



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog

The truth about bottom trawling

The Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, David Parker, when questioned in the House last week on bottom trawling was measured in his response.

The question, on the impacts of bottom trawling, was posed by Green MP Eugenie Sage and is part of the campaign the Greens launched this month to have bottom trawling banned.

The Minister agreed that some forms of bottom trawling could damage habitat but said he was looking at the advice of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor on the matter and also looking at technological solutions to improve or reduce the effects of bottom trawling. Dame Juliet Gerrard has just completed a report aimed at keeping New Zealand at the global edge of fisheries management. The paper will examine fisheries management and suggest improvements where needed.

Scaremongering about bottom trawling is nothing new and, like most other attacks by environmental activists on the fishing industry, is a combination of half-truth and hyperbole.

The facts are that some 90 percent of New Zealand's EEZ has never been bottom trawled and a third of our territorial waters are completely closed to bottom trawling and dredging. New Zealand's bottom trawl closures are one of the largest national networks of protected areas in the world.

We need to remember that in 2007 it was the seafood industry that actively worked with the then government to close 1.2 million square kilometres of seabed to bottom trawling through Benthic Protection Areas (BPAs), which only permit fishing 100 metres above the seabed.

This ban on bottom trawling includes 28 percent of underwater topographic features, 52 percent of seamounts, which are underwater mountains over 1000 metres in height, and 88 percent of active hydrothermal vents.

Could we do better? Of course.

Mr Parker's mention of technological solutions is welcome and different streams of work are already underway. Fisheries Inshore New Zealand has received funding for an innovative project to measure interaction with the seabed through the use of sensors that will be important to record the effectiveness of future innovations to trawl gear.

On an industry-wide and individual company basis, there is an ongoing global search for solutions to improve the ways we fish.

There seems to be an assumption that the seafood industry has no interest in protecting the environment and this is both untrue and dangerous.

Unfortunately, misinformation campaigns get more attention than the truth.

Creating outrage is profitable, be it politically or financially. Misinformation pays dividends for those with an agenda.

A quote, found in research on fake news by the Pew Institute, sums it up; "In the arms race between those who want to falsify information and those who want to produce accurate information, the former will always have an advantage."



The Primary Industries NZ Awards

The Primary Industries NZ Awards bring together supportive and active participants in New Zealand's primary sector businesses, suppliers and government agencies.

The Award categories are as follows:

- Outstanding Contribution to NZ's Primary Industries – sponsored by Massey Ferguson
- Primary Industry Emerging Leader Award – sponsored by Lincoln University
- Primary Industries Producer Award – sponsored by Kotahi Logistics
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- Primary Industries Team Award
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Entries close **Monday 19th April 2021**, with finalists announced on 17th May.



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