



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog

Wider oceans policy adopted by National as well

This week the National Party named Tim van de Molen as the new Fisheries Spokesman. And like Labour a few weeks ago, has changed the name of the portfolio to Oceans and Fisheries.

The industry has not yet had the chance to meet with either Minister David Parker or Mr van de Molen, and it is unclear how wide ranging the portfolio will be.

Industry welcome it. As we noted in this publication last week, a healthy ocean is essential to a healthy fishery.

The seafood industry has made significant improvements in its practices year on year yet receives much condemnation for what it has not addressed and little praise for what it has.

That comes with a big 'however'.

There are still some thorny issues that need to be addressed and the new portfolio name may be the catalyst for those changes.

One such issue is marine protection. We have long stated our support for coherent, risk-based marine protection. We need important habitats protected, not just from fishing impacts but from land-based activities too. With Minister Parker also holding the Environment portfolio there has never been a better time to ensure our coastal environment is protected from the effects of terrestrial activities.

Marine protection should not be synonymous with Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). We need to understand the threat and address that with the right tool. When MPAs are appropriate, there should be careful thought given to the extent of restrictions. Do MPAs in

the 'no-take' sense, have the desired outcome, which is presumably a healthier and more productive ocean? Or would a more measured approach that restricts by fishing method do the same? Or, controversially, since we dealing with *poissons sans frontières*, is there a whole other way to improve ocean health while still providing high quality seafood to New Zealand and the world?

The seafood industry is dynamic, inventive and resourceful, and many fishers are natural problem solvers. The seafood industry welcomes the opportunity to understand government's expectations and meet those in a way that allows fishers and their communities to flourish. Because imposed solutions are rarely optimal.

I mentioned earlier about the progress the industry had made. In an upcoming article in Seafood New Zealand magazine, Richard Wells of Resource Wise and a veteran champion of industry change, talks about the many ways we should be proud of what we have achieved in the environmental space.

He cites sea lions in particular. We were killing 150 a year 25 years ago. Now on average we are catching one a year. Wells says the industry deserves an award the size of a frying pan for it. He recalls people screaming at him down the phone saying he should not be telling them how to use their Sea Lion Exclusion Device (SLED). Now if a sea lion is caught, we circulate that information around the entire fleet and name the vessel.

It's about finding out what went wrong and rectifying it.

We look forward to meeting with the Minister and discussing both the complexity of some of these issues and the widespread desire to find workable solutions.

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CONTACT

Email info@seafood.org.nz

Phone [+64 4 385 4005](tel:+6443854005)

Physical address

Level 6

Eagle Technology House

135 Victoria Street

Wellington 6011