

Summer 2024 NEWSLETTER

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IMPORTANT DATES

- MFA Board meeting**
8th March 2024
- Havelock Mussel and Seafood Festival**
16th March 2024
- Beach cleaning reports due**
31st March 2024
- MFCAP Light audit (Q2) due**
30th April 2024

President's comment

What a difference a few months make!

Early summer the Marlborough and Tasman regions were both looking green and lush as we exited a multi-year La Nina weather pattern and transitioned head on into a strong El Nino, which saw the whole region turn brown almost overnight.

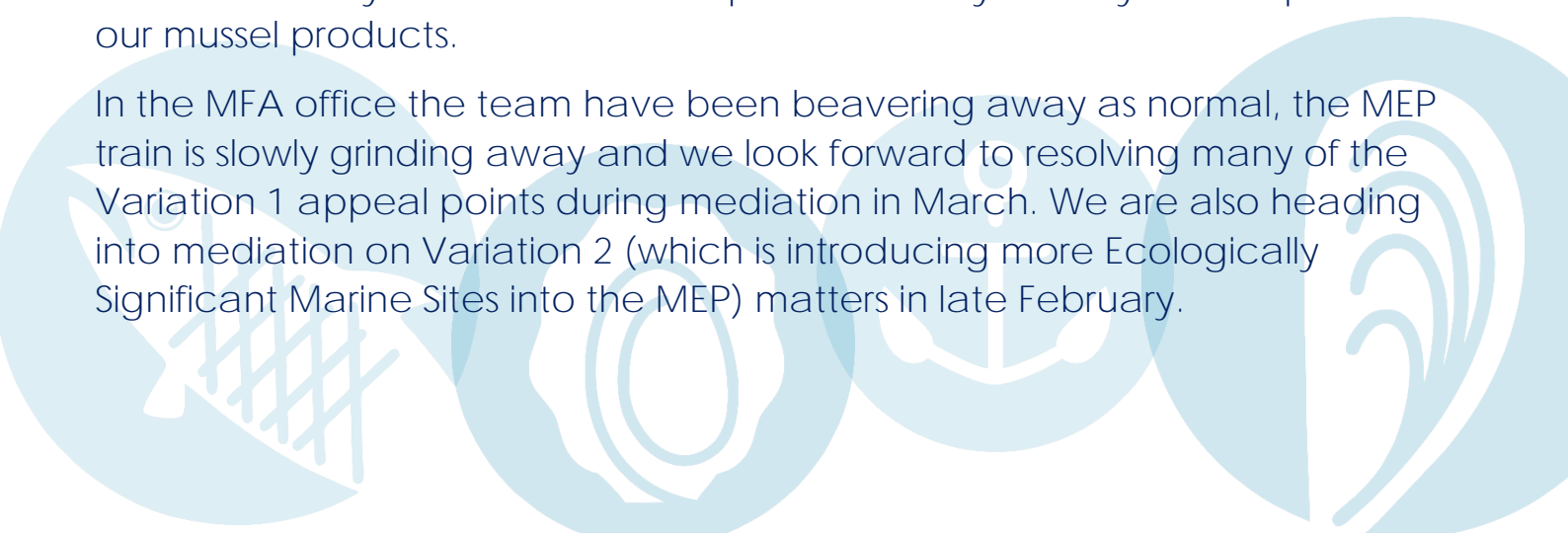
It has been a challenging period out on the water, with El Nino reversing the desired easterly flow (produced by La Nina), which flattens down the roll on 90 mile beach and brings the spat and seaweed in close enough for collection. Instead, persistent westerlies have kept the spat and seaweed further out due to larger swells driving a significant under tow. This results in the seaweed being pushed further and faster along the beach before heading off around Cape Reinga into the abyss!

This change in weather patterns happened at the worst possible time for us, right when we should have had multiple landings of prime spring spat. I know this has added a lot of pressure to the industry spat collectors on the beach and indeed to us as farmers whilst we consider what a low spat supply season means to each of us.

The recent landing in late February is very welcome, however we will need a lot more to help fill the gap left from the spring; all we can do is manage what we have to the best of our ability and know that the teams on the beach remain very focused.

Another challenge has been the slow lift in mussel condition this season, I know the sourcing teams have been working hard to find mussels good enough for harvest. We can only hope that we see the normal late summer boost in condition so that the processing teams can really stretch their legs, and the industry as a whole can capitalise on very healthy market prices for our mussel products.

In the MFA office the team have been beavering away as normal, the MEP train is slowly grinding away and we look forward to resolving many of the Variation 1 appeal points during mediation in March. We are also heading into mediation on Variation 2 (which is introducing more Ecologically Significant Marine Sites into the MEP) matters in late February.



The newly minted Coalition Government has already embarked on making changes to resource management legislation and we are optimistic that some of these changes will be hugely beneficial for aquaculture. While we are currently light on the detail, we will share any developments with our members as appropriate. We are also closely monitoring how any new national direction will affect the MEP process/outcomes.

One thing we do have to look forward to is the Havelock Mussel Festival on the 16th of March, I encourage you all to get along and support the festival and enjoy a great day. Even in tough times we have to take time out for our own wellbeing and a can't think of better place than the Mussel Festival!

I'll see you there.

Cheers Jono

Celebrating 20 Years

havelock mussel and seafood festival'24

16 MARCH 2024 / 10AM-6PM
HAVELOCK, MARLBOROUGH

HOLLIE SMITH, chef ZENNON WIJLENS
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Marine Farm Compliance Audit Programme

Declarations are Due
30th April 2024

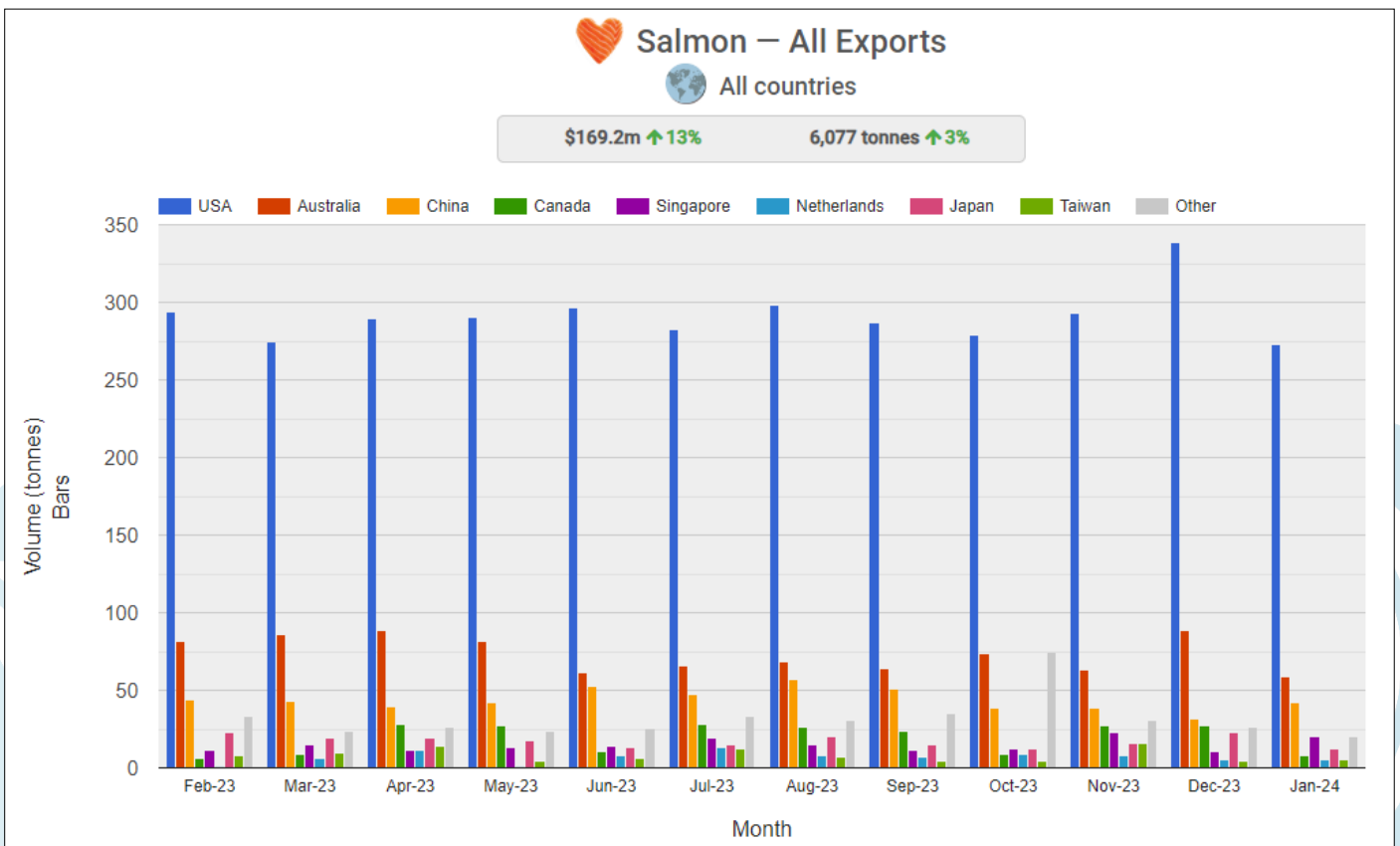
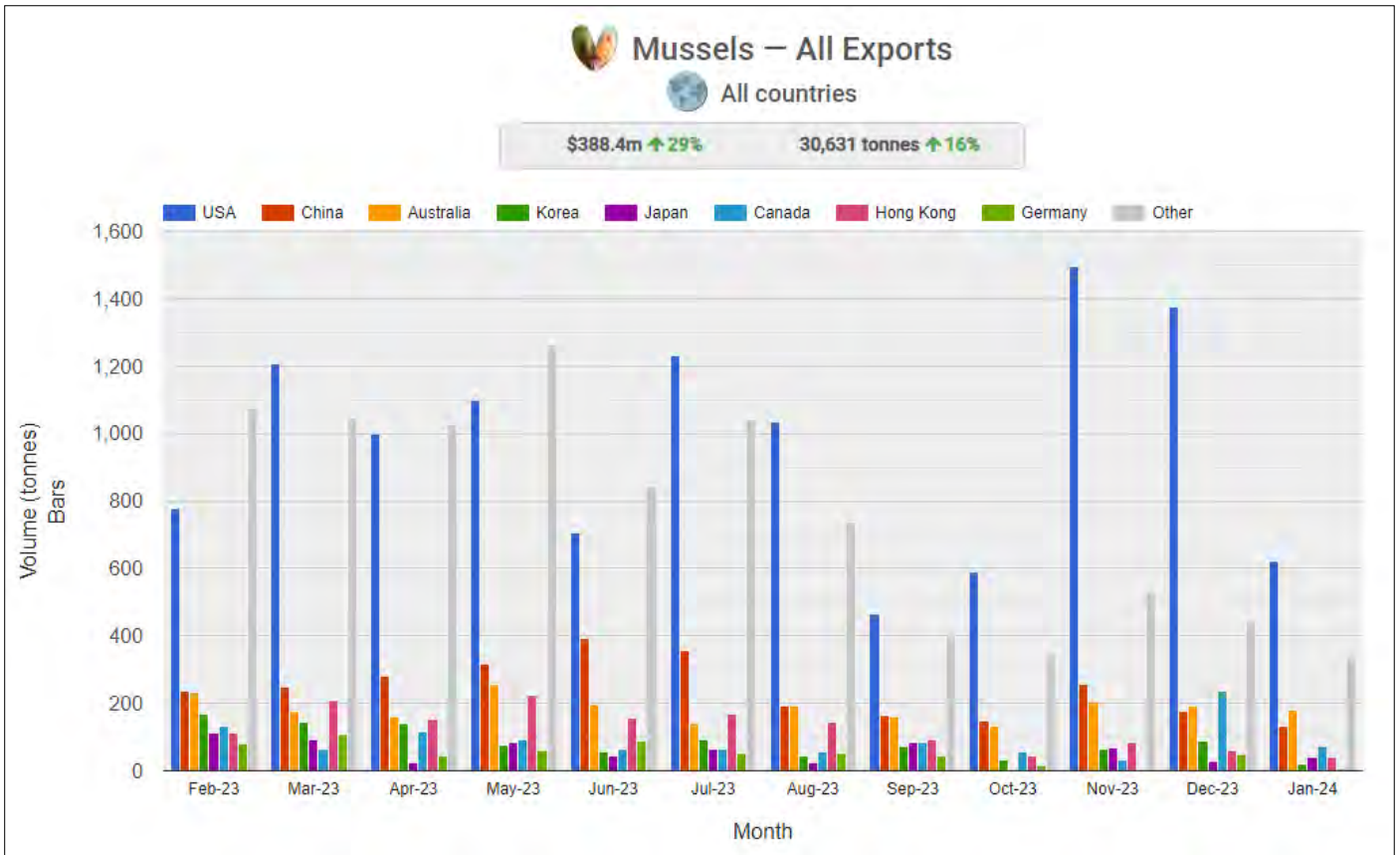
If you have not sent in your declaration
for the 2nd quarter,
please do so as soon as possible

