

NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION OF FRESHWATER ANGLERS (INC.)



Press Release 21 July 2011

Trout Fishers Seek Politicians' Answers on Rivers

A national trout-fishing advocacy wants answers from political parties on question marks over water quality and public access to rivers and fishing.

The New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers has written to all political parties identifying threats, often commercially driven, to traditional public ownership and use of water and waterways plus environmental standards and water quality.

Federation president Jim Hale, a Manawatu dairy farmer and trout fisherman, said there was growing concern at the potential plight of New Zealand rivers and the erosion of access to waterways.

"While such issues may not be at the top of political party agendas, they are of considerable importance to the numerous trout fishing public. There is a feeling and an awareness within freshwater anglers that the threats to our freshwater rivers and lakes from urban, industrial and agricultural extraction and pollution, and the increasing attempts by vested interests to privatise and monopolise a public resource, are at a tipping point," he said. "Consequently there is a very real danger that something the public values greatly, and which many take for granted, could be lost forever."

Mr Hale said the first European settlers had established trout fisheries and a law framework that was designed to, unlike the UK, make trout fishing a public sport available to all along egalitarian principles.

"So there is nearly two centuries of tradition and heritage and associated law at stake."

Many of trout fishers want parties to consider formulating sound policies and have indicated answers will definitely influence voting preferences in the upcoming election.

Ends

The statements and questions that were put, were as follows:

NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION OF FRESHWATER ANGLERS (INC.)



July 2011

To: The Leader,
NZ Political Party
At: @ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister,

Questions to Political Parties - 2011

The New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc) is an affiliation of angling clubs from throughout NZ. It has been operating continuously since 1974. It is an independent organisation that represents the collective interests of the anglers who participate in freshwater sports fishing in New Zealand. The Federation identifies and works to resolve national issues affecting freshwater angling in NZ. The Federation's strength lies in its independence and the number of anglers it represents. It also advocates for, and celebrates the joy of freshwater fishing.

The NZFFA has six specific issues concerning political party policies that it would like to inform its members about, prior to the next general election. These relate to specific policies adopted by the NZFFA to reflect the concerns of its angler members.

Your responses to these questions by August 19th 2011, reflecting how (if at all) your party's policies can support them, will be gratefully appreciated. After that, responses (or non-responses) will be communicated to our members and associates. An indication of whether they are negotiable, as part of a coalition agreement, would also be appreciated.

Whilst such issues may not be at the top of your current agendas, they are of considerable importance to our members. There is a feeling and an awareness within freshwater anglers that the threats to our freshwater rivers and lakes from urban, industrial and agricultural extraction and pollution, and the increasing attempts to commercialise and monopolise a public resource, are at a tipping point, and there is a very real danger that something we value greatly, and which many take for granted, could be lost forever.

It should not be forgotten that the first European settlers established trout fisheries and a law framework that was designed to, unlike the UK, make trout fishing a public

sport available to all along egalitarian principles. So there is nearly two centuries of tradition and heritage and associated law at stake.

Consequently, many of our members have indicated that the consideration of policies supporting the resolution of such issues would have a greater than usual influence on their voting preferences in the upcoming election.

We look forward to your prompt responses to the issues outlined below.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Hale
President
New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc.)

1. A Public Resource

The NZFFA advocates that legislation formally recognises that New Zealand's freshwater bodies and waterways are a public resource that cannot be owned (and hence bought, sold, traded or held) by any party.

Explanation:

Whilst New Zealand's waterways *are* a public resource, and their use for recreational purposes *is* recognised, the water that they contain is increasingly being seen as a commercial resource necessary for the generation of private wealth. The pressure to use these waters commercially is increasing in size, value, complexity and number of sources; at the direct expense of the ecosystems they contain and the recreational opportunities they present. Current administration and allocation of this resource through regional and local authorities has not adequately protected it, and the current calls to use free market forces to regulate water usage (tradable water rights) will exacerbate this erosion of a national heritage.

Question 1:

What specific policies does your party have and what actions does it intend to take, to protect and enhance the public right of ownership and use of water and waterways themselves?

2. Public Access to Public Resources

The NZFFA believes that free, certain, enduring and practical public access to, within and along these public resources must be guaranteed, enforceable and enforced. (As per the Walking Access Act 2008).

Explanation:

Access to, along and within public lands and waterways is being increasingly eroded by one of three ways. Firstly, inappropriate land usage designation has seen common ground bordering them lost. Secondly, breakdowns of the traditional and inherent trust between private landowners whose properties border such public resources and

the angling public, is resulting in increasing refusal of access to them. Thirdly, there is an increasing trend (openly advocated by some parties) to charge the public for access to public resources. While the NZFFA applauds the Walking Access Act for addressing some of these issues, we believe that it lacks resources, enforcement capability or political support.

Question 2:

What policies do your party have to protect, ensure and enhance:

- the status of public resources (and their recreational usage),
- free access to such public resources for recreational use, and
- application of the Walking Access Act to such public resources for recreational activities?

3. Public Resources are valued

The NZFFA advocates that legislation should formally recognise that rivers and lakes are wild, natural places with an intrinsic value. This non-monetary value should be considered separately to, and the equal of any commercial value put on them or their contents.

