

PICTON CASTLE

Dear Sir

What a great article about the *Picton Castle* in the last issue.

What a transformation of a run-of-the-mill 1920s steam trawler.

"Common as muck" they were then, but they came into their own during the Second World War as minesweepers, as described in the article.

The *Picton Castle's* history is very varied indeed, with at least five roles, under seven names, before she reverted to the name given upon her launching on August 4, 1928 at the Cochrane & Sons shipyard, Selby in Yorkshire. She was built for the Great Grimsby fishing company Consolidated Fisheries Ltd's Swansea operation. Consolidated named their Grimsby trawlers after football teams and their Swansea trawlers after castles.

The *Picton Castle* served in the Royal Navy from August 1939, just before the war started, until she was returned to the owners in December 1945, only to be displaced by new, larger and mostly motor trawlers built in great numbers in the 1950s and 1960s.

The 42m vessel was sold in 1955 and converted to a cargo ship with the name *Tetys*, and later *Uttraum*, *Steinfrost* and *Bergfrost*. In 1978 she was converted to a suction dredger and called the *Tunstein* and finally the *Dolmar* in 1984. At some point in these decades the old steam engine was replaced with the B & W diesel described in the article.

What is interesting about her re-invention as a sailing ship is the lengthening. Ships are usually lengthened by inserting a new section into the mid-portion of the hull, leaving the bow and stern mostly unaltered.

The *Picton Castle* is different, in that an entirely new bow section (partly-riveted?) was built. This made the usual steam trawler hull, with its straight stem and counter stern, about 10-12m longer on the same 7.3m beam, much more like a typical sailing ship. Her original hull length was about 138ft (42m) and her registered length in 1928 was 130.4ft and a beam of 24ft.

The photograph in the article shows it all – a distinctive sailing ship appearance, which clearly adds to the "tall ship romance of the sea", within which the *Picton Castle* still sails the high seas. It's a long way from the stormy waters of the North Sea and Icelandic fishing grounds. It's good to see an old ship re-born, as it were.

Bob McDougall, Wanganui

STELLA RESURRECTION

Dear Sir

Your article in the November/December issue of *Professional Skipper* on the *Stella* fascinated me. I knew her (as an observer) from her Ministry of Transport days, when she was a tidy, no-frills workboat, through her days as a freight carrier to Great Barrier Island, when she was certainly still no-frills, but you couldn't really call her tidy.

I recall then thinking she could be modified. However, my thoughts were to remove the "surplus" structure aft of the wheelhouse to provide a more open work deck area. I would never have expected to see this resurrection.

Kevin Burke

Dear Sir

I read your magazine with interest and thoroughly enjoy the honest, working waterfront approach. Having grown up on the wharves, my eye caught the article on the rebirth of the *Stella*.

Grant has done wonders with the old girl and I wish to pass my compliments on to him for the outstanding job he has done. The *Stella* is a workboat with history, good bones and a soul.

I'm very glad to see her saved from the knacker's yard, but more importantly I'm very impressed with the standard of workmanship and foresight that has seen the old girl re-born as a thing of beauty. I'm sure she will serve Grant well in his adventures for the future. My compliments. I wish him fair winds and following seas.

Deane Ingram, Wellington

Dear Sir

My issue of *Professional Skipper* arrived today so while I had my afternoon cup of tea I started to read it.

Welcome Back to a Lady brought tears to my eyes. When the *Stella* was up for sale back in the 1990s we wished we had the money to purchase her, as she was going for something like \$250,000. Perhaps I don't remember correctly but it wasn't a huge amount of money. Anyway, we hoped the boat would get a good owner, as she is just a sweet vessel and she did her job well.

A few years ago we saw the *Stella* having cargo unloaded from her and she was a sad and pitiful sight. That dear little vessel was unloved and it appeared the owners couldn't care less. I was very sad that day and have not seen her since. ▶

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PROFESSIONAL Skipper



The winner of the oil painting of the barque Pamir, underway in stormy seas, by marine artist Paul Deacon was drawn by the editor Keith Ingram. Artist value of \$800

Congratulations to Paul Chapman of Waiheke Island.

www.marineartgallery.net.nz

So, what a wonderful sight to see the article you did on her. What a fortunate vessel to have found an appreciative owner who could see the potential. Grant Clothier has very good taste and a good eye when he did the changes.

