

Boat

Since the last newsletter lots has changed. The original charter vessel “Cerveza II” was replaced by the new vessel “Cerveza” in 2009, in reality the third Cerveza, the original having been wrecked in the Lyttelton Marina disaster in October 2000. When the new Cerveza was placed into service Cerveza II was leased to Dean Marine Coastal Charters in Whangerau, with an option to purchase. An unhappy tale, that lasted two years and ended with the boat being repossessed in 2011 in very poor condition. Cerveza Charters Ltd wish to distance themselves from Dean Musgrove’s operation, though he renamed the vessel during his tenure it was done in such way to cause confusion.

Cerveza II was refitted in Norsand’s Yard in 2011/2012, with a complete exterior repaint and the refurbishment of all the exterior deck-ware. The electronics were replaced and the main saloon tidied up, the intention being to sell her. However in a tough market and given the extent of the repairs required due to the damage done during the lease, it was clear that the vessel was now overcapitalised. A buyer was found for the newer vessel at a fair market value so the refitted Cerveza II is now our charter vessel again.



Cerveza II undergoing the refit at Norsand Yard in 2011

Cerveza II is a good vessel and has proved its worth in the most testing of conditions, be it battling the Grey river bar or the unpredictable conditions up at the Three Kings. I have circumnavigated the entire New Zealand coast in her so it is a boat I have a lot of confidence in. With the refit and ongoing upgrade she is a first class game fishing vessel with many years of reliable service left in her.

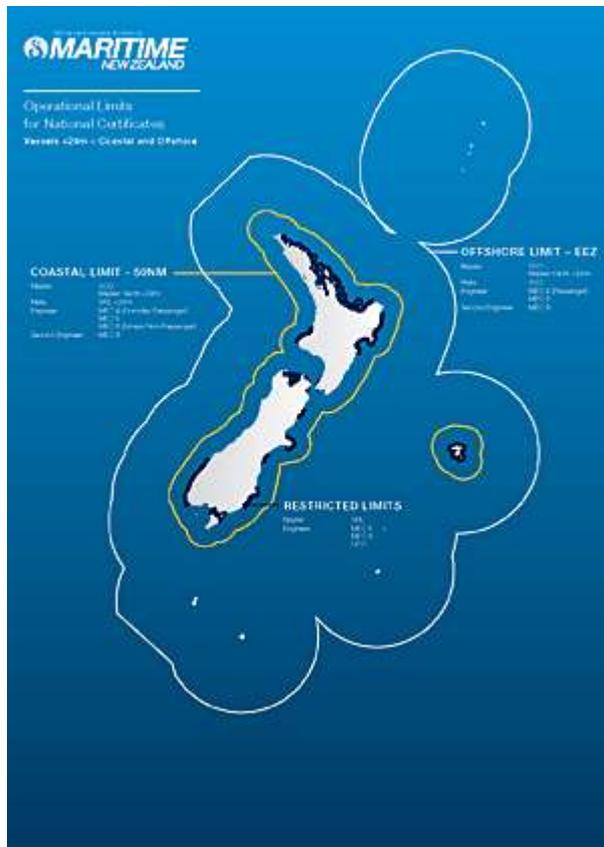
Tuna Fishing

Soapbox time: We did our last Blue Fin Trip in 2012. Our decision not to return in 2013 and this year is a direct result of the incompetence of Maritime New Zealand and its inflexible rules, written by desk bound jockeys who are out of touch with reality. The problem existed from the outset, but there was recognition of the irregularities in the rules for coastal and restricted offshore vessels and some latitude was given to operators especially with respect to manning. The crux of the problem was in their drawing of the coastal limit, which unlike the 12 mile limit did not contour the coastline. Whilst the limit, for example, was over 90 miles off Manukau, 60 miles off Tauranga and 40 miles off the north east coast off the South Island, it was only 20 miles off the West Coast of the South Island and this had severe implications for the minimum crewing requirements for vessels operating outside the coastal limits. To operate outside the coastal limit requires three qualified crew, a skipper with offshore master (NZOM) a second skipper with offshore watch-keeper (NZOW) with ILM command endorsement and a 4th Class Marine engineer (MEC4). We had applied for exemptions to allow us to crew as a coastal vessel in a restricted offshore limit of 60 miles, in an area from Kahurangi Point to Abut head. All well within the maximum coastal limits in other parts of the coastal area and initially we were permitted to operate without the requirement for a 4th class marine engineer as both myself, a qualified A grade diesel mechanic and my former Skipper held a 5th class marine engineers ticket. Common sense would surely have meant that if a vessel can operate safely 90 miles off Manukau without a MEC4 then there is a case for a suitably equipped and crewed vessel to operate in the same manner at more than 21 miles off Greymouth, but no. In 2011 Maritime New Zealand withdrew this permission citing the impending rule changes and claiming any exemption pre-empted the new rules. At that time the new operating limits and manning rules were supposed to come into force in time for the following season, but due to Maritime New Zealand's inability to finalise these rules this did not happen until the 1st of April this year. Archaic sea service time rules, a hangover from the 1950s, meant it was impossible for a charter boat skipper to get the required sea time to get the required tickets forced us and many other operators to withdraw from the fishery.

