



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



First two roadshows well-attended

Seafood NZ's Promise 2020 roadshow kicked off in Nelson, Australasia's largest fishing port, last Friday.

Nelson Mayor Rachel Reese, who features in the current industry television advertisement on the importance of the seafood sector to communities throughout New Zealand, was an enthusiastic supporter.

"It is fantastic to welcome Seafood NZ back to Nelson/Wakatu," she said in a video interview.

"Seafood NZ is a key partner for our region.

"Today I've been catching up with the industry, what the issues are and what concerns they have and also their aspirations.

"Every time I meet with the industry I'm really impressed with their focus on innovation, the changes they are making that are good for their business, good for the environment and achieving a real interest in careers and prosperity for our region.

"It's a fantastic industry with great career choices. I know there will be some more work done on that and I'm really happy to support that in our region."

Reese also had a bouquet for her local fish retailer, Guytons on Wakefield Quay.

"I'm a big fish eater. I like my fish. I'm a convert.

"It was so nice to go down to Guytons to and get our Friday fish and there it was packaged, no more plastic.

“They’ve transferred across to a sealed paper package, totally recyclable, so well done Guytons. Great result.”

The Promise campaign was launched in 2017 aimed at improving the reputation of the seafood industry and building trust with the New Zealand public.

It was backed by a Code of Conduct and the admission that while we hadn’t always got it right, we were committed to improving industry performance across a range of measures.

About 25 fishers and staff turned out at Trailways to hear from Seafood NZ chair Craig Ellison, communications manager Lesley Hamilton and Fisheries Inshore chief executive Jeremy Helson, while communications assistant Emily Pope shot video for the SNZ website.

The discussion included a review of public attitudes towards the seafood industry conducted by the Nielsen research company.

That showed that despite relentless criticism from the anti-commercial fishing lobby, there were substantial positive lifts in recognition that our fishery is sustainable and that the Quota Management System is world leading in preserving fish stocks.

Those who had seen the Promise advertisements highlighting communities, careers, innovation and marine protection were favourably influenced about the seafood industry and its contribution.

This year’s approach is turning a promise into a commitment – “we’re doing this, rather than we’re going to be doing this” – providing examples around sustainability, engagement and accountability.

This support is vital for an industry that provides employment, healthy food, substantial export returns and also a big contribution to the domestic market.

The roadshow visited New Plymouth yesterday where local fishers are facing being forced out of business if further restrictions are imposed to supposedly protect Maui and Hector dolphins.

A renewed threat management plan is currently being considered by the Government.

Significant set net and trawling restrictions are already in place, despite none of the endangered Maui dolphins being seen in the area, let alone caught.

Lively discussion included too much fish (especially snapper and kingfish) and not enough Annual Catch Entitlement, punishing deemed values, historic shelved fishing cuts termed 28N Rights and ideology subsuming science in dolphin protection at the expense of commercial fishers.

Lyttelton will be the next port of call – on April 3 at the Naval Point Yacht Club.

Then follows Tauranga on May 1 at the Sebel Trinity Wharf and Invercargill/Bluff on May 22 at Ascot Park.

Kingfish pilot carries plenty of potential

A \$20 million kingfish farming venture could bring huge aquaculture potential for Northland.

The pilot will assess whether it's technically and economically feasible to grow 600 tonnes of kingfish to market size each year.

Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones announced a \$6 million loan for the prototype system last week, with NIWA contributing \$7.84 million to the project, and Northland Regional Council \$6 million for buildings and infrastructure.

"It is testing technology that could bring major sustainable economic growth not only to Northland, but the rest of the country," Jones said.

"Both central and local government support high-value land-based aquaculture as a key driver of sustainable economic growth. The project aligns with the government's aquaculture strategy and its goal of reaching \$3 billion in annual aquaculture sales by 2035."

The system, set to be built and operated at NIWA's Northland Marine Research Centre, will depend on fresh seawater brought in from Bream Bay through 400 metre long pipes.

The water will be recirculated through the fish farming operation, with the bulk of the seawater recycled rather than returned to the ocean. The remaining water will be discharged back into the sea.

Eighteen jobs are expected to be created initially and if the 600-tonne target is achieved, it's estimated to generate \$45 million in annual revenue.