Nice writing from you, Keith, too. It's such a sunny day today and this article adds to it. Thanks for a great mag.

Melva, Whangarei

PROPER ENGLISH

Dear Sir

During my association with fishermen's organisations, I made myself the terminology watchdog. As a stickler for correct and good English (my family and few remaining friends preferred the description "pedantic nit-picker"), I tried to ensure everything we submitted meant exactly what we wanted to say, if only to avoid having it come back to bite us in the future.

The shaky use of hazy and old facts, imprecise and emotional wording and ill-disciplined presentation in the well-meaning but ineffective programme The Great New Zealand Fishing Scandal shows how a good cause can be let down through the lack of a good wordsmith. The makers couldn't even spell the names of fishing ports correctly.

In a similar, but minor, way, John Hannah of the Maritime Seafood Educators Association Aotearoa went astray when he reported delegates were "fulsome" in their praise for your presentation at their conference.

"Fulsome" actually means "sickeningly overdone". Perhaps it is just as well he did not praise you for the "enormity" of your contribution, as that word means "great evil".

R Lea Clough, Chatham Islands

STIFLING BUREAUCRACY

Dear Sir

Having just returned to New Zealand briefly to complete a job we have been involved with for the last few months I bought a copy of the July/August issue of *Professional Skipper*.

The magazine is still as interesting and informative as ever, but it seems the same points are still being laboured as when I left New Zealand five years ago: safe ship management, commercial qualifications, Maritime New Zealand, compulsory licensing for boats, etc.

Having worked in Singapore and South East Asia for the past five years actively involved in the industry on a daily basis, it saddens me to see how in comparison the industry in New Zealand is being stifled by inefficient, inexperienced and overstaffed bureaucracy.

Every aspect of Maritime New Zealand and the Transport Accident Investigation Commission work takes an age to complete. Accident reports released a year after the incident? I worked briefly for Maritime NZ in 1997 and went on to do about 3.5 years with the TAIC, and witnessed first-hand the inefficient processes involved.

With all the self-proclaimed expertise, analysts and risk managers employed by Maritime NZ, I fail to understand why changes that will be practical, effective and make the industry safer cannot be discussed and implemented in a timely manner.

The company I work for in Singapore has a team of eight consultant surveyors, comprising three master mariners, four engineers and a naval architect, who collectively handle about 350 cases a year involving international shipping.

At the moment I am working on two international towage approvals, a collision in the anchorage, a tug that went "missing" from an anchorage in Indonesia, salvage of a coal

barge aground in the Philippines, the discharge of two naval patrol boats from a heavy lift ship and an accommodation fire on a tug.

We handle these cases individually with support from the team and reports are completed and issued as soon as possible, usually within two months, depending on the length of the job. Our reports are all written to a standard acceptable in court. We also handle high-profile cases such as sinking of passenger and cargo ships, engine damage, collisions, groundings, fires and pollution, often with numerous fatalities.

I would conservatively say one of our surveyors handles more major cases in a year than Maritime NZ and the TAIC combined!

This letter is not written to impress. It is meant as a comparison of what goes on in the real world and how the likes of Maritime NZ are able to make mountains out of molehills, to the detriment of the industry in New Zealand as a whole.

As stated in the editorial of the issue I have just read, it is up to the people involved in the industry to make their voices heard and demand better service. After all, it is you that is ultimately paying for it, in more ways than one.

Billy Lyons, Singapore

HIDDEN COST?

Dear Sir

I am on a vessel anchored off Port Melbourne for a while. Snapper have come into the bay. Snapper fishing is popular. Nearby there are many fishing for snapper in small boats. Sometimes the water Police have to clear the dories from fishing in the shipping channel.

On public holidays with good weather, the water Police have been busy doing this. Perhaps it is a case of the cost of the non-compliance is the hidden cost of the activity that is picked up by the community. Does this sound familiar?

Vince Scully

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Dear Sir

I have just become aware of Kelvyn Leslie's financial problems with Black Robin Freighters (not Black Robin Shipping) operating in receivership. I think it shows, once again, that there is not enough room for two in the Chatham Islands trade.

