

protection and commercial fishermen found it easy to target them with floating long lines and gill nets. The numbers of kingfish in the Northland area went in to rapid decline. By 1989 the terrific summertime kingfish runs in Northland harbours, including Parengarenga, were just about gone.

The Minister for Fisheries and MAF could have prevented all these problems. Instead they have let things get worse. The solutions are simple:

- a reduction in the snapper quota to below its 1986 figure of 4,700 tonnes for the north-east coast.
- a ban on all gill nets in Northland with the exception of mullet and flounder nets in shallow estuaries.
- the elimination of all purse-seining for kahawai from the east coast of the North Island for at least five years until the kahawai recover.
- kingfish to be made a sport fish only. Possession or sale of kingfish by commercial fishermen should be illegal.
- a reduction in the trevally quota. This could be achieved by limited target fishing for the species as much of the trevally caught is a by-catch of the trawl snapper fishery. The rest is targeted by trawlers, purse seiners and gill nets.

retrieved with power winches caught large numbers of trevally, snapper and kahawai. By waiting until cover of darkness to do this illegal fishing the people responsible could be confident of not getting caught. With MAF enforcement 250 kilometres away in Whangarei and complacency rife among the local people there was nothing to fear.

There was one legal way for the Maori people to protect their harbour. This was the taiapure provision of the 1983 Maori Fisheries Act which could make it possible for the Aupouri people to manage the harbour themselves and to ban all commercial fishing until they felt the harbour had recovered. But the taiapure process is very slow and paved with paperwork. There was no time for that. In 1991 the people of the Parengarenga decided to act.

At first there were reports of locals shooting at the illegal boats. Then definitive action was taken and some burned-out car bodies were strategically dumped in the channels so the drag nets couldn't be used.

But that wasn't enough. Finally the Aupouri people put a gate up on the Paua road, blocking all access by vehicle to the Paua wharf and the informal camp ground nearby. Recreational fishermen



Kokota Spit on the right is Maori land and is the largest area of dunes containing entirely native plant communities in New Zealand. Ngatehe Point is on the left. ACI dredges sand for glassmaking from the main channel.



A school shark is released after tagging. The sharks are tagged to find out more about their life cycles and migration patterns.

- a ban on commercial fishing in all Northland harbours with the possible exception of controlled mullet and flounder fishing in less populated areas.

Not all the damage to Parengarenga's fishery has come from government and bureaucratic inaction. For the past ten years nasty things have been happening within the harbour as well.

By illegally laying gill nets completely across the narrow channels of the harbour commercial fishermen were able to capture entire schools of shark in a single night. Nets dragged along the sandy, smooth bottom of the harbour and then

and campers who wanted to enjoy the beauty of Parengarenga were able to get a key. But the commercial fishermen who had been operating illegally could not. The Aupouri people had made their stand. They were going to protect their harbour and its resources.

EACH DECEMBER, for as long as anyone can remember, the school sharks have come into Parengarenga Harbour. They'd come and go in waves, venturing right up over the mud flats at high tide to warm

their bodies in the summer sun. People once thought that they came in to have their young but this appears not to be the case. While the sharks are in the harbour they are all pregnant, but with eggs that have embryos many months away from being born. No males ever seem to venture into the harbour.

With so many sharks in such a confined space they made an easy target for commercial fishermen using long lines or gill nets. During the early eighties huge numbers of sharks were taken from the harbour, sometimes by obstructing the narrow channels with gill nets and capturing an entire school. In the mornings the fishermen would clean the sharks for hours, throwing the waste into the harbour and stacking the bodies like cordwood on the deck of the boat. It was a pretty grim scene and made a hell of a mess.

When the QMS was introduced, the average school shark catch was reduced by 40 percent. Since then the Quota Appeal Authority has authorised another 100 tonnes of quota, increasing the total