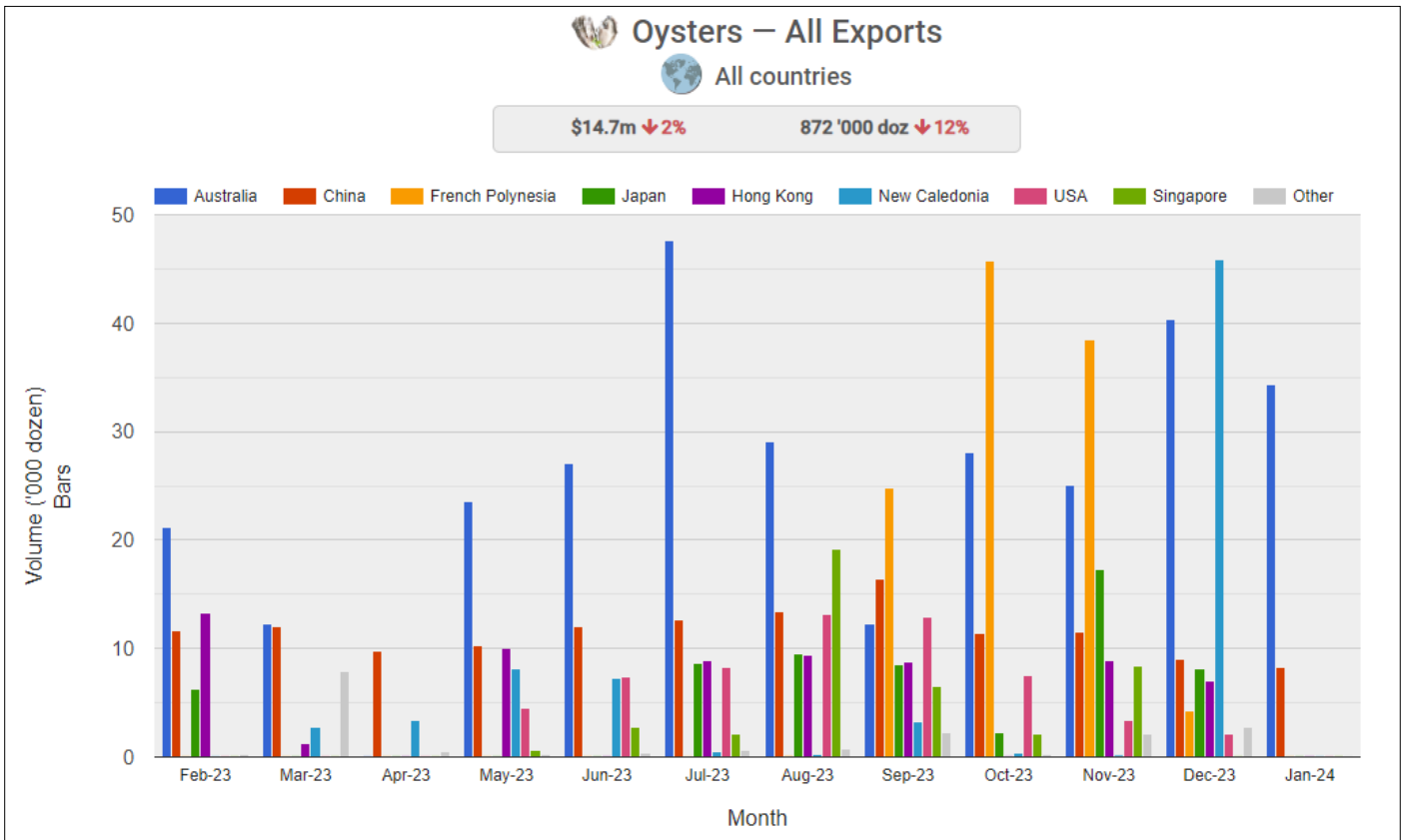


ONE DECLARATION FORM PER SITE
DUE BY THE END OF EACH PERIOD

November, December, January	(1)
February, March, April	(2)
May, June, July	(3)
August, September, October	(4)

AQNZ export data





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Top of the South Marine Biosecurity Summer Surveillance Programme

Recreational vessels across the Marlborough Sounds, Abel Tasman and Nelson Bays were recently inspected by divers during the 2023/2024 summer hull surveillance programme. The aim of the programme is to prevent the introduction of marine pests to the Top of the South, educate boat users on the risks posed by marine pests, and reduce the spread of species already present. The Top of the South Island continues to face potential marine pest invasions, particularly through fouling on the hulls of recreational vessels.

Two rounds of hull inspections were carried out, the first in early January during the Christmas break and the second in late January to coincide with the Nelson Tasman Anniversary weekend. Divers targeted areas popular with boaties, including Abel Tasman National Park and Queen Charlotte Sound.

What happens during an inspection?

Vessels are inspected for marine pests and fouling. Vessels are assigned a 'Level of Fouling' by the divers, with 0 being the cleanest, and 5 being the highest level of fouling. A score of 0-2 is considered clean, and a score of 3-5 is deemed considerably fouled. Approximately 80% of all vessels inspected this summer had a score between 0-2. However, a low level of fouling does not guarantee that a vessel is free from marine pests. Marine pests can hide in niche areas such as the keel, rudder, intakes, outlets, propellers, shafts, rudders, and casings.



Specialist divers from Wai Dive, undertaking the summer hull inspections. (Photo by Boffa Miskell)

Divers discovered two vessels that were found to be carrying Mediterranean fanworm (*Sabella spallanzanii*), including a vessel with a low level of fouling. Mediterranean fanworm is a marine pest that displaces native and fisheries species and fouls boats, aquaculture installations and other marine

structures. This find highlights the importance of keeping not just hulls clean, but also niche areas as these are prime locations for harbouring pests.

The hull surveillance programme is funded by the Top of the South Marine

Biosecurity Partnership, coordinated by Boffa Miskell, and undertaken by specialist divers from Wai Dive Services. The Partnership is a collaboration between Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council, Marlborough District Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Ministry for Primary Industries.



Example of biofouling on a yacht keel where Mediterranean fanworm is present. (Photo by Boffa Miskell)

Reporting a marine pest

If you come across a suspect marine animal or plant pest, report it as soon as possible to MPI by calling the **Exotic Disease and Pest Hotline 0800 80 99 66** or report it online at <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/how-to-find-report-and-prevent-pests-and-diseases/report-a-pest-or-disease/>. Remember to take a photo or sample if you can.

For general marine biosecurity enquiries, please contact councils' customer service centre. They operate a 24/7 phone service.