It is mostly hearsay, but I believe the *Rangatira* has been operating for some time with exemptions from various safe ship management procedures (such as shaft examinations) and that it is all catching up on her.

Recently, I was told, Kelvyn put his freight rates up, causing an outcry, so the owner of the *Baldur* stepped in, steamed to Timaru and took a full load of cargo from Timaru to Chatham Islands at the old rates. Kelvyn then had to lower his rates to what they had originally been.

What worries me is that the *Baldur* may not be able to cope with the demands of the Chatham Islands trade if Kelvyn goes under. She doesn't have the capacity or the layout, so she cannot carry items like large vehicles.

All those people who complained bitterly that Kelvyn was overcharging and encouraged Dennis Nisbet to enter the trade may have cause to regret what they have done. I don't know when I shall be going south next, but I shall try to find out what I can. I am supposed to be going to the Chatham Islands from November 30 to December 21.

R Lea Clough, Chatham Islands

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68 ►

The new regulations requiring charter boat skippers to log all their clients' catches and other information has stirred up considerable debate. We present some letters from readers who are keen to voice their concerns.

Keith Ingram, publisher

Dear Sir

I do not need to "become an amateur charter boat operator". The Ministry of Fisheries apparently cannot get its head around the concept that we are professional skippers. Our clients may be amateur fishers, although I prefer the term "recreational". I have been chartering for 24 years, so the invitation to become an amateur would be laughable if it wasn't so insulting.

At the original "consultation" meeting in Wellington the Minister of Fisheries, Phil Heatley, said the process was going ahead regardless of what we said, and we had to try to make it work. We should have stood up and walked out. However, we made it clear the only way charter boat reporting could possibly work was to get the operators on side. Regrettably, MFish has done the opposite and handled the whole thing appallingly badly.

FIINZ have also contributed handsomely to our disgust by demanding all kinds of personal and irrelevant information. By registering in the first place, you provide an MSA/Maritime NZ number and boat name which are unique. Nothing else is required. I don't intend to indicate what fishing methods I wish to use. How silly. I cannot even register my port of operation as Tutukaka. It has to be Tutukaka, Whangarei. If MFish is that geographically challenged there is no point in providing fishing locations anyway.

The cost, while minimal, is another bone of contention. We are expected to pay to send what will prove to be useless information. This will in all likelihood suffer the same fate as the data from the NSW charter boat fleet, which has turned into a disaster.

The requirement to complete all reports before anchoring for the night or allowing passengers to debark is ridiculous. I do not have the legal power to restrain people on board if they want to leave. I will complete my bookwork when it is safe to do so.

As far as providing information goes, most of us do not object in principle. Had MFish had the nous to absorb the cost they would have gone a long way towards gaining support. As it is, the \$27 or \$54 will not go anywhere near meeting the cost of this white elephant, but it has created a lot of ill will.

Our situation is vastly different from commercial fishers. We have no property right in the fishery. We do not have any rights to the fish that come on board, since they belong to the fisher. (We do have responsibilities re minimum sizes and so on.) The quota management system relies totally on accurate reporting (and compliance) to work.

The catches from charter boats, with a few notable exceptions, will prove to be small and the days fished to be few. While we are forced to comply with the new regime, unlicensed, unsurveyed pirate operators will gain an even bigger advantage over professional operators.

Lastly, MFish have very unwisely stated that the area information provided by us will be used when applications for marine reserves are being considered. This is an invitation to provide false information if ever I heard one. Nice one, MFish!

Pete Saul, Tutukaka

Dear Sir

The Tauranga Charterboat Association invited the Ministry of Fisheries to come to Tauranga to discuss the registration of

charter vessels with MFish and the reporting of their activity and catch.

Graeme McGregor of MFish said he had only attended one other meeting, in Whangaparaoa, and there were unlikely to be any other meetings for operators around the country - great communication from a government department.

I am a business owner. I do not operate our charter boat, my husband does. Our company owns it.

I flatly refuse to give this department all my details such as passport number and driver's licence. If they want our company details they are on the companies' office website for all to see.

What kind of scientific results are they going to come up with when they gather all that personal detail about me, who might go out on the boat once a year! What's happened to our privacy laws?

