

Kahawai Challenge Team

Update #32, February 2008

The real test of sustainability

When was the last time you caught four kahawai in a day?

Surveys have proven this is a rare event for people fishing between North Cape and East Cape.

Strange then that recent science assessments have indicated there are too many kahawai in this area and increasing commercial catch is one way to reduce those numbers!

Try telling the surfcasters who now wait all day for a stray fish to pass-by that kahawai is above sustainable limits.

What now for all the conservationists who have been releasing their kahawai in an effort to improve abundance? How is a 50 percent increase in commercial catch going to make them feel, knowing that they have contributed to a rebuild only to find those fish being allocated as extra quota?

Sustainability obviously has different meanings depending on whether you fish for food or money.

Was it really worth it?

Amateur fishers have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars taking the Kahawai Legal Challenge through the High Court and defending Justice Harrison's decision in the Appeal Court. The High Court confirmed sustainability is the bottom line and must be the Fisheries Minister's long-term goal.

Sanford Limited, Sealord Group Limited and Pelagic & Tuna NZ Limited have jointly appealed the 2007 High Court decision. The appeal is due to be heard on February 26th and 27th in Wellington.

What does sustainable utilisation actually mean?

The purpose of fisheries legislation is to provide for utilisation while ensuring sustainability. This is to ensure that future generations' needs are met and to enable people to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

In 2004 the Ministry of Fisheries acknowledged that recreational landings of kahawai were not satisfying current needs. MFish also noted that people targetting kahawai fished frequently, were food fishing and mainly shore-based. Kahawai fishers were also identified as being less affluent and less able to afford to target other species in deeper waters.

It is a simple fact that purse seiners can and will take easy-access fish first - the same inshore fish we target. This leaves the larger fish-mass out to sea where only commercial fishers have easy access. The outcome has been empty catch bags for non-commercial fishers.

Kahawai have gone from being the 'people's fish' to cheap Australian crayfish bait.

It is the 'science' and MFish management that creates this absurd notion of kahawai being above sustainable levels when clearly our inshore waters are devoid of the healthy fish stocks we all remember.

Your ongoing access to kahawai, snapper, blue cod, kingfish, crayfish and paua could all be influenced by the outcome of the Appeal. If you want to contribute to the defence please:

- Make a secure online donation at www.kahawai.co.nz
- Dial 0900 KAHAWAI (0900 52 42 92) to automatically donate \$20 via your phone account
- Contact Jo Harris on 0800 KAHAWAI (0800 52 42 92) for larger amounts.
- Cheques to the 'Kahawai Challenge Fund' can be sent to *New Zealand Fishing News*, PO Box 12-965, Penrose, Auckland.