

15/11/2025

To the Taranaki VTM Expert panel

My name is Leon warren Lawrence, and I am a Commercial fisherman of over 25 years on the West Coast of the North Island, I am also the owner of Awaroa Fisheries Ltd and Ali Brooks spoke at the October conference on Awaroa Fisheries behalf. Awaroa Fisheries Ltd is the second largest inshore trawling operation on the North Islands West Coast.

Over the last 5 years I have fished most of the South Taranaki Bight that is able to be trawled safely, this ranges from depths of 40 meters deep to 75meters. I have attached photos that show fishing operations conducted in the South Taranaki Bight from 2020 to present day by my Commercial Fishing vessels:

- Fv Oceania 6403 (sold but gill netted South Taranaki)
- Fv Brenda kay 63098
- FV ANA 15527
- FV Bachante 15342

Awaroa Fisheries Ltd in previous seasons has been restricted to how much fishing it could carry out in the South Taranaki bight due to Snapper Quota access and weather conditions, for this season 25/26 and the foreseeable future we will be increasing both our Commercial and Customary fishing harvests in the South Taranaki Bight. We have acquired a significant Quota package for the foreseeable future and the area that is being considered for Seabed Mining is important to our past present and future fishing operations.

I have attached a landing docket for a trip where I sailed to the Rolling Grounds (South Taranaki Bight) from the slipway in Nelson and in only three fishing tows (1 day) I caught just under 10.5 metric tons of fish, 2500 kilos of this were trevally that was caught in one tow along with 2500kg of Snapper and approximately 500kg of other mixed species.

5.5 ton of fish in one tow using a low flying scrapper trawl is unquestionable evidence of an extremely healthy Fishery, in the attached photos with trawl lines, each line is a trawl activity between 2 and 4 hours in duration. If the same net parameters as east coast trawlers was used, this would have been a 20ton day.

Due to the unreasonable timeframe for evidence, I have only been able to compile a small snapshot of the over 100 ton of fish that I have harvested in this area. The expert panel should do the right thing and reject this application and preserve this area for fishing and uphold Treaty Rights.

I am currently basing my vessels out of both Kawhia and New Plymouth ports and will be landing Customary fish for Taranaki Whanui Iwi. Awaroa Fisheries Ltd is the largest inshore Customary harvester in North Island.

Ali Brooks has told the panel that we are willing to take them to the area to see with your own eyes the evidence of Healthy fish stocks, that offer should be accepted if you are serious about making sue you make the right decision.

The fish in South Taranaki Bight are healthy and generally bigger fish than other areas of the Coastline, you won't get that unless there is an abundant thriving Fishery, anyone who says otherwise does not know what they're talking about and has probably never been there.

The Mining application should be rejected, and previous Court Rulings upheld.

Leon Lawrence

Awaroa Fisheries Ltd