And they want us to pay for the privilege. It's the age of users pays - so MFish want to use our information. Pay us, instead of charging us to give it you.

As one operator said: "No-one at this meeting would ever argue that we want the resource looked after. It's all the bullshit information they are asking for that the majority of us object to."

I am very suspicious as to where all this so-called scientific information that is to be gathered from charter boats is going to be used. I hear big player's names spoken about. Is this being driven by the likes of Sanfords and/or Talleys?

If it turns out that the data MFish get is that the charter fleet really does take a minute amount from this resource, I can hear the big players saying, "Well, they take so much less than we ever imagined, so the government should now be able to increase the quota so we can take more."

I urge all associations around New Zealand to demand the Ministry of Fisheries face up to them and hound them to take their concerns back to the minister.

Daphne Keller, Tauranga Marine Charters

Dear Sir

The latest legislation coming out of MFish is probably the best example of government speak that is so out of whack that it's unbelievable.

Being new to the industry, I was stunned when I witnessed the animosity of many of the operators towards MFish. To me, MFish seemed to be reasonable.

Two years later I had my answer. MFish came back with legislation that was unchanged from two years ago. The good news was they were only going to charge \$54 to join by post or \$27 to join online. Yeah right, haven't heard that one before.

The whole process is immediately brought into question by their definition of "online application". I have been sent an application form I am required to fill out, then post. Online? Yeah, right!

Apparently I'll then be sent a PIN and "then" I can get online (at last) and fill out more forms.

When I registered as a charter boat and got my MSA number, as well as the yearly boat surveys I must undergo a police check and prove I'm a suitable person to run a charter boat.

Two months after my four-year survey, MFish now asks all the same questions again. Why must I keep proving this?

Why does MFish demand I join but I don't have to report my catch for the next 12 months? Why do I have to give away sensitive information such as GPS co-ordinates showing where I caught the fish?

Why do MFish want all my commercially sensitive information? They promise to protect it but it often reappears in the public arena over and over. I don't trust the government's security and I don't trust MFish's link with commercial fishing.

MFish is firmly entrenched and there is a wall of silence. The

rules have been created. There are so many ways these guys can hit us with a fine and even if I tried to report on everything that they demand I will be fined, as they are impossible to fulfil.

MFish say they will be lenient once, then I'll get a written warning, then I'll get fined. At least the commercial guys will have a clear shot at wiping out our coastal fish when my fellow operators and myself are fined out of existence.

Admittedly, there are many ways that I can manipulate the reporting that it will be meaningless. If I get caught I'll get fined. If I try to be accurate, it will be impossible and I'll get fined. Fail to join up and I'll get fined.

Thanks Mr Key, you're making me a criminal. We know that small business only gets in the way of the big guys and who needs tourism anyway?

Murray Chisholm, Arline Fishing Charters

Dear Sir

This charter boat reporting stuff is all BS and I am really surprised that a National party minister let this one through. Can the National government not see that they are being conned by the commercial fishing bosses who are pointing the finger.

Yes, we know they make substantial donations to the party's coffers, but this is a clear case of he who pays the piper calls the tune. It won't work and the information will be meaningless. If they are not very careful this will bite them on the arse next year.

Do they want to run that risk in an election year? Risky stuff, if you ask me.

G Barnes, Auckland

Dear Sir

I have just been talking with a fellow charter boat operator who was boarded by four fisheries officers, who then clambered all over his boat checking his clients' catch bags and chilly bins before asking him about his reporting paperwork.

Like me he has none and now may face prosecution when next boarded for non-compliance. My concern as a similar small fishing charter boat is that if they board me in a similar manner I will exceed my passenger survey and stability limits. If I refuse they will charge me with obstruction.

Where do we sit, legally? And have you seen the paperwork? My wife, as a partner in the boat, refuses to give the level of private information being requested, and for what! Surely to make this work the ministry needs our support. We are, after all, providing information freely.

Alex McLeod, Gone Fishin

Dear Sir

I thought the application form was totally over the top with the personal information required.

If the Ministry of Fisheries had asked for us to help out by reporting certain species (like we have just done with a kingfish survey and with all gear/forms provided at no cost!), we would have done this with pleasure.

