

Environmental Update

The MFA Environment Committee has just met for the first time in 2021. We had a very constructive session where we reviewed the 2020 statistics and agreed that even though times are tough due to Covid-19, we should endeavor to roll out our new programmes in Quarter 2 of 2021.

The MFA has been running the current Environmental Certification Programme successfully for the last 10 years, but it is time for a review and a refresh.

1. The Updated Environmental Certification Programme

Our objective is to promote best practice and work with our members to achieve improved environmental performance. An important component is also ensuring that those companies who are already operating at a high level receive the appropriate recognition.

The biggest change from the previous certification system is the implementation of yearly reviews and the introduction of a tiered rating system. Companies who meet the entrance criteria will be awarded one of the following statuses:

- Bronze status
- Silver status
- Gold status
- Platinum status
- Diamond status

The current status of member companies will also be displayed on the MFA website, which we hope will drive continuous improvement, as companies can go both forwards and backwards under the new system.

In 2020, we ran trials of our new certification programme with three companies to ensure we had the assessment metrics correct. All three companies scored Silver or Gold status, pretty good, but still leaving room for improvement. I'd like to thank Just Mussels, Sanford, and Marine Farm Management for being our guinea pigs for the trial.

Our goal for this programme is that companies will strive for Diamond status and that consent holders will assess environmental credentials when engaging contractors, resulting in an overall lift in industry performance.

Focus Areas for 2021 and beyond

- Education for all, there is always more to learn
- Minimizing waste falling in the water from marine farming activity
- Zero floats to landfill, 100% of floats recycled
- Reduction in waste to landfill
- Noise reduction where practicable when replacing vessels and/or engine systems.
- Minimizing light spill from vessels
- Engage more with employees
- Invest in research & development
- Acknowledging social responsibility, consider & care for the communities in which we operate.

2. Beach Cleaning Programme

In conjunction with the new Certification Programme, we have an updated beach cleaning programme set to be released.

This programme will see participating companies given a beach cleaning target based on how many hectares they impact (consented, farmed, harvested etc).

The participating companies will also be assigned specific bays or areas based on where they farm. That way companies will have ownership of certain areas and if there is an issue be faster to respond.

We have also reviewed the areas we clean and the frequency in which we clean them based on feedback from the community and our Environmental Mentor.

3. Technology

We have also been doing some work around how we report beach cleaning and float recovery, historically reports were completed on a paper form, scanned to the MFA, then someone would enter them. While we will never reject any report coming in, we now have some alternative methods.

- MFA website, anyone can submit beach clean data through our website www.marinefarming.co.nz – under the Environment tab at the bottom of the page. You can also submit feedback or report float sightings.
- MFA Enviro App, this is in its final stages of testing and once ready will be sent out to anyone who wishes to use it (with instructions). The app works from a smart phone or tablet and runs offline so it will still work if you have no coverage.

4. Big Month Out

The industry always does a big collaborative beach clean across the Top of the South every December to try and ensure the beaches are sparkling clean from both marine debris and recreational debris before everyone arrives at their beaches for Christmas.

In 2019, the participation was not great this was mainly due to staffing issues faced by the industry. In December 2020, we decided to embark on a “Big Month Out” rather than a “Big Day Out”, this was to allow companies more time to roster beach cleaning around staffing and vessel availability.

We found that the “month out” approach was incredibly successful with many companies offering to clean more areas than allocated. During these December cleans we try to target the known hot spot areas, areas we know are bad and collect waste due to winds & tides and areas that the public use over the Christmas periods like the DOC camps.

This was hugely successful, and we will look to tweak and build on this for Big Month Out 2021.

Big Month Out - December effort