Explanation:

Current resource usage consent processes are destroying the wild, natural and recreational heritage of our country in two ways. Firstly, by trying to equate the intrinsic value of such resources using monetary figures, and comparing that with the monetary value of commercially using the resource for specific projects. It doesn't work, and even when applied, the status quo of the resource inevitably loses. Secondly, successive consent applications to use the same resource result in a 'salami effect' where slices of environmental capital are successively sliced off the total, resulting in progressive diminution. This is especially true of our waterways. There has to be a way to preserve the environmental capital of our rivers and lakes, and the ecosystems they support for this and future generations.

Question 3:

What policies does your party have and what actions does it intend to take, to ensure an environmental and recreational 'bottom-line' is applied to the use of public lakes, rivers and waterways, (and the allocation of water from them), and how will that protect their environmental and recreational status?

4. Public Resources are utilised for public recreation

The NZFFA advocates that legislation formally recognise that sportfish such as trout, salmon, and perch are now part of 21st Century New Zealand ecosystem, and are a valued and valuable part of current balanced natural ecosystems.

Explanation:

Naturalised sportfish are not just highly valued by the large numbers of all New Zealanders (irrespective of race or creed) who fish for them; they generate large amounts of additional income in the process, both from within New Zealand and by overseas anglers (who also highly value the resource). They were acclimatised and established by the hard work of enthusiastic volunteers and former acclimatisation societies and conservation boards, and have been part of New Zealand's waterways

for over 130 years. They have therefore reached a balance and equilibrium with other species in their environment. Despite this, their status is not clear-cut when applying legislation and regulations. There is a tendency for legal processes, Government Departments and zealous green groups to ignore, marginalise or even actively discriminate against them to the point of anti-introduced phobia. This has resulted in the recent deliberate poisoning of trout populations in free-flowing rivers by the Department of Conservation, and having them being labelled as 'stoats of the waterways' by both industry lobby groups and other 'conservation' organisations.

Question 4:

What policies does your party have and what actions does it intend to take, to protect and enhance the status of recreational sportfish within New Zealand waterways, and ensure that legislation designed to achieve that is consistently considered and applied?

5. Public Resources are protected

The NZFFA believes that any addition to, withdrawal from or modification of a freshwater body must not impair the ability of that body to support a balanced natural ecosystem. Anything shown to be adversely affecting public resources or the balanced natural ecosystems they contain must be legally prevented, stopped and/or mitigated.

Explanation:

Whilst this is obviously the intent of the Conservation Act, we believe that it's application and implementation is under attack from many different directions (see 3 above). Apart from a lack of national environmental standards to apply and large regional differences in how the law is interpreted and applied, increasing commercial pressure is being applied to all facets of public resource management. This has been coupled with a shift in where the current Government is prepared to allocate funds which has seen the ability to regulate what protection measures there are being compromised, and the Department of Conservation reduced to trying to be a commercial entity.

Question 5:

What policies does your party have and what actions does it intend to take, to establish, implement and enforce national environmental standards for our waterways and the ecosystems they contain (including sportfish); and ensure that such policies are enabled through adequate funding?

6 Freshwater sport fisheries are a public resource, self funded and self managed.

The NZFFA fully endorses recognised controlling bodies, elected and funded by the angling public, which are authorised and required to maximise angling opportunities and manage the fish stocks to that effect. It also recognises and appreciates the special function that DOC carries out for the Lake Taupo fishery in this respect. This includes liberating stock into public waters and replacing stock affected by natural disasters or human intervention incidents, as well as actioning prosecution under these (above) points.

Licensed anglers have the right to harvest freshwater sportfish from public waterways according to current regulations set by these bodies.

Explanation:

With the exception of the Taupo fishery, Fish & Game NZ controls the management of freshwater sportfish within New Zealand. This body is completely funded by licensed anglers, who elect its members on to regional councils. Yet despite this, most of that organisations time and funds go into representing anglers and game hunters interests in the administration and application of Acts and Regulations, resource consents and compliance processes, and bringing prosecutions under such Acts. This public good activity is neither acknowledged nor funded by government. At the same time, because the naturalised status of sportfish is not always acknowledged by the Conservation Department and Conservation Boards, their ability to manage fish stocks to maximise angler opportunities is impeded.

Question 6:

What policies does your party have and what actions does it intend to take, to:

- strengthen the independent role of NZ Fish & Game in the management of the sports fishery,
- provide oversight of its role in achieving its statutory obligations, and
- fund its expertise and involvement in the application, monitoring and correction of Government Acts and regulation?

The New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc.) thanks you for your consideration of these questions, and looks forward to being able to inform our members of your party's response.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Hale, President
New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc.)

Contact:

Selwyn Hodder, Secretary
New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc.)
C/- P O Box 38-777
Howick, Manukau 2145
Email secretary "sghodder@xtra.co.nz"
<http://www.nzffa.net>

Jim Hale, President
New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (Inc.)
Kairanga-Bunnythorpe Rd,
R D 5 Palmerston North 4475
phone: (06) 357 1569
Email: annjimhale@slingshot.co.nz