They could have marketed their idea a whole lot better instead of taking the "big brother" approach and expecting us to pay fees and postage to do their information gathering for them!

Most operators are always happy to help out if we can enhance our fishing resources with proper management, but this plan was not very well thought out.

At a recent meeting in Tauranga, the man from MFish in Auckland, Graeme McGregor, was asked if he would take our concerns back to the ministry and refused to do so. To me that is totally irresponsible, as our concerns were all relevant and common sense.

Russ Hawkins, Fat Boy Charters, Mount Maunganui



Dear Sir

I think we need to make MFish accept that charter vessels are not fishing vessels and that we are tourism operators.

MFish enforcement officers boarding charter boats, checking passengers and being aboard for 45 minutes, (of our customers' time) not showing consideration for the "no black-soled shoes aboard a vessel" and telling the operator to "get over it" is not good enough. How will the overall tourism industry fare when stories of these bullying tactics start circulating worldwide? Would it be acceptable for fisheries officers to barge into any other tourism operation, halt the activity of the guests for 45 minutes while they interrogate everyone?

I think the main points we need MFish to address and consult with the industry on are:

1. Recognition that charter boats are not fishing vessels and are available for public hire and as such are in the tourism business. Fishing is an activity the customer chooses to experience while aboard a charter boat.
2. Passengers have the to catch their full recreational quota and not be hassled without good reason in the process.
3. Safety concerns with compliance. The responsibility of the crew and owner is to provide a safe environment for customers to enjoy recreational activity aboard the vessel.
4. It is expected that crew or the solitary skipper assist passengers to enjoy their chosen activity and look after their needs. Can MFish take excessive time to make a check? Charter passengers are paying for this time. This could be a safety issue if skippers offer extra time as compensation and become exhausted. What recourse do passengers have if they feel a refund of some sort is in order if their trip is ruined due to unwarranted activity by MFish?
5. Consultation was not done as it was legally required to be. Stakeholders who should have been included in consultation include:
 - a. charter boat owners
 - b. Maritime New Zealand, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Tourism
 - c. the public
6. The requirement of owners to notify MFish in advance of names of skippers and crew, etc. This is impossible to achieve in many scenarios.
7. Concerns that the officers will not respect our property while boarding (our vessels, etc).
8. Why do charter operators have to bear the cost of this information gathering?
9. Why is there a legal requirement to provide private and company information which is not necessary for counting fish? Surely that can only be needed for prosecution purposes?
10. At the Whangaparaoa meeting, McGregor stated this ►

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legislation was “not to do with catch activity, but to do with the activity of the charter boat fleet.” So just what is the legislation for again?

11. If MFish staff constantly harass a particular vessel and passengers, what is the process owners pursue to have this addressed and if necessary, be compensated for any loss of earnings or damage?

This legislation could seriously affect the reputation of the charter boat tourism industry as well as individual businesses.

Stef Railey, RnR Charters Ltd

Dear Sir

We have the reporting forms and have paid up under threat and misinformation. But as yet have nothing filled out, yet!

Having worked in education for the government, I find the lack of consultation totally unacceptable. Information collected by just throwing forms at people will produce worthless data. Please keep me in the information loop, or send me a really big torch so I can find my way.

The police state comes closer all the time. If they really want the data then why weren't we [charter operators] asked about a system for gathering it?

James Hope, owner/skipper

Dear Sir

I have been in the unfortunate position of having to register my fleet for charter boat reporting as the Marlborough Sounds area is the first to come into the scheme.

I would have resisted registering if it were not for the fact that I would be singled out as a target for prosecution. I made numerous requests to be involved in the process but they fell on deaf ears.

As a member of the Blue Cod Management Group, I spoke to Phil Heatley earlier this year about the requirement to provide GPS positions of my fishing spot. He was surprised to learn my vessel does not have GPS and there is no obligation for me to do so.

When I came to register online I explained to FINNZ I did not have a GPS. I will be interested to see the response I get after my first return is sent back with “No GPS information”.

The group has been told the type of catch reporting we are being forced to provide is virtually useless as a scientific tool for MFish purposes. So why bother?

