

Kahawai Challenge Team

Update #29, November 2007

Two recent developments are worth celebrating. The NZ Big Game Fishing Council (NZBGFC) has decided to levy each of its 32,000 members \$3 to underwrite the Kahawai Legal Challenge Appeal Court proceedings. Unanimous support was also given at their recent Annual General Meeting to increase the affiliation fees by \$3 per member to empower the Council to continue its advocacy role in fisheries management and the ongoing rights debate.

High Court Ruling

Both the Minister and Ministry of Fisheries have previously advised they accept the High Court's ruling in favour of the Challenge. The March judgment was an historic win for all New Zealanders, as Justice Harrison confirmed that sustainability of the fisheries and people's wellbeing were mandatory considerations in fisheries management.

KLC Appeal

Big corporate fishing companies Sanford Limited, Sealord Group Limited and Pelagic & Tuna NZ Limited have appealed the decision. The Wellington hearing is planned for late February 2008.

Fundraising

Legal fees are expected to be at least \$80,000. Although this has been underwritten by the NZBGFC fundraising is continuing as there will be major costs associated with the public awareness campaign leading up to the Appeal hearing.

Richard Baker, the newly elected NZBGFC President, is very appreciative of the support from the Council's 59 clubs.

"It's inspiring to receive such overwhelming support from our membership."

"Past President, Jeff Romeril is acknowledged for his role in ensuring the success of the fundraising campaign. His leadership was pivotal. The public of New Zealand are privileged to have such committed defenders of their right to fish for food," said Richard.

The NZBGFC is also grateful for the continued support of other non-commercial fishing representatives and Maori groups. option4 has recently raised over \$10,000 to assist the appeal. The NZ Recreational Fishing Council announced it has secured \$2,500 as a contribution towards the legal representation costs.

Advocacy for the fishing public

The increased affiliation fees will give the NZBGFC vital funds to continue actively participating in fisheries decision-making processes, marine protection and rights-based discussions. The NZBGFC has plenty to contribute to the various debates.

Baker said: "Resolving the rights debate is the 'Holy Grail' of fisheries advocacy. After years of working with other organisations and now the Hokianga Accord, the mid north iwi fisheries forum, it feels like we are making progress.

"The High Court clarified that every man, woman and child in this country has a well settled common law right to fish. In addition, Justice Harrison said that right is particularly valuable because of our climate and access to the sea."

Many of the important inshore fisheries are not being managed according to the legislation, at or above a level that can produce maximum sustainable yield.

Hesketh Henry Lawyers will be working through the traditional summer break to prepare for the February hearing. Defending the public's interest in fishing has become a passion for the legal team too.

Visit www.kahawai.co.nz or call the \$20 donation line on 0900 KAHAWAI (0900 52 42 92) to give your support.