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EDITORIAL

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TEETH, NOT BLUBBER

Once again in the news we have examples of where New Zealand is ineffective in policing our marine protected areas. The latest example would be Japan's on-going insult to us by returning to hunt whales in what is effectively our Southern Ocean whale sanctuary.

The Japanese claim that it is for scientific research, and yet they proposed to kill some 1500 whales this year. In this issue we read of New Zealand research on marine mammals, in particular whales in the Southern Ocean, where scientists on board the vessel *Tiama* took genetic samples by using a dart core sampler which effectively gives the whale a mosquito bite.

And yet from this small sample our scientists learn much more than we are hearing from the Japanese international whale science programme. Let's be honest. It is just a ploy to hunt whales for meat to feed wealthy Japanese consumers.

To meet the Japanese need, we have to sit by and watch them hunt whales in our Southern Ocean sanctuary. It is in fact a marine mammal protected area, and yet the government appears to be powerless to do anything.

Granted, much of the sanctuary is on the high seas. So what. All it needs is for the government to take some positive action and show better leadership.

Now we read of a potential disaster with the factory ship catching fire and the loss of a crewman. One has to ask that given the sensitive nature of the Antarctic environment, why are all the signatory countries not speaking out and banning this type of activity in the Antarctic waters of the Southern Ocean.

To prevent this ongoing, wanton killing of whales and the potential ecological disasters requires governments with teeth, not blubber...

Seagoing mariners will now be aware that their trusted 025 ship's telephones are dying and losing coverage, as Telecom systematically degrades the 025 network in preparation to shutting it down.

In response to this developing problem, one of *Professional Skipper's* worthy readers, Ian MacDonald, raised the concerns, the outcome of which features in this issue with an offer from Telecom for vessel owners to upgrade to the new M800 ship's phone at a special price, coordinated by this magazine and the Federation of Commercial Fishermen. Please contact us if you need an upgrade.

The shared fisheries debate has been long and protracted, with final submissions closing on February 28. It would be fair to say that the different stakeholders have all

approached this discussion differently.

It was always going to be nigh on impossible to get a consensus, as each group retracted and closed ranks, until the Maori Fisheries Trust, Te Ohu Kiamoana, came out and claimed that any move by the government to cut quotas or reallocate fish share to the recreational sector would slash \$100 million from iwi fishing assets. Now, let's back up a bit and remember that commercial fishers only have a right to harvest their allowed share of the TACC, which is set after the interests of Maori customary, recreational and all other mortality associated with fishing have been allowed for.

Since the quota management system was introduced 20 years ago, recreational fishers have seen a constant erosion of the public's access to catch a reasonable share. In many cases this can be attributed to an over-allocation of key shared fish stocks to commercial in 1986, and the further over-allocation by the Quota Appeal Authority which followed.

Maori are significant harvesters of fish and shellfish taken under the amateur regulations. In fact Sonny Tau, the chairman of Te Runanga a Iwi O Ngapuhi, is quoted as saying, "For 99.9 percent of the time, when Ngapuhi go fishing to feed their babies they are now categorised as recreational fishers."

The ability of all New Zealanders to exercise this right must remain paramount, and not risk being eroded by commercial pressure and over-harvesting to meet corporate balance sheets. The public just does not accept that exporting our fish for profit should take priority over feeding their families and friends.

This being the case, one must question the commercial motives of Te Ohu Kaimoana, who appear to be suggesting, contrary to the act, that their commercial rights should take precedence over the rights of all New Zealanders, including Maori who fish for food under the Amateur Fisheries Regulations.

Somehow many have missed the fact that this is still a shared fishery, and this discussion document is all about balance, righting past wrongs by ensuring that all stakeholders are given a reasonable share.

It's not about winners or losers, it's about what's right for the people, he tangata he tangata he tangata.

Keith Ingram, Editor