MFish has managed to alienate possibly its greatest allies by forcing this scheme upon us. I have had a gutsful and look forward to getting out - pretty sad after 20 years. But with this and MOSS and the qualifications review, not to mention we still have a cod ban here in the sounds, it all has become just a bit too hard.

Mark Baxter, Sounds Connection, Picton

Dear Sir

I have struggled to understand the reasoning behind the introduction of this reporting and the operational requirements to comply with it.

I cannot understand why it is so hard for the ministry to supply answers to questions posed by the industry. Surely it would be logical to put the introduction date back until the bugs are resolved?

Several operators have told me they are under the impression it does not apply to them until 2011.

Some of the issues include the requirement to notify MFish of the identity of all vessel skippers, issues with correctly filling out paperwork and the requirement for compliance checks.

Why, when all vessel skippers need to have their information recorded in the vessel's SSM manual, do we need to supply MFish with these details prior to sailing? In the event that a relief skipper is required at short notice, it now appears that

allowing the vessel to sail without notifying MFish of the change is an offence!

As far as the paperwork goes, what happens when we are targeting any table fish, as in bottom fishing. The forms require you to specify species, which we often do not do as “amateur fishers”.

Also, what happens if we are using several fishing techniques during the one fishing event? Do we pick one and run with that, in which case, is the data gathered completely flawed from the start?

My insurance agent says if a vessel is damaged during a boarding, MFish will be held liable by the insurers. I also question the use of military vessels and personnel to conduct the boarding operations of vessels operated by civilian New Zealanders, in some cases within one mile of land.

In the event that we are carrying a full complement of passengers and we are boarded by fisheries officers, surely we are then in non-compliance with the Maritime Rules and the conditions of our SSM certificate? Who is liable for any incident?

What happens if passengers become frustrated and vent their frustrations at the fisheries officers? Are fisheries officers not required to comply with the same Maritime NZ operating requirements that apply to the rest of us? Will the compliance checks only apply to vessels that operate close to the coast and if so, is this an unfair burden on one sector of the industry?

Evan Riggir, Anita Rose Charters Ltd., Tauranga

Dear Sir

I am very upset about the catch reporting legislation that MFish is trying to implement. More to the point, it is the way they have gone about it and the way they expect it to be done.

I operate a small charter vessel. My most popular trip is a four-hour fishing trip around our local coastline and I am absolutely flat out. There is no opportunity to fill out paperwork the way that MFish says I should when the boat is rocking around. And on some trips any papers will end up as a soggy mess. I wonder what MFish would do with an unreadable, water-soaked report form.

As a keen recreational angler myself I can see the value of this information gathering. We all need to work together to make sure there are fish for the future generations, but I'm not sure this is what MFish is trying to do. Just because they have made it law doesn't mean that it can be realistically achieved.

I know that every charter boat operates differently, but there are multiple issues with MFish catch reporting.

The most concerning issue is safety. If a sole charge skipper is filling out paperwork then he/she is not keeping an adequate watch. With this in mind, it must be justified to have uncompleted paperwork at the end of a trip if safety of the vessel and passengers is to be paramount.

I could just send them incomplete report forms but they would be useless.

MFish need to change the way they expect us to complete the forms because at present it is completely unworkable. MFish need to realise charter operators are not commercial fishermen. We are hosts and recreational fishing is just one small part of what our customers enjoy while they are with us.

Grant Sneddon, Fish HQ Fishing Adventures, Leigh

Dear Sir

I am not opposed to gathering catch information from recreational fishers per se. But I do take issue with numerous aspects. These fall into two general categories: the impact on charter boat operators and the impact on the fishery.

This has been imposed on charter boat skippers with virtually no consultation. The very small number of charter operators

who were consulted did not have a mandate to speak for the fleet and clearly did not consider all the issues. By the time the majority of charter boat operators became aware of the catch reporting requirement, it was too late to contribute to the so-called consultation process.

At a recent meeting in Tauranga between MFish officials and charter operators, it was made clear that none of our comments would be passed on to the minister.

We are told the information from charter boat reporting will determine how much of the total allowable catch should be allocated to the recreational sector in the future. In my opinion there are a number of flaws in this reasoning.

