of scientists to see what the technology can do, said Johansson.

"We expect this will happen on the inshore vessels too."

PSH's funding period will end in September, at which point the programme will continue to be developed with the fishing companies involved.

The PSH team are optimistic the technology will replace traditional trawl gear in many fisheries.



THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE FISHING

Celebrating top-notch seafood

Sydney Fish Market is on the hunt for the country's best seafood as part of its biennial Sydney Fish Market Seafood Excellence Awards.

Run since 1996, the awards recognise industry players who demonstrate outstanding professionalism, contribution to the economy and a commitment to supplying high quality seafood to local and international markets.

New Zealand King Salmon's Ora brand was commended as an overseas Best Supplier in 2015, along with OPC Fish and Lobster (a division of the former Aotearoa Fisheries) who also took out the title in 2013.

There are [14 categories this year](#), four of which are new: the Young Achiever Award, People Development Award, Promotion Award and the Research, Development and Extension Award. Some categories are open to both Australian and international producers.

[Nominations are now open.](#)

The awards will be announced on 25 July, in Sydney.

Tindale marine research tagging programme

The Tindale Marine Research Charitable Trust is again asking for your help to report and measure tagged fish you recapture.

The research programme is run by the trust to track seasonal movements, habitat and growth and the same method is used in more than 100 countries.

The trust is asking that you identify the species, record the tag information, note which date and where the fish was recaptured and to measure it. Trevally, gurnard, snapper, kahawai, kingfish, terakihi and school shark (tope) have all been tagged.

The first recapture in this programme was in a commercial trawl off Taranaki. The 38cm snapper had originally been tagged in Kaipara. In the 41 days between sightings it had grown two centimetres and travelled 165 nautical miles (305 kms).

Displaying [this poster](#) in places where commercial and recreational fishers meet would also be appreciated.



NZ Federation of Commercial Fishermen Conference

The 2019 NZFCF Conference will be held on Thursday 30th May, followed by the AGM on the Friday at the Copthorne Hotel Bay of Islands, Waitangi.

[Registrations](#) are now open and the [programme](#) confirmed. The line up includes updates on electronic reporting, several safety and wellbeing presentations and the latest from Seafood New Zealand on the Promise Campaign and building trust and reputation.

Special conference rates have been secured, so please inform reservation that you are a NZFCF attendee to receive the discounted rate. The following group code can also be used: **NZFCF19**.

For more information or to register, visit www.nzfishfed.co.nz



New Zealand Seafood Industry
Conference and Technical Day

2019 Conference programme posted

Registrations for the 2019 New Zealand Seafood Industry Conference and Technical Day are open and the [programme](#) has now been posted.

Seafood New Zealand has negotiated accommodation rates at the conference venue and neighbouring hotels. Please note, there are now a limited number of rooms available at the [Rydges hotel](#), so be in quick to secure remaining accommodation and flights. Bookings can be made through the [Information](#) section on the conference webpage along with [links](#) to Air New Zealand for group flight bookings.

[Register now.](#)

Seafood Stars Awards

The 2019 Seafood Stars Awards are open for nominations. The awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our industry people and their achievements. This year's award categories include:

- Future Development and Innovation Award
- Young Achiever Award
- Longstanding Service Award

For more information on each category [visit our website](#), or [download the form](#) to nominate someone today.

News

Fisheries New Zealand recently published its annual Status of New Zealand's Fisheries Report showing 95 percent of New Zealand's fish stocks are sustainable, *NZ Herald* reported. Manager of Fisheries Science Dr Richard Ford said Fisheries New Zealand is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of New Zealand's fisheries. "It was good to see that 142 of the 169 assessed fish stocks have no sustainability issues," he said. "However, there are 27 fish stocks which have some sustainability concerns. In all cases where stocks need support, corrective management action has been, or is being, put in place to improve stock levels." Overfished stocks below the soft limit include southern bluefin tuna, Pacific bluefin tuna, five bluenose stocks, three stocks (or substocks) of tarakihi, three black cardinalfish stocks, two stocks (or substocks) of orange roughy, snapper, scallops and oysters and one stock each of flatfish, John dory, rock lobster, pāua, pipi and freshwater eels. "We spend about \$22 million a year on scientific research to get the best available information about what is happening in our fisheries," Ford said. Highlights from the report include the successful assessment of Chatham Islands rock lobster in 2018, which found the stock to be above biomass limits, but below management target. A 2017 assessment of Puysegur sub-stock of orange roughy was also found to have been fully rebuilt since its closure in 1997.

A petition to ban bottom trawling on underwater seamounts has amassed 20,000 supporters in one week. Environmental groups Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, ECO, Forest and Bird, Greenpeace, LegaSea, WWF New Zealand and recreational fishers launched the petition. A recent report from NIWA on the impact of bottom trawling concluded that benthic communities on seamounts had low resilience to the effects of bottom trawling. The study looked at six seamounts with a range of trawl histories, one with persistent levels of trawling, two with intermediate levels and two which were low or untrawled, and another which had been heavily trawled but was closed to the practice in 2001. It found the abundance, species richness and diversity of benthic communities were higher on the seamounts which had experienced low levels of trawling, than those that had been trawled. Greenpeace's oceans campaigner Jessica Desmond said seamounts are often covered in ancient coral forests which are habitat-forming and important ecosystems and might never recover from bottom trawlers, which she said destroy everything in their path. To ban trawling would require amending the Fisheries Act. The groups have also called on the government to stop permitting New Zealand ships to bottom trawl outside of this country's waters in the South Pacific as well.

UK meat packer Hilton Food Group is planning to sell seafood products in New Zealand. The new facility is still under construction but will incorporate a fish packing unit and leverage off experience from Hilton's frozen food business Seachill. Located in Auckland, the plant will facilitate meat processing and seafood production, including its 'The Saucy Fish Co.' line of products. The plant is scheduled to open next year.

Check out the latest Seafood Magazines