- Marlborough District Council **03 520 7400**
- Nelson City Council **03 546 0200**
- Tasman District Council **03 543 8400**
- Greater Wellington Regional Council **0800 496 734**

Alternatively, for non-urgent matters, email info@marinebiosecurity.co.nz.



Mediterranean fanworm (Sabella spallanzanii). (Photo credit unknown)



WOAA, it's time

Women working in aquaculture, it's time to tell your stories and celebrate your successes.

That's the call from Caroline Gilbertson and Áine O'Neill who last October formed Women of Aquaculture Aotearoa, WOAA.



Women of Aquaculture
Aotearoa

Aine says the idea began to form at the last couple of Aquaculture NZ conferences during discussions between members of industry.

The pair have established a website and are now seeking funding to further expand the organisation.

Numerous women working in aquaculture have joined already and their profiles found on the website show some of the diverse roles women play in the industry.

These include women working as aquaculture tutors, scientists, technicians, and researchers.

Áine O'Neill, who is Sustainability Manager for NZ King Salmon, says these sorts of roles and middle management positions are often where women work in aquaculture rather than out on boats, but we are seeing an increase on farms and hatcheries.

"We do want to see more women in these other roles as well."

Caroline who works for Aquaculture NZ as Environment and Sustainability coordinator says the AQNZ workforce programme involves a survey which

may identify where women are working in the industry – and where some future opportunities will lie which might be supported by WoAA.

Áine says it's very much a family-based industry for many with Mum and Pop businesses. She says the industry does offer a lot of flexibility including a capacity to align with some of the necessary drop-offs and pick-ups that reflect the lives of many women.



Caroline says the industry is supportive of women and that is something that deserves to be recognised. Their initiative does not reflect any sense that women face toxicity in the industry.

"It's more that we want to celebrate the good things that are happening and the work

our women are doing. We tend to stay very private with our success. We don't tell enough of our stories."

Áine says there are some amazing role models in our industry completing amazing work and we want young women looking at, or working in, our industry to know about and learn from them.

WOAA plans to organise in coming months a gathering in Nelson where both Caroline and Áine live before looking at events in other centres. They also hope to host a meeting around events such as the 2024 Aquaculture NZ conference in October.

They acknowledge the Young Fish initiative will cross over some of the same issues that WOAA plans to cover, though they will have a core focus on supporting and mentoring women.

Áine says WOAA is still a work in progress, but she and Caroline are confident it is gathering momentum.

"We just want more women to know about the industry and what it has to offer. If you know of anyone who would be keen to complete a profile or get involved, please encourage them to get in touch, be brave and put

themselves out there. We need to showcase the mahi being done and the incredible women doing it."

If you are interested in being involved with WoAA you can join their mailing list through their website - <https://www.woaaotearoa.org/>. You can also get in touch with them at woaaotearoa@gmail.com.

- *Brendon Burns*

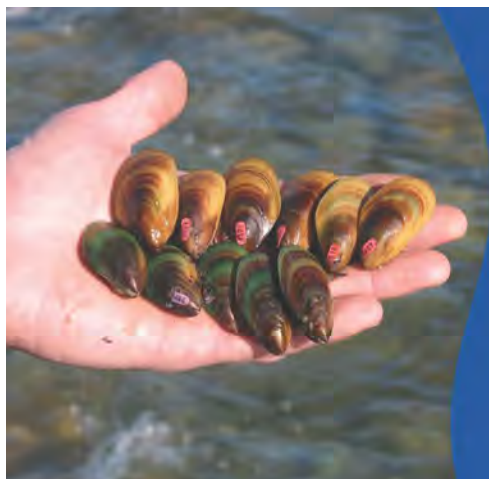
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Thanks to your support via MFA, last year we were able to work with over 5,000 Marlborough young people! 

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MARLBOROUGH

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Kelvin Watt: 021 420 962
kelvin.watt@dinglefoundation.org.nz

Havelock festival comes of age

The Havelock Mussel & Seafood Festival turns 20 next month and it's going to be an extra-special event.

Born out of a humble appreciation for the Greenshell Mussel in 2004, the festival has become a cherished tradition for locals and a must-attend for seafood enthusiasts.

This year's mussel shucking competitions will potentially see shuckers from the North Island taking on the Mainlanders in a friendly yet fierce competition taking on the reigning supreme Talley's Team.



Renowned chefs, including Chef Zenon Wijlens of Auckland's Paris Butter will take the goodies through with live cooking demonstrations alongside demos from Marlborough Oysters and NZ King Salmon. The festival also hosts the **Te Pūkenga Festival Chef Cooking Competition**, inviting participants of all ages to showcase their culinary talents and highlight the versatility of NZ King Salmon and Greenshell Mussels.



The festival's famous for its family-friendly atmosphere with activities from exhibits to face painting and the NIWA Kids Zone.

On the stage, headline acts Hollie Smith and Lost Tribe Aotearoa are supported by Brad Staley, locals Eclectic Fix and youth acts with Nelson's JOLA BURNS and the Queen Charlotte College Kapa haka group.

An R18 VIP area is available with complimentary seafood-inspired food, luxury amenities, and a private bar.



The festival is committed to environmental stewardship, with reusable cups and efficient waste management practices. Punters can even bring back their cup from last year's event.

It continues to be a not-for-profit event, with all funds raised going to local organizations which over the 20 years have benefited from a total of \$315,000.

Tickets to the Festival available: <https://www.havelockmusselselfestival.co.nz/>

- *Brendon Burns*

Celebrating **20** Years

havelock mussel and seafood festival'24



16 MARCH 2024 / 10AM-6PM
MARLBOROUGH



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LOST TRIBE AOTEAROA
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A date not to forget

Julien Stevens ordered salmon when he took his girlfriend out on a dinner date some years ago.

Somehow, he began thinking and talking to her about what happened to the rest of the salmon beyond the fillet that appeared in front of him.

Fast forward to today. Julien is still thinking about what to do with the rest of the salmon as R&D manager with New Zealand King Salmon.

Not long before last Christmas, Julien shared his story at a forum on the circular economy organized by the Marlborough District Council.



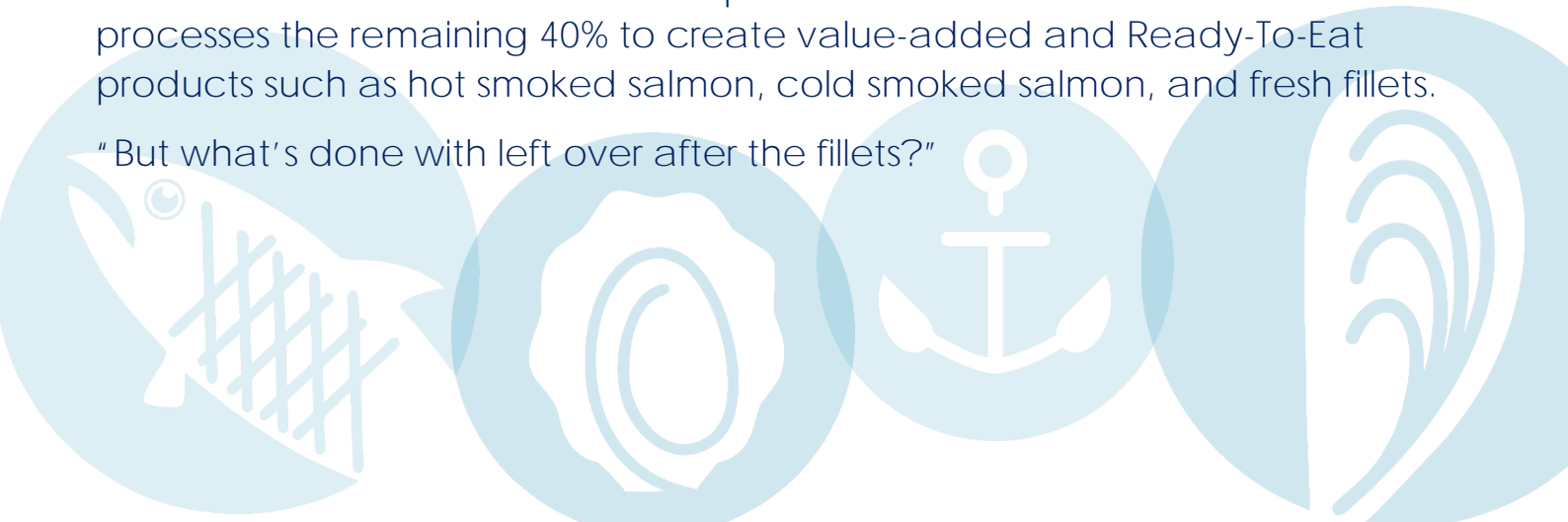
“In the western world the idea that people have when they think of salmon, is most often the beautiful pink fillet. That is the star attraction of course.”

However, Julien outlined how NZKS developed a brand around its remaining raw materials from processing.

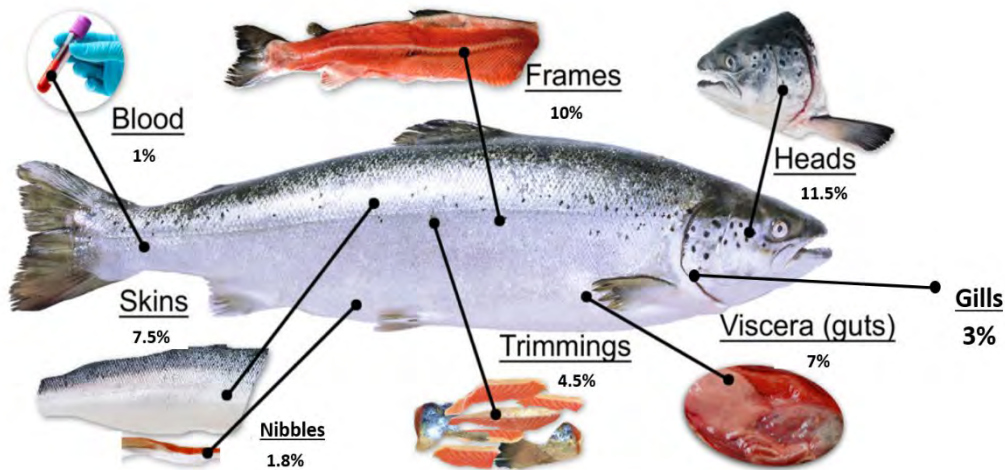
“You’ll notice we don’t call these materials by-products as it was important for our team to recognize the changes we’ve implemented to achieve food grade standards in how we handle and utilize these materials.”

