

Memorandum for: Members of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association AGM 2015

From: Marine Sub-Committee (Andrew Caddie)

Subject: Update as to matters concerning the sustainability of the Marlborough Sounds Scallop Fishery in SCA7

Introduction

In early 2014 the Committee received an initial position paper from the Ministry of Primary Industries concerning a review of sustainability measures for southern scallops (SCA7). This paper was referred to the Marine Sub-Committee for review and preparation of a submission following circulation to interested members. In short the review paper was a discouraging read highlighting the collapse and closure of the Golden and Tasman Bay scallop fisheries and the increasing reliance and pressure being placed on the Marlborough fishery.

Having lodged our submission, the Committee decided to take a more active interest in scallop matters and obtained and reviewed various research papers as well as sending a representative to the Shellfish Working Group meeting in July.

In essence the process works like this. A biomass survey is carried out each year in the relevant areas. The requirements of the biomass survey are set by NIWA and carried out by the industry who supplies the data to NIWA who calculate the results. Based on the subsequent NIWA report and discussions between MPI, the industry and other stakeholders, the industry puts up a harvest plan for the coming season. With a little more toing and froing this is finalised. From time to time a mid-season biomass survey is sometimes carried out to check on shellfish availability. At the end of the season the industry reports back as to their takes.

An interesting development was that last year NIWA had observers on the vessels carrying out the biomass survey and reported back. This report highlighted a number of operational divergences between the survey design and the implementation; for example, varying the location of survey lines and not counting all scallops brought on board and so on. A second development is that NIWA are concerned that the exploitation rate that they are using is far too high (40-45% of the total biomass as opposed to overseas best practice being 10-15%).

Finally, in the 2009-2010 season the total estimated harvest was 123 tonnes (meat weight) and the actual catch was 120 tonnes. For the season 2013-2014 the predicted harvest was 45 tonnes and the actual harvest 43 tonnes. This dramatic decline is emphasised in that for the season just passed, the predicted harvest was set at 30 tonnes. The Association urged that it should be set at 19 tonnes.

Harvest Report from 2014-2015 Season

MPI has kindly supplied the table attached to this report. As can be seen, the dramatic decline in the commercial harvest continues apace with the actual harvest being 21.5 tonnes versus the predicted harvest of 30 tonnes.

I stress that the “Additional context” column comes from MPI entirely. I find the comments rather weak and not addressing the bigger picture of a fishery in decline through overfishing by commercial operators.

Another point to note is that approximately 64% of the take comes from the Guards Bank/Bay areas and that Ketu Bay, which in the 2013 season had some 25 tonnes taken from it, has now plunged to zero. There are also reports of a disease affecting scallops in the Ketu Bay area and I have asked MPI as to whether they are aware of this or have any information on the disease.

Conclusion

In short, the results of the 2014-2015 season continue to paint a picture of a resource in dramatic decline. One long term recreational advocate has suggested to me that what needs to be done is that the fishery be closed to commercial fishers for at least a season in order to give it a chance to rebuild and that recreational fishers have a shorter season – say, late September to late January with a reduced catch limit of 25 scallops per person.

We will continue to involve ourselves in this area of interest to us all.

Andrew Caddie
Vice President
Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association

18 March 2015

Area	Proposed Catch Limit (t)	Actual Catch (t)	Additional context
Total Catch Limit In Marlborough Sounds	30	21.5	Not necessarily an overestimate as the estimated proposed catch does not necessarily take into account economic density factors that will influence harvest.
Guards Bank	6.5	8	Increased take was based on an in-season survey that found a greater than expected number of recruits (scallops that had grown through to legal size) were available to the fishery
Ketu Bay	4	0	Decisions made by CSEC not to fish the area once the season started because the density was below economic levels
Forsyth Bay	1.75	2.02	
Ship Cove (which was referenced as Queen Charlotte)	6.3	4.82	Fishing in this area was curtailed during the season because of too high a ratio of undersized scallops in the catch
Remainder of open areas	11.45	6.714	Includes 5.73 tonnes at Guards Bay and 0.984 tonnes at Waitata Bay. 'Waitata Bay' included areas around the Bank, the Bay, the Reach and Richmond and Horseshoe Bays.