

mal scientific staff and a history of close relationships with the commercial sector, MAF was not interested in conservation. But the inshore fishery continued to decline and within a few years the majority of commercial fishermen were complaining of a rapidly declining fishery.

While the bureaucrats at MAF procrastinated, our American tourist was back at home developing his business and raising a family with his kiwi wife. During the long American winters he thought often of Mangonui and its glorious sea life. Finally, in 1980, he was able to take an extended vacation. The family packed their bags and headed for New Zealand. While his wife and children spent time with their grandparents in Auckland the American fisherman drove north to Mangonui. Doubtless Bay was as beautiful as ever and the kingfish still swam by the Mangonui wharf. Out in the bay the kahawai were schooling but some things seemed to have changed.

The first thing he noticed was the marked increase in the number of commercial fishing boats. Trawlers and long-liners seemed to be everywhere. The wharf was the centre of activity, with trays of snapper, kingfish, trevally, hapuka and school sharks being unloaded daily. There were changes in the water too. The kingfish swimming under the wharf were smaller in size than he remembered. Out in the bay the kahawai still fed voraciously on the anchovy but the schools were not so large and there were fewer of them. There were not so many birds around either.

## Bribes Received

The visiting tourist was puzzled but decided it was just a trick of memory. After all, he was a young man full of imagination when he first visited Mangonui and his memories could have been coloured over the years. But he was very conscious of how rapidly a fishery could decline because of the unfortunate nature of the American experience. He remembered how the American fishery managers had allowed several of their most important species to be depleted because of the bribes they had received from commercial interests. The big fishing companies were not interested in managing the resource for the long term. They wanted to make big money now, get out of the fishery and invest that cash elsewhere. Paying off a few fishery managers was a minor expense considering all the fast money that could be made and invested for additional profit.

But the American naively decided that kiwis were different and were smart enough to have profited from the mistakes of other nations. Surely they would not allow greed and bureaucratic bungling to destroy their fishery. These discomfiting thoughts passed quickly, just like his month of sport fishing in Mangonui.

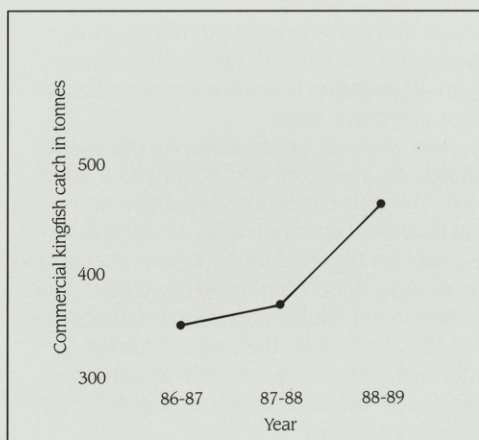
The wonderful weather, beautiful countryside, delightful people and good sport fishing combined to give him an idea. Why not give up life in America, sell the business, and come to live in Mangonui? He loved fishing and surely life was too short not to take advantage of the joys fishing in the Far North had to offer. He returned to the United States thinking Kiwis were part of a society which put the long term management of their environment ahead of short term commercial

greed. Unfortunately he was wrong, and events in Wellington were to prove it.

By 1983 fishermen all over New Zealand were complaining about the declining fishery. MAF clearly had to do something but it took until 1986 for the TAC (Total Allowable Catch) – ITQ (Individual Transferable Quota) system to be introduced. Under this system fishery scientists would determine the maximum tonnage of each species that could be safely harvested annually. This is the TAC. The TAC is then divided up into individual quotas. These quotas would be based on catch histories. So the fishermen who had caught the most fish in the past would get the most



*Kingfish like this were common around the Mangonui Wharf just five years ago. A commercial fisherman might get \$20.00 for this fish. It would be worth hundreds more if caught by a tourist and would probably be released to fight another day!*



*The known commercial catch of kingfish has been rising steadily because of increasing use of gill nets. These figures do not include kingfish sold on the black market, which are usually caught in gill nets too.*

quota in the future. In other words, the fishermen who had made the most profit in the past and done the most to deplete the fishery would receive the largest share of the future fishery! The quotas would also be transferable. That is, the Government would give these quotas to the fishermen to be used, or sold, as they saw fit.

The implications were obvious. The large fishing companies which had been operating the wasteful pair trawlers would get most of the quota. The individual long liners would get much less quota, usually not enough to stay in business. To reduce the total catch

MAF then bought back quota from the commercial fishermen who were willing to sell it. Since many individual fishermen received too little quota to stay in business they sold what they had back to MAF and quit fishing. The bottom line was that the New Zealand taxpayer ended up paying off a lot of individual fishermen in order to reduce the competition for the big companies which had received most of the quota! Even the most naive observer could only conclude that MAF and the big fishing companies had a cozy relationship!

Four years before the Quota System came into effect our American tourist had moved his family to Mangonui and begun sport fishing in earnest. He bought an aluminium dinghy and spent at least three mornings a week fishing the waters around Doubtless Bay. He primarily fished for sport and close to shore so the powerful pelagic fish like kahawai and kingfish were his main interest. By the time the Quota System came into effect (1986) he was on intimate terms with the rhythms of the sea. Because of the time and effort he put into learning about the kahawai and kingfish he was able to catch fish on those days when most casual fishermen could not. Luckily for them, his family was almost always able to have a meal of fish in the evening.

## Favourite Fish Declining

It was clear to the American that his favourite fish were declining in numbers at an alarming rate. Although the Quota System clearly worked to the advantage of the big companies, was difficult to enforce and would produce a lucrative black market, he was relieved to see some controls introduced. Because the Quota System would reduce the East Coast snapper catch by 34 percent, the use of wasteful pair trawlers would come to an end and most snapper fishing would be done by long liners producing a catch of higher quality and value. This meant that the kingfish, which were taken by pair trawlers in great numbers, would receive some protection. But there were flaws with the Quota System that outweighed this small advantage.

Many small fishermen who had small or even negligible quotas wanted to keep fishing. Since the Quota System only protected some species, the obvious targets were the unprotected kahawai, kingfish and other reef dwelling species. For the individual fisherman, gill nets were clearly the way to go. By laying gill nets around reef areas and harbour channels, commercial fishermen could take these species in large numbers. MAF actually encouraged the practice by issuing new licenses to just about anyone who wanted them! In keeping with their traditional inability to predict the obvious MAF was AGAIN encouraging boom-and-bust fishing.

The hapless kahawai were highly vulnerable to purse seiners as well as gill nets. Kahawai almost always feed and travel in large groups. During certain periods of the year and in certain areas very large schools form and these are easily seen by spotter planes. The purse seiners then steam out to the school, encircle them with their net and winch the kahawai in by the tonne!

The executives who ran the big fishing corporations were no fools. They knew that MAF would bring kahawai into the Quota System within a few years. When they were made a