NZ King Salmon sells 60% of its harvested salmon as head-on, gilled, and gutted fish to premium food service customers. It further processes the remaining 40% to create value-added and Ready-To-Eat products such as hot smoked salmon, cold smoked salmon, and fresh fillets.

“But what’s done with left over after the fillets?”



"It's higher yield than any land mammal as our salmon don't have to fight against gravity which requires dense bone structures. Nose to tail utilization should be a very important part of every meat production model."



Julien said over 2000 tonnes of Remaining Raw Materials (RRMs) are now processed each year by NZ King Salmon

In the past, such materials would traditionally be sent to an animal-grade fishmeal rendering plant – which would create lower quality stable meal and oil products.

While these plants serve an important purpose in the aquaculture and fisheries sectors, the returns after processing and transport costs can be low.

"We wanted to aim for highest value maximizing our salmon. Around the same time we had begun looking for alternatives to extract the full nutrient, resource, and financial value from these materials."

Julien said capturing RRM doesn't happen as part of a Business-as-Usual approach.

"Existing businesses really have to work to capture and utilise this material. Capture of RRM doesn't happen as part of a BAU approach."

One benefit of using the whole salmon is environmental. Each tonne of food waste to landfill can generate 2.1 tonnes of greenhouse gas equivalents.

Salmon is rich in EPA and DHA (the key components of Omega-3 fatty acids) which are a highly researched area of health science, food science, and

even veterinary science with 200 to 250 new global research articles added monthly.

NZ King Salmon looked at how the benefits of Omega-3 Fatty Acids (such as EPA and DHA) for humans had also been extensively researched for canine or feline diets.

“We began development of Omega Plus pet food in 2016 with a couple of freeze-dried treats, and now have a range of complete diets (wet and dry) as well as a range of freeze-dried treats, and salmon oil. ”



Omega Plus initially was only sold domestically but has now expanded sales to the US and China markets. “Here in New Zealand we continue to build our speciality pet food and veterinary customers.”

Julien says the company is also looking at future opportunities with salmon RRM’s including marine collagen, fish protein concentrate, organic fertilisers, and anaerobic digestion feed stock.

Certainly, he is one for thinking outside the square. After qualifying in marine science at university in Hawaii and working for a time as an instructor at Outward Bound in Anakiwa, he decided he wanted to do a master’s programme in sustainable aquaculture at the University of Stirling in Scotland. His fundraising included doing community service that people could pay to support; it included cleaning up rubbish on the beach, teaching salsa classes and tutoring children.

Oh and what happened to that date? Julien later married Angel and they have two little boys, Lucien, and Remi.

- *Brendon Burns*

Mussel Reef Restoration in full swing

The last quarter has seen a flurry of activity for mussel restoration in the Marlborough Sounds.

In mid-December the team carried out a deployment at new restoration site Penguin Bay, in Pelorus Sound. With the help of Sanford's mussel team, 2 tonnes of mussels and 4 tonnes of shell were deployed. As well as providing another site for restoration, the team is trialling the use of shell material at different heights to understand if relief from the seabed helps to provide better environmental conditions for adult and juvenile mussels.

Altan Ní Mhurchú and Luke Johnston joined the team in December as PhD students, and both have hit the ground running with experiments already in the water.



The University of Auckland, Top of The South, mussel restoration team with the Sanford crew for December 2023's deployment in Penguin Bay.

Altan is investigating ecosystem benefits of utilising recycled mussel shell from industry for restoration purposes. Her first experiment involves using fish sampling devices called "SMURFs" (standard monitoring units for the

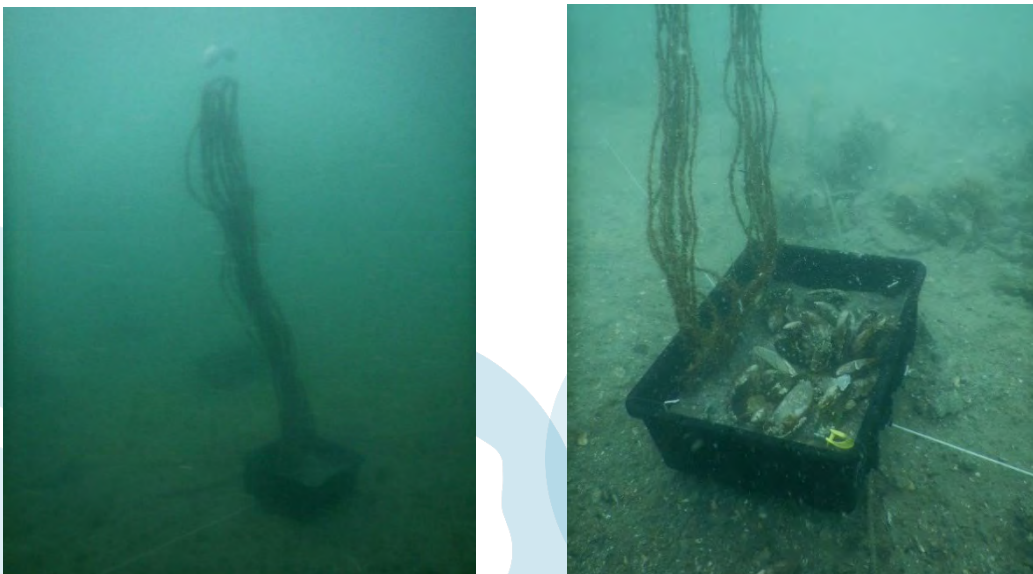
recruitment of fish) to quantify larval and juvenile fish on the restored shell and mussel habitats.

Early results have been exciting with a variety of fish species found to be present already including triplefin, spotties, leather jackets and a couple of sea horses!



Left: Emilee Benjamin and Altan Ni Mhurchú with a SMURF, ready for deployment Right: Some of the juvenile fish found in SMURFs one month after deployment.

Luke is focusing on how to improve recruitment of juvenile mussels into restored reefs. He currently has two experiments underway. The first is investigating spat settlement gradients in the water column at subtidal restoration sites. His second experiment is looking at settlement substrate use as a potential method to facilitate spat into the restored mussel beds. Small trays are being used as simple, defined sampling units with coir as a settlement substrate. Trays will be collected at various time points to quantify recruitment and evaluate the usefulness of this facilitation technique.



Trays simulating restored reefs with suspended coir to investigate substrate use in facilitation of spat recruitment.

Over the next few months we will continue to collect data and look to expand mussel restoration in Wakapuaka (Delaware Bay) and Mohua (Golden Bay).

As always, mussel restoration is a community effort. Thanks to Sanford for their generous help with the Penguin Bay deployment and for providing the mussels and shell, SPATnz for providing coir, the Brownlee family for their patience with our work in Penguin Bay, Mike and Lynley at Hopewell Lodge for their help with the tray deployment and outstanding hospitality, and the numerous supports from all our partners.

Please feel free to get in touch with any questions or if you'd like to get involved:

Emilee Benjamin: emilee.benjamin@auckland.ac.nz

Altan Ní Mhurchú: anim823@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Luke Johnston: lloh533@aucklanduni.ac.nz



A recently deployed shell and mussel plot in Penguin Bay



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Aquaculture Direct believes that New Zealand can benefit from the economic, cultural and environmental opportunities that sustainably managed aquaculture can deliver.

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Caging Waves

As part of her dissertation project, Ashtyn Smith has figured out a way to help restore intertidal mussel beds.

Her field experiment near Okiwi Bay was aimed at helping greenshell mussels (supplied by Sanford Ltd) establish in the intertidal zone – the area where the ocean meets the land between high and low tides.

Ash worked where there was increased wave activity on the shore. She set up 3D-printed cages that housed the mussels to prevent them from being thrown about too much. This was done over different lengths of time, and the results were recorded.

Ash's project was designed and run in collaboration with Emilee Benjamin from the University of Auckland as part of the Bachelor in Aquaculture and Marine Conservation at NMIT Te Pūkenga. Emilee has been involved in mussel reef restoration in the Marlborough Sounds for several years.