"If proven, this system will produce high-value aquaculture products with global appeal that are produced sustainably and efficiently," Jones said.

"It is quite a cliché but very true in this context — good things take time. It has been eight years, in fact, since the launch of the aquaculture strategy. Now it is time to turn all that hard work into something very tasty."



Juvenile kingfish. Photo; NIWA.

Industry veterans land whopper fish

When commercial fishing industry veterans relax, they go fishing.

Former Sealord skipper Michael Connolly and Independent Fisheries compliance advisor and Deepwater Group director Steve Bishop entered the Dawn Breaker Nelson Fishing Club competition on Tasman Bay last Saturday.

And both nearly nailed the top catches aboard their launch *Arrow*.

Connolly, who formerly skippered the Sealord trawler of the same name, landed second biggest snapper, a 10.25kg whopper, just shy of the 10.6kg winner.

Bishop landed the second biggest kingfish at 7.98kg, beaten a whisker by the 8.2kg top weight.

“There were a helluva lot of snapper caught and good sizes too,” Bishop reported.

The average weight was around 4kgs.

About 160 fishers took part, with a large number of youngsters coming through to challenge the old dogs.



Michael Connolly (left) and Steve Bishop with their prize-worthy catches. Photo; Virginia Woolf, *Stuff*.

Sustainable Seas Challenge - Innovation Fund

The Sustainable Seas Challenge is calling for expressions of interest in proposals that will contribute to building a blue economy in New Zealand, with blue economy being defined as marine activities that generate economic value and contribute positively to social, cultural and ecological wellbeing.

Details on the Innovation Fund can be found on the [Sustainable Seas website](#).

Calls for expressions of interest for projects close at midday, 18 May.

On 4 March 2020, in the Nelson District Court, the skipper of the *Amaltal Mariner* intimated a guilty plea to one charge under the Marine Reserves Act 1971 for accidentally crossing into a marine reserve in March 2019, *Stuff* reported. The vessel started a tow outside the Hikurangi Marine Reserve, off the Kaikōura coast and then accidentally crossed the line into the reserve. During the brief time the net was in the reserve, \$213 worth of fish was caught. No benthic organisms were recorded as being caught in the tow. The skipper said his actions were "an honest mistake" and accepted compliance regulations at sea were his responsibility as captain. He had since apologised "unreservedly" to the company and his crew. "I realise the importance of maintaining the integrity of the system, whether it be under the Fisheries Act or whether it is a marine reserve under the Marine Reserves Act. "I would never and did not intentionally fish in a marine reserve," he said. Amaltal general manager Tony Hazlett said the one-time mistake was made by a skipper who had fished for more than 40 years with no previous incidents. "We have undertaken a detailed internal investigation into the incident, which confirmed the skipper's report that he made an unintentional mistake and will face disciplinary action," Hazlett said. "We have also reiterated to all our skippers the importance of strict compliance with all fishing and maritime regulations." Hazlett said the vessel had been seized by Fisheries NZ and bonded back to them. "Amaltal takes the sustainability of the marine environments where we fish seriously, and do not condone fishing in closed areas. We have co-operated fully with Fisheries NZ on this matter and will continue to do so."

The Government has been told a potential decline in seasonal workers is one of the biggest concerns for top of the south employers as coronavirus spreads globally, *Stuff* reported. Economic Development Minister Phil Twyford was in Nelson on Tuesday, speaking to representatives from councils, iwi and local industry, including fishing, forestry, horticulture, viticulture and tourism, about the impact of Covid-19 on the regional economy. He said while industries in the region were currently "in good shape", there were still a lot of unknowns around the effect of the virus on the global economy. The biggest concern for employers had yet to be felt, he said, which included the availability of seasonal workers in horticulture, fishing and related industries. "It's a highly seasonal workforce here, some industries are quite reliant on working holiday people and workers from overseas, whether that's in the grape harvest, or hoki season for Sealord. [Those pressures] may be exacerbated by the fact that those industries rely on those workers coming in for a short period – if international travel seizes up that will put more pressure on them." Twyford said the Government was committed to working with local industries to see what they could do for them to get the workers they need. "What we're looking at is tailor-made regional responses. The last thing we want to do is launch an untargeted wage subsidy programme that has the effect of slowing down the movement of workers from one industry to another."

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