A very small proportion of the total recreational fishing community goes out on charter boats. We asked if licensing all fishers had been considered, and were told it was decided not to proceed. It is clear that charter boat operators have been targeted as there are far fewer of them and their collective voice is much quieter.

Charter boat skippers are being charged to register and provide the information. I have two issues with this:

We are told the charge is based on “user pays”, so MFish should be paying charter boat operators to collect the information!

They tell us they have reduced the registration fee, but this is not the only cost to skippers. Any costs incurred by operators will either have to be passed on to customers, which may result in a drop in custom, or absorbed by the operator.

One of the most significant issues arising from the catch reporting regime is that of safety. Skippers simply cannot be in two places at once. How is a skipper supposed to operate safely and ensure all the catch reported on during the trip is recorded?

This raises another issue. If the client puts fish that should have been recorded into their bin without letting the skipper know, the vessel is later boarded by MFish officers and the skipper’s records found to be inaccurate, it is the skipper who faces a fine. Yet skippers have no right to go into client’s bins and check what their clients have caught and kept.

There are also issues around the provision of information. The detail required on the registration form is over the top!

Skippers have already provided much of this information to obtain their skipper’s ticket and to put their boat into survey. All that should be required is a copy of the skipper’s ticket and the vessel’s survey certificate.

Likewise for the requirement to include the GPS marks for where fish are caught. I imagine very few skippers will use the correct GPS marks in their returns, even if they know what they are! This of course will also affect the accuracy of an extremely small sample of data.

The name “amateur charter boat reporting” is derogatory to charter boat operators. Charter operators are professionals who have put in some seriously hard yards for their qualifications. I also believe that the name could have a detrimental effect, as tourists will be reluctant to book with “amateur charter operators”.

I realise we operate under the recreational (amateur) fishing regulations, but we are not amateur charter boat operators!

They would be all the other people who operate charter boats without a skipper’s ticket using an un-surveyed vessel.

It would be a simple matter to collect data from all recreational fishers. All that would be needed would be to have small cards printed that could be completed by each fisher at the end of a day’s fishing and left at boat ramps, with no personal details required.

Most people will gladly provide information if asked, but in my experience people do not respond well to subterfuge and threat.

Hapuku and bass are included in the reporting requirements,

so why not bluenose? Numerous recreational fishers regularly target bluenose because the daily limit is 20 fish, and also catch and keep their daily limits.

Most hapuku and bass cannot be released, so to my way of thinking it is pointless to try and ascertain the levels that are currently being caught, especially given that these are slow-growing species. If the minister has a concern, the catch limit for these species should be reduced to one fish per person per day (one bluenose, one hapuku and one bass).

When all this information is provided to the minister, I have some real concerns regarding how it will be used. Nowhere in this meeting was there any mention of how they intended to spend any resources catching illegal operators.

As a personal protest, I intend to register and will complete the catch returns, but refuse to pay for the privilege of doing so.

Colin Tecofsky, Fish and Dips Charters, Tauranga

Dear Sir

I recently cancelled all my fishing charters in November in order not to contravene legislation implemented by MFish.

Am I entitled to compensation for lost business and income during this mess with the MFish recording system? I am confident MFish legislation will be repealed as it was poorly thought out and is outright dangerous.

It has cost me around \$5000 turnover in the month of November. The vessel may have to be sold. I will have to go on an unemployment benefit if this continues.

Was this the intention of the government? We are behind on the mortgage on the vessel because we are committed to upholding safety procedures as clearly defined by Maritime NZ.

I am told pirate operators have experienced an upturn in demand in pirate fishing charters. I have been forced to give them business, as I cannot comply with the legislation as set out by Maritime NZ and MFish. Great Barrier Island tourism is limited.

Overseas guests think it is a joke when they are told to go out with ammeters on un-surveyed vessels. Why must we be made to compromise safety? Was this the intention of the legislation? This will ultimately diminish Maritime NZ’s client base further, not to mention the safe ship management companies.

I understand the need to record catch, but why not consult with those who will be responsible for collecting the data? The cost will be passed on to the customer in the form of extra staff and charges.

Can professional skippers affected by unworkable legislation get a fast track to the unemployment benefit when faced with MFish’s unenforceable legislation?

Kim Watts 



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