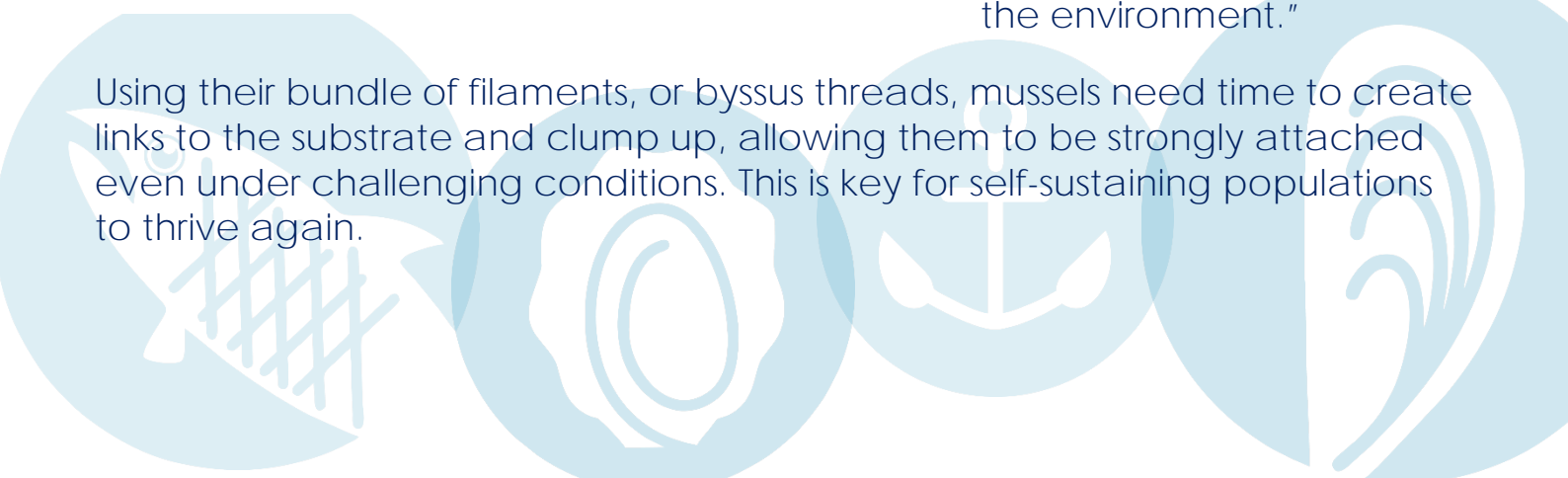
Ashtyn Smith helping restore intertidal mussel beds. – NMIT

Ash's project has provided clear and robust evidence that shows cages allow mussels to settle successfully.

"My project has been immensely rewarding, despite the numerous challenges associated with it," Ash says.

"Overcoming those hurdles and seeing the positive result is great not only for me personally but also for the environment."

Using their bundle of filaments, or byssus threads, mussels need time to create links to the substrate and clump up, allowing them to be strongly attached even under challenging conditions. This is key for self-sustaining populations to thrive again.



These mussel reefs provide food and habitat for a range of species, promoting local biodiversity.

She hopes her research will be used on a bigger scale in the future, allowing intertidal mussels to stick to the substrate and provide food and shelter for others – all with just a bit of help from a cage.

The majority of New Zealand's aquaculture produce is grown in Te Taihu (the Top of the South), and the region is also the country's research hub.

At NMIT Te Pūkenga, we offer world-class aquaculture programmes at Certificate, Bachelor, and Postgraduate levels.

Our programmes are designed with industry to ensure graduates have the right blend of knowledge and skills to transition seamlessly into the workforce. For more information, [visit our website](#).

– NMIT Te Pūkenga



Industry Big Month Out 2023

The annual industry-led beach cleaning effort of “Big Month Out” saw an impressive effort by many different companies over the period of 15th November to 22nd of December.

In what can only be described as an outstanding effort, well over 1 tonne of rubbish was collected during the month! Around 200 hours were spent cleaning and 122 locations visited across Pelorus Sound, Croisilles Harbour, Tasman Bay, Golden Bay, Queen Charlotte Sound, and Port Underwood.

Prizes were awarded by MFA for the top 3 cleaning teams - based on the average kilograms of debris collected per person. As well as for Most Interesting find (won by NZKS) and Best Picture (won by Marlborough Oysters) categories.

Our Top Collectors, with a total 593kgs, were:

1st Cawthron, SpatNZ, Moana

2nd Maclab

3rd New Zealand King Salmon

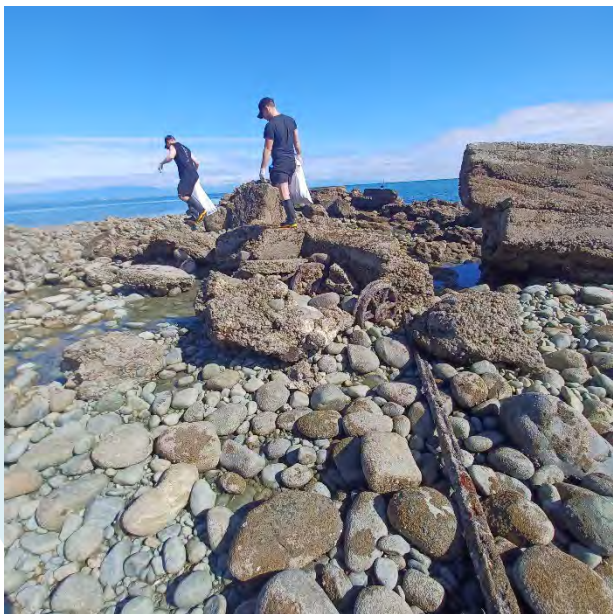
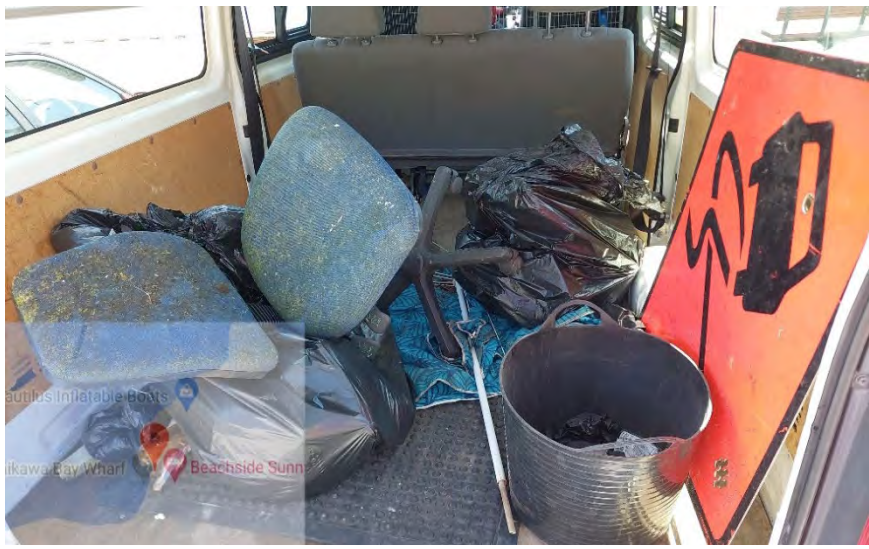
A special mention also goes out to the crew at Waimana Marine who put in the biggest effort (most hours spent per person).

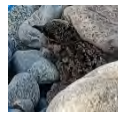
MFA acknowledges that the cleans were completed by teams from a range of roles across the industry. We had cleaners from farming vessels and crew, as well as those in managerial roles, production staff, administrative staff, and many more.

Once again, a huge thank you to all those companies and to the individuals who made the effort to get out there cleaning our beaches.

- Kiah Holdaway

Sanford | Clearwater | Maclab NZ | Maclab Tasman | MFA
 Aquaculture Direct Ltd | Aroma | Waimana Marine | Marine
 Farm Management Ltd | David Burt | United Fisheries
 Moana | Cawthron | Marlborough Oysters | Talley's
 SpatNZ | New Zealand King Salmon Co | Plant & Research







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- Jo, 2023 SRL Graduate



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Life with a pioneer and beyond

Robyn Jenkins married Jim Jenkins in 1975, six weeks after they met.

The deal was sealed when their employer, the Fishing Industry Board, sent them to Stewart Island where Robyn had grown up. They stayed with her family while she assisted Jim with some fisheries research.

"When we returned to Wellington, we got married in our lunch break. I rang up Mum and said: "Guess what I did today – I got married. She said: "Who to?" and was pleased it was Jim."

They built a life together that not only reflects their commitment to each other but to the marine farming industry. Jim passed away in 2017 and Robyn soon after gave up the role counting spat which she'd done for many years for MFA.

American-born Jim had arrived in Wellington in 1972 after graduating with a degree in fisheries from the University of Washington in Seattle. He'd worked for a couple of years in Alaska before coming here for a holiday.

The Fishing Industry Board (FIB) snapped him up and asked him to help develop mussel farming which was starting to emerge in the Sounds. In 1974 he'd visited Japan for the FIB and is credited, among many other innovations, with importing the first farm floats having seen them at work for the Japanese oyster industry.

By the time he and Robyn were married, he was already working on spat collection and counts. He convinced the FIB to let him move to the Sounds. Having grown up in Stewart Island, she was as keen as Jim to make it their home.



Jim winding coir fibre around polypropylene mussel ropes in Havelock, 1974.

“We wanted to make our lifestyle in the Sounds and settled first in the Kenepuru near Raetihi.”

Jim taught Robyn the art of counting the spat which she patiently continued to do for most of the years to come.

As well as his role with the FIB helping the mussel industry gear up, Jim was already underway with his own farms.

“Our first farm was at Nikau Bay; then we put in one at Snapper Point. Every bit of spare cash we had went into another mussel float.”

Meanwhile, Jim was helping other marine farmers and wrote the handbook, *Mussel Cultivation in the Marlborough Sounds*, which became their bible. John Young updated the second edition.

By the early 80s, Jim and Robyn were full-time mussel farmers but a crash in prices saw them struggling to pay the mortgage on the house they'd built near Raetihi. By now they also had son Curtis and daughter Mateen to feed and look after as well as themselves.



The first spat catching line, Crail Bay 1975. The orange floats were some of the original 40 imported from Japan.

“We basically had nothing to live on,” Robyn recalls.

Jim was offered a job with BP Salmon (owned by the oil company) in Big Glory Bay and Robyn was delighted to return to her family. Her mother Nancy had links on Stewart Island dating back to the 1840s and her father Murray Schofield had been a cray fisherman amongst other occupations.

The couple had three years there with another daughter, Haley, born and Jim helping set up NZ Salmon. He also introduced the first mussel lines to Stewart Island.

In the mid-80s, they returned to their home near Raetihi which had been leased along with their farms and resumed mussel farming.



Jim then had the idea of setting up Regal Salmon and talked to another expatriate American Terry Shagin, then living in the Sounds. Later Graeme Coates came on board.

