

Time To Look Forward (Fisheries Management / Kaitiakitanga)

The July edition of *Seafood New Zealand* magazine, quotes a 1991 NBR survey stating that “914,000 kiwi’s over the age of 16 go fishing at least once a year”.

Now not all of us share the rush some dedicated fishers get from baiting their hooks and waiting for the big catch, but I’m sure we do all enjoy the knowledge that we could if we wanted to. That’s why kaitiakitanga is such an important thing, and as John Manuel said in a recent *Nga Kohinga* Article, *Te Ngutu awa o Waiapu*, “we’re all kaitiaki”.

Our role as kaitiaki goes way back, but we are not the only recognized stakeholders too, like commercial and recreational, so let’s break them down:

Stakeholder: My trusty on-line dictionary defines this as being ‘a person or group with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in something’, and, according to whakapapa, when it comes to Takutai moana – that’s all of us.

Commercial stakeholders usually own an individual quota, and a variety of management controls are imposed on them. The purpose of these controls is to ensure that fishing is sustainable, both in terms of the fish that is taken as well as the effects of fishing on the aquatic environment.

The management controls commonly imposed are:

- Closed areas – areas are closed, usually to protect juvenile fish
- Closed seasons – areas are closed for a specific time to protect fish stocks
- Size limits – again, these are imposed to protect fish stocks
- Gear restrictions - Limits are set on things like the size of the mesh nets, usually to protect young fish.
- Prohibited species –under fisheries regulations commercial fishermen are prohibited from intentionally taking toheroa, marine turtles, black corals and protected species.

Our *Customary Stakeholders* represent iwi and hapu rights to specific areas of the coastline. As mentioned in a previous *Nga Kohinga* article, Tangata whenua of each area nominate one or more Kaitiaki or Tangata tiaki, and they are responsible for ensuring Customary Fishing rules and regulations are enforced in that particular area.

This is necessary when the *recreational* guidelines are exceeded. This is the category most of us fall into. Now like the commercial stakeholder we too have size limits and quota we must adhere to. In the December 2005 issue we looked at our shellfish restrictions, so now let’s take a look at our ‘wetfish’ guidelines.

For ‘finfish’ which includes such delicacies as the ‘Ngāti Porou



Salmon’ (kahawai), red snapper, john dory and grey mullet, there is a daily bag limit of 20 fish. I was shocked to find that eels are absolutely protected in some areas, but they’re still aplenty here, must be that fine stock from Paikea’s eel.

Now that we better understand our rights, what are our responsibilities? It all goes back to that word – kaitiakitanga.

I once thought the Commercial and Recreational worlds were far apart, but after breaking it down I see another side. They too are kaitiaki, and a lot of monitoring of our takutai moana comes from their sectors. I’m not rowing anyone’s waka here, just acknowledging that we’re all in this together.

This sentiment is echoed by the newly formed Multi Sector Stakeholder Forum.

“It’s a chance for all stakeholders to sit at the table with respect for each others views and place in the fishery”, said Ngati Porou Fisheries Ltd General Manager, Mark Ngata. He continued, “It’s been positive so far and we need to get behind it and support it as the only way we are going to achieve sustainable resources is by reading from the same information, being part of the same discussions and making the best decisions collectively, each stakeholder group has a responsibility in this and its not going to be an easy path but one we must take, the other path of finger pointing and mistrust by stakeholders is not an option anymore.

Does this mean there is no longer a place for mana whenua, mana moana? Absolutely not.

At this years Seafood Industry conference in Wellington, the Minister of Fisheries clearly stated that he would be looking for regional solutions to regional problems, and wants all stakeholders to be a part of regional plans to achieve catchability in the first instance and ultimately sustainability.

NPFL General Manager, Mark Ngata looks forward to these developments and believes “Its time to look forward to the future”.

Our lifestyle is not what it used to be in the day’s of our grandparents; some of our tamariki think vegetables come from pak ‘n’ save, and fish comes battered and wrapped in newsprint paper. And, if we don’t take our role as kaitiaki seriously, one day koura may be considered mythical legends...sounds far fetched but there are already tamariki in Ngati Porou who don’t know first hand what a mara kai is...food for thought.

Visit the Ministry of Fisheries website www.fish.govt.nz or phone 06 869 0870 for a free *Recreational Fisher’s Handbook*.