The new QOL (Qualifications and Operating Limits) belatedly introduced, now provides for a 50 mile uniform coastal limit and the new rules are competence based rather than strictly sea time based which will permit experienced skippers to get the required tickets to operate outside the 12 mile limit, without the requirement to work for at least for 5 years on an vessel. However this comes at the cost of 5 yearly renewals and 2 yearly medicals that add to the costs.

This has been a major impediment to the fishery, with many operators flouting the rules and operating vessels surveyed for inshore limits and crewed with skippers and crew not holding the required command and engineering tickets or exemptions. Maritime New Zealand also unfairly granted exemptions to some and not others. When asked to justify the high cost of operating in this fishery, you only need to look at the fuel and crewing costs to understand the challenges. With the

Hokitika Trench, the closest blue fin fishery, 25 miles offshore and most of the 500 metre contour at least 40 miles off, all Blue Fin Tuna fishing off the South Island's west coast was outside the old coastal limit, requiring offshore crewing. In the end only three boats (to the best of my knowledge) met the requirements despite the fact there were many more charter boats operating in the fishery.



New operating limits effective 01/04/214

I will be doing the SCO upgrade to my current ILM ticket before the 2015 Blue Fin season and I already hold the MEC6 engineers ticket, so we should be in a position to resume blue fin charters in 2015.

Marlin fishing.

Whilst we cut our teeth in the blue fin fishery, the high costs of operating coupled with the economic slowdown in 2009 caused a drop in demand for \$6000.00 per 24 hour day charters. From operating over 500 invoiced hours in 2007 to just over 200 hours in 2012 meant we needed to look elsewhere for clients. In 2010 we started bringing Cerveza up to Opuia from February to May and operated in the Bay of Islands and up to the Three Kings. We will continue to do this, regardless of what happens with the blue fin fishery.

Last season we concentrated on the Bay of Islands Swordfish Club's tournament's, with their assistance, taking corporate groups for the Eldorado, Probase, Zane Grey and Truckers and Loggers tournaments. We will continue to do this in 2015 and look at extending our season to do autumn trips to the Three Kings as we had done in 2010-2012.

In 2012 we won the Zane Grey Tournament and as such qualified for the 2013 Offshore World Championships in Costa Rica. I had fished there back in 2009 and used the tease and switch techniques for catching Sailfish and Marlin, but this was new to the rest of the team. We went a couple of days early and chartered a boat for a days practice fishing, getting 7 fish from 19 bites, much to the chagrin of the local crew, but at least the other 3 in the Zane Grey team got an idea of what was required. In the end we placed 5th equal on points and 8th on count back (the time the fish is called in placing the tied teams) from a total of 68 teams, with an awesome last day that included a quadruple hook-up ten minutes from stop fishing.

In August 2013 I fished the HIBT in Kona as part of a team from New Caledonia (I have business interests in Nouméa and I am a member of the Circle Nautque game fishing section). Though fishing was slow we did tag a couple of Blues and learnt heaps from the crews on the boats we drew for the 5 days. I am going back to Kona next week, the week before this year's HIBT, to fish on the 42' Black Watch JR's Hooker, one of the boats we had fished on last year. Hopefully we can catch a "big girl" this time and certainly we will be watching and learning from some of the best of the best.



Small but feisty Blue Marlin caught on JR's Hooker in last years HIBT

In November I will be fishing the Off shore World Championship qualifier in Vanuatu, with a team from Nouméa and two other Kiwi's, this is the last chance to get a place in the 2015 OWC tournament so the pressure will be on as I am keen to do this again.

Roll on the 2015 season.