Robyn returned to counting spat with Jim for the MFA, often using equipment he'd developed. "We used to do lots and lots of retention samples. Jim used to say history comes in 50-year cycles, not 5-year cycles."

By the late 1980s, the couple had spotted a bigger block of land near Mills Bay and purchased it before building a home. It had a quartz reef running through it and Jim had it officially named Gold Reef Bay.

Jim was by now serving the third of four stints on the MFA Board and later was awarded MFA Life membership.

In 1997, Jim was honoured by the Mussel Industry Council for his work as a pioneer researcher, scientist, and farmer.

The couple lost their daughter Mateen in an accident in 2013 and Jim passed in 2017 after a bout with cancer.

Robyn remarried in early February to David Western, a farmer who lives opposite her in Riverlands and had been good friends with Jim. David lost his first wife a couple of years before Jim's passing.

"This time I didn't just zip down to the Registry Office," says Robyn. "Too many grandchildren for that."

- *Brendon Burns*

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From coffee to kelp

Rachel Cullimore came across Kelp Blue, a company that harvests cultivated kelp to produce ingredients for agriculture, pharmaceuticals and textiles, as she was researching content for her Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Aquaculture.

Rachel Cullimore holds a piece of giant kelp, which she is researching for her postgraduate dissertation.

"I'm working with a start-up in Namibia called Kelp Blue," Rachel says. "They are growing *Macrocystis pyrifera* (giant kelp) off the coast of Luderitz."

Rachel is investigating the growth and vertical biomass distribution of the plants to enable harvest forecasts and plans that will optimise yields.



Rachel Cullimore holds a piece of giant kelp, which she is researching for her postgraduate dissertation – NMIT Te Pūkenga

"The study I have designed will involve measuring and weighing removed sections of kelp and looking at relationships between them to describe the morphology of the kelp in this environment," she says.

"The growth and morphology of giant kelp is heavily impacted by its environment, and since it has never been grown in Namibia before, Kelp Blue need to understand how it's growing and how to best maintain and harvest the plants.

Rachel's journey to get here has been an interesting one. She has an undergraduate degree in graphic design from the UK and set up her own coffee business there before arriving in New Zealand five years ago.

"I fell in love with the ocean and diving and soon, I had my heart set on working with seaweed – a strange dream for most!" she says.

She enrolled to study remotely at NMIT to obtain a Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Aquaculture and whilst researching for an assignment, stumbled across Kelp Blue and discovered they were offering internships.

"I got in touch and before I knew it, I was set to do my dissertation here— it all happened very quickly!"

As Rachel's educational background was not in science, she was concerned she might not keep up, but her NMIT tutors have been nothing but supportive.

"I have absolutely loved studying at NMIT, in fact, it doesn't really feel like studying when you find the content so interesting," Rachel says.

"The tutors have been fantastic, and I feel the course has definitely given me real industry insights as well as academic gains."

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Sounds Summer Slam

The Sounds Summer Slam (SSS) is the biggest spearfishing/ freediving competition in New Zealand with around 300 entries every year.

It was founded in 2018 by local lads Lee Dobson (No. 1 Family estate) and Sam Murray (Cawthron), both of whom are avid divers and part of their own small dive circle known as the "Stoned Em crew". After spearfishing both recreationally and competitively for years, Lee and Sam saw a gap in the sport for a well-structured spearfishing competition, with a focus on sustainability.



Sam and Lee out on the water

The SSS competition is designed to encourage divers to target a list of 7 species which changes each year - the number of species collected earns higher points than the size or weight. This helps avoid the behaviour of "upsizing" when divers continue to go bigger and bigger on the same species. It also takes the heat of traditional spearfishing species by requiring competitors to look for less common quarry, such as stargazers and flounder.

The whole Marlborough region is covered (about 4000km²), which further reduces the diving pressure. The competition usually runs from the first Friday night of December, after starting with a compulsory safety briefing, through to the weigh-in on the Sunday evening, where the prizes are allocated.

Both Sam and Lee have dedicated a lot of their time to making this event hugely successful and gathering a number of supporters and sponsors, resulting in some truly epic prizes.

In 2022, a Stabicraft 1450 explorer boat package, worth \$30K, was given away as a spot prize! At the last event in 2023, the top spot prize was cold hard cash to the sum of \$10,000.



One of the winners from the "Best photo" category

This makes the comp immensely popular with divers across all levels, not just the pros, as the spot prizes are often just as good (if not better than) winning first place! What's even better is that to be eligible for a spot prize all you need to do is weigh in 2 of the 7 species on the target list and collect at least an ice cream container full of ocean rubbish.

With sustainability at the forefront, it's no surprise that Lee and Sam have made cleaning up our waters an integral part of the comp with prize categories for rubbish collected. Each year results in thousands of kg of rubbish being collected, mostly pulled from the ocean in areas regular beach cleaners would not be able to access.



The Stabicraft boat won as a spot prize in 2022, donated by Marine and Outdoor

Last year the MFA became a sponsor of the event and helped support the cleaning of our local waters. In the 2023 competition 2.2 tonne of rubbish was collected, smashing the previous year's record of 1.8 tonnes.



Some of last year's rubbish collected by competitors

As if that wasn't enough, funds are raised through the sales of t-shirts, food, and drink at weigh in, and are donated to a charitable organization. In 2023 Sustainable Coastlines received \$1,500.

Previous recipients have been I am Hope, Marlborough & Nelson Rescue Helicopter, Ripple Action, Spearfishing NZ and the Coastguard, totalling around \$11,000.

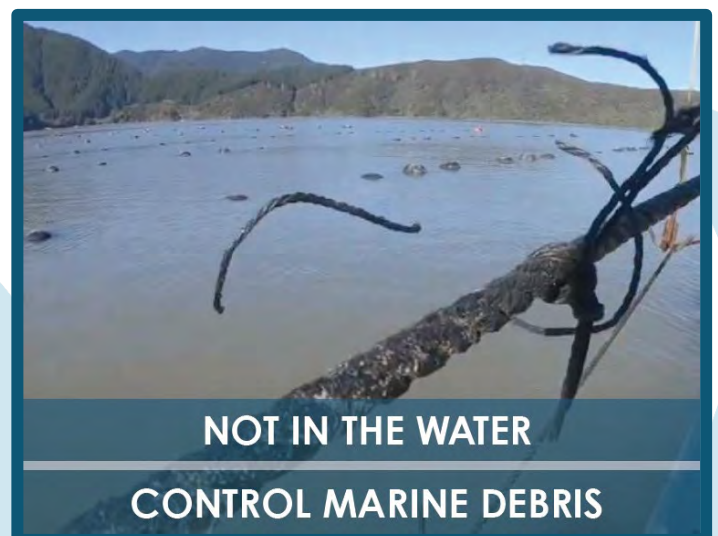
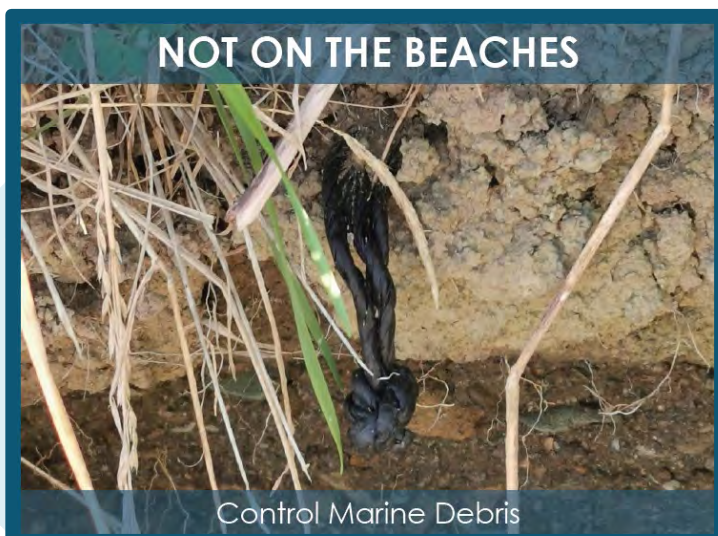


Some of the catch donated to Crossroads for the second year

For the last two years, the competition has given any donated fish caught to Crossroads, a Blenheim charity who provide free meals at their Koha Café and a food pantry service. This has had such a positive effect on those who do not have the opportunity to enjoy fresh seafood. Clients received a huge array of seafood from Kingfish and Snapper, to Butterfish and Crayfish, perfectly timed for Christmas celebrations!

If you would like to know more about the competition, head to <https://www.facebook.com/stoned.em> (Facebook).

- *Kiah Holdaway*



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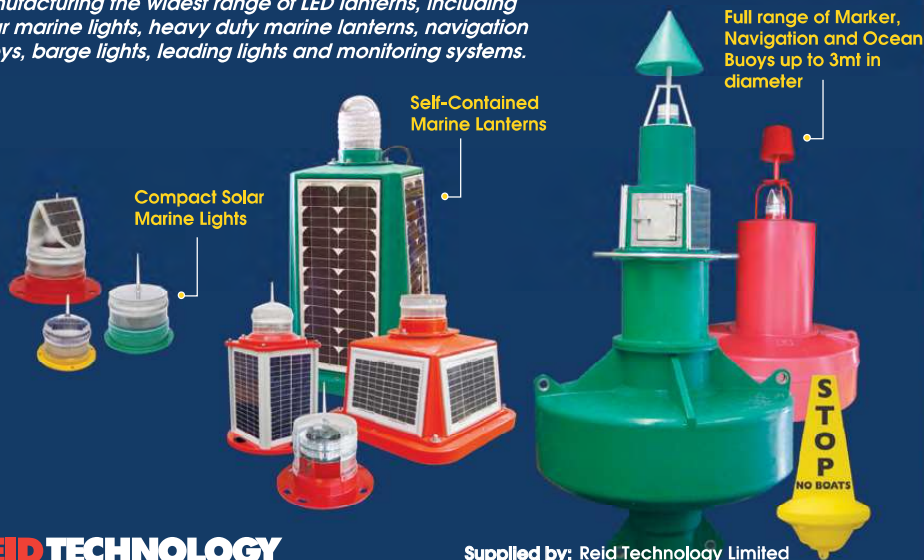
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Cawthron launches Ahumoana Whakahihiko/Inspiring Aquaculture programme at Ōpōtiki College

Cawthron Institute's Ngā Punga o te Moana open ocean aquaculture research programme delivered its first Ahumoana Whakahihiko (Inspiring Aquaculture) programme at Ōpōtiki College last December.

During the first of its kind offering, held during the School's Wananga (Activities) week, a group of Year 10 students were exposed to the aquaculture industry's key skills and knowledge including shellfish analysis, husbandry, processing and food preparation alongside diving, boat navigation and marine pollution mitigation.

Ahumoana Whakahihiko is part of Cawthron's six-year MBIE-funded [Nga Punga o te Moana Open Ocean Aquaculture research and development programme](#). The programme aims to advance the core technologies and systems for growing oysters, scallops, and seaweed in New Zealand's exposed (offshore) waters. Within the program, Cawthron is working with the Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board to assist with the advancement of their aquaculture strategy.



Ōpōtiki College Year 10 student Ngaio Wood examining a nudibranch/sea slug at Ōpape Beach during the Cawthron's Inspiring Aquaculture programme near Ōpōtiki last December.

Cawthron Institute social scientist Dr Craig Prichard said developing the skills and interest of local rangatahi and placing a strong focus on mātauranga Māori is a shared goal of both partners.

"We're delighted to be work with Whakatōhea, Ōpōtiki College and our local partners to get young people passionate about aquaculture, as it's a very important part of the community here."

This includes using some cool Cawthron technology to help the students learn, like a specially designed recirculating shellfish experimental station built by

Cawthron engineers that students studying NCEA biology and statistics will use to inform their studies alongside real data collected through the Ngā Punga o te Moana programme.

Prichard said delivering the Programme has been a community effort. "In addition to Cawthron staff and college teachers, the Ahumoana Whakahihiiko offering drew on a wide range of knowledge and skills from local businesses and organisations.

"Local dive master Phil van Dusschoten from Whakatane based Diveworks Charters introduced students to diving and supervised the underwater ecology snorkeling trip to Ōpape Beach.

"Ōpōtiki Coastguard, Bay of Plenty Harbour Master staff and Ōpōtiki waka ama club, Kura ki tai Waka Ama, were also on board to cover boating safety, navigation, and boating skills during a day at the Ōpōtiki wharf. On the final day the students visited the Open Ocean Whakatōhea Mussel's Factory and the Tio Ohiwa oyster farm at Ohiwa Harbour.

Prichard says the success of the first Programme has provided proof of concept and the team are excited to deliver it again this year with larger groups in all four school terms.

"The first term's Programme will be specially designed for the College's Maurua, Māori immersion group, which we are very excited about because we think it will be the first aquaculture programme delivered in Te Reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand."

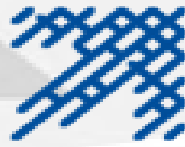
For more information, visit openocean.cawthron.org.nz.

- Craig Pritchard, Social Scientist



Heni Unwin, Cawthron Māori researcher in marine technologies, demonstrates the shellfish experimental station as part of Ahumoana Whakahihiiko, the first offering of Cawthron's 'Inspiring Aquaculture' programme at Ōpōtiki College. The recirculating system specially built by Cawthron engineers and shipped to the school will help students study mussel feeding, respiration and behaviour as part of their NCEA studies at the college in 2024 and beyond.

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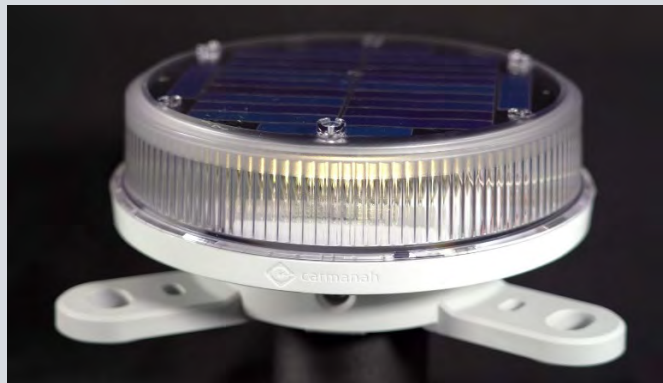
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The world is now their oyster

Once considered a problem for disposal, Greenshell mussel shells are now being used for fertiliser, water treatment, heavy chemical removal, poultry grit, cow lanes and horse arenas.



A University of Canterbury research project which started some years ago using GSM shells to filter zinc and copper running off Christchurch roofs has now gained a US patent. This year the project will exit the university to become a stand-alone company and sells two products to treat metal roof runoff – the Storminator™ Lite and the Storminator™ Barrel (for bigger flows).

It's all a long way from the 1960s when Bill Brownlee senior, farming near Havelock, agreed to having scallop shells put on the farm. In the

1970s his son, also Bill, let mussel processors begin trucking shells from their factories to the nearby farm which continues to this day.

His son Michael is now running the 150ha farm – although Bill is still very much involved. It includes Havelock Shell Processors - a crushing plant housed in a big shed which for the last decade has turned the shells into pulverised lime and other products.

What some locals refer to as Mt Perna (*Perna canaliculus* is Greenshell mussels scientific name) was at its peak estimated to total around 50,000 cubic metres and be up to 13m high.

"I remember as a kid, people saying to Dad: 'What are you going to do with those shells?' and he'd say: 'There'll be a use for them one day.'

Now it's down to about half that volume as seen from SH6 near Havelock.

Over recent years the biggest customer has been farmers around Marlborough, who use it instead of quarried lime. "It is slightly more expensive

– though being local, the trucking costs are less - and it's got lots of minerals in it," says Michael.

The shells are 91 % calcium carbonate (lime) and contain traces of nitrogen, boron, magnesium and other minerals.

A couple of truckloads went up to Kaitaia as backloads for Greenshell mussel spat collected off 90 Mile Beach for use on a local avocado farm. Michael says orders then came in from other Northland avocado growers who'd apparently seen the results.

The benefits of using Greenshell mussel shells are not just anecdotal.

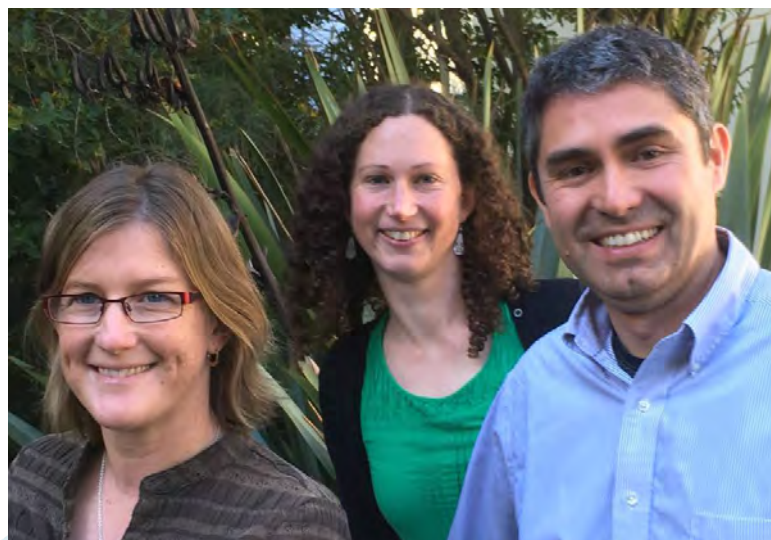
Professor Aisling O'Sullivan heads the Centre for Ecological Technology Solutions (CELTs.org.nz) at the University of Canterbury.

She and her colleagues and students have been working with the shells over many years.

Initially it was using them as a water filter at the Stockton Mine near Westport in 2008. "We trialled the shells in large ponds and they worked really well to

remove acidity and metals, especially iron and aluminium." After that, we trialled them in raingardens in 2012 successfully treating stormwater runoff in Christchurch, including at the UC campus during the campus rebuild after the 2011 earthquakes.

Then, along with two colleagues Professor Tom Cochrane and Dr Charters, she developed the



Aisling O'Sullivan, Frances Charters and Tom Cochrane

Storminator™ solution, a downpipe treatment system which uses the shells to remove zinc and copper coming off metal roofs which would otherwise have the dissolved metals going into waterways.



Storminator Ltd was formed as a company last year and a patent was secured in the United States.

Professor O'Sullivan says the company is now in the process of exiting the university and a Business Manager helped them in 2023 to navigate the supply chain system. They have now recruited a part-time assistant to help manage sales and product development.

This is based around Greenshell mussel shells – mostly sourced from Havelock Shell Processors – mixed with lesser amounts of another benign material which is also being recycled. Professor O'Sullivan declined to name that other material as Storminator Ltd heads into commercialisation.

While the initial Storminator™ was designed for homes, industrial buildings are now their biggest client; they face more stricter environmental auditing for the discharge of dissolved metals into waterways.

Professor O'Sullivan says they are also looking at a project with the Christchurch council to help polish stormwater runoff being treated in a wetland.

Back near Havelock, Michael notes that while it looks set to grow, supplying the university has to date literally been chicken feed. Poultry grit – the first product made from the shells – continues to be a real earner along with farming, including the dairy and equine sectors.

"They are putting it on cow lanes into the dairy sheds down in Kaikoura and a lot of people also use it for horse arenas."



Three generations of shell processing – Michael, Bill and Bill Brownlee senior

There's even been a bit of trialling and use in Marlborough's grape growing industry.

Late last year, Marlborough Roads announced it was using mussel shells sourced from Havelock Shell Processors to filter sediment from water entering the Sounds as they repaired the area's roads after the July 2021 floods.

That's a great homegrown solution to a local problem but for Greenshell mussel shells it now seems the world is their oyster.

- *Brendon Burns*



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Complaints from public rise as boats, jetskis get too close to ocean animals

An increase in risky, potentially harmful encounters with marine mammals is prompting a call from Department of Conservation to the public to give dolphins and whales space on the water.

DOC's Marine Technical Advisor, Hannah Hendriks says DOC has received numerous complaints from the public about boaties and jetskiers getting too close to marine mammals.

"This is something we see every summer, but more people seem to be aware of the rules these days and are contacting DOC when they observe inappropriate behaviour.

"We are often getting several complaints about the same interactions - showing people understand the rules and care about reducing our impact on these animals.

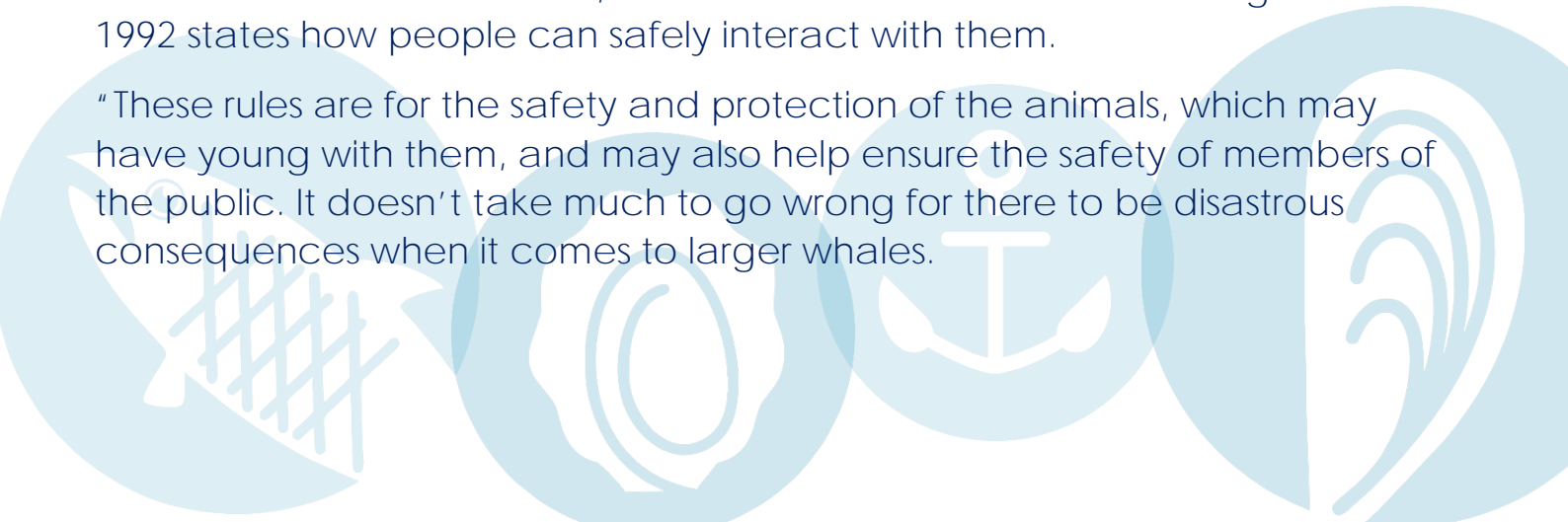
"One of the complaints we are seeing is about crowding of dolphin pods, especially in small, shallow bays. We want these animals to be able to behave naturally and move away if they want to without being chased", says Hannah.

All seals, sea lions, dolphins and whales are protected under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. It's an offence to harass, disturb, injure, or kill marine mammals.

Offenders could face a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment or a fine to a maximum of \$250,000.

Hannah Hendriks says although it is exciting and interesting to come across marine mammals in the wild, the Marine Mammals Protection Regulations 1992 states how people can safely interact with them.

"These rules are for the safety and protection of the animals, which may have young with them, and may also help ensure the safety of members of the public. It doesn't take much to go wrong for there to be disastrous consequences when it comes to larger whales.



“Regulations pertaining to speed, direction, and approach of vessels are ultimately about being predictable. Dolphins are excellent at manoeuvring in water, but mistakes can happen.

“If you are travelling at speed, and making sudden turns, it is harder for dolphins to predict what you are going to do and keep out of harm’s way. This can cause vessel strike injuries that can kill or severely injure animals.

“Young animals are particularly at risk as they may not be as nimble or may not have learned how to interact safely with vessels.

“The risk is even greater when there are many boats and jet skis operating in one area. The amount of underwater noise produced can disrupt their ability to communicate with each other and cause confusion and stress. This all results in an increased risk of vessel strike and mothers and calves being separated,” says Hannah.



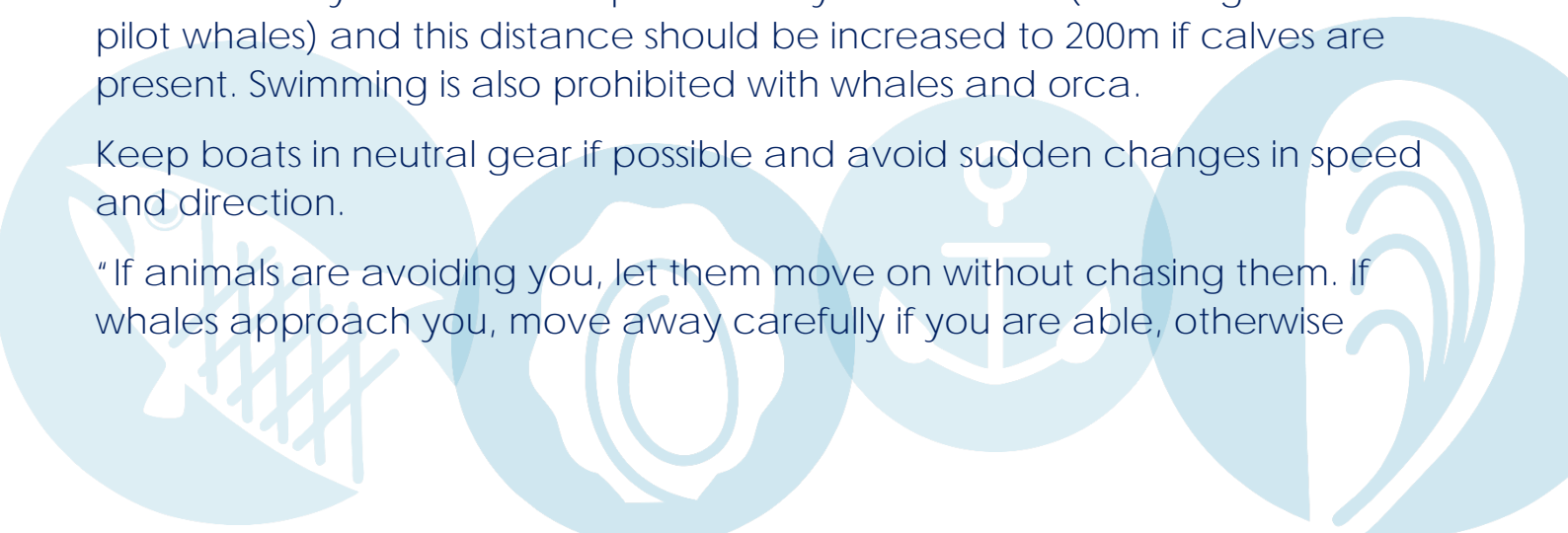
Jet ski too close to marine mammals in Hauraki Gulf. Photo credit: Lydia Green

For whales, including orca and pilot whales, the rules require people to be extra cautious and keep further away.

Boats and kayaks should keep 50m away from whales (including orca and pilot whales) and this distance should be increased to 200m if calves are present. Swimming is also prohibited with whales and orca.

Keep boats in neutral gear if possible and avoid sudden changes in speed and direction.

“If animals are avoiding you, let them move on without chasing them. If whales approach you, move away carefully if you are able, otherwise



reduce speed and put your engine into neutral until they move away, or you can safely depart.

“We have investigated offences in which people have ignored these rules.

“DOC has a range of enforcement options available, starting at education, advocacy and moving towards formal warnings, infringement notices, and prosecutions. We treat all reported incidents very seriously,” says Hannah.

Concerning behaviour involving marine mammals can be reported via 0800 DOCHOT (0800 362 468), with as much detail as possible such as images or video, descriptions of persons, boat names or vehicle registrations. This enables DOC to follow up with anyone involved.

More information and guidance on interacting with marine mammals can be found on DOC’s website: [Sharing our coasts with marine mammals \(doc.govt.nz\)](https://www.doc.govt.nz) and you can report your marine mammal sightings via our online form: [Marine mammal sighting form: Conservation \(doc.govt.nz\)](https://www.doc.govt.nz)

- Department of Conservation

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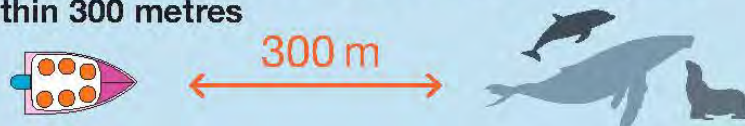
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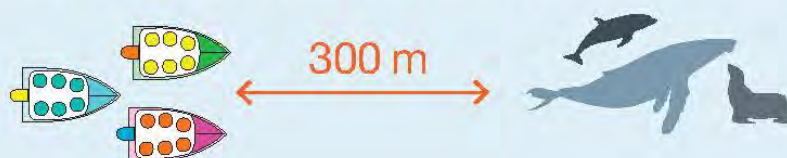
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Simple rules when interacting with marine mammals

Don't travel faster than idle or 'no wake' speed within 300 metres



No more than 3 vessels within 300 metres



Do not obstruct their path. Approach from a parallel/ slightly rear direction



Do not swim with dolphin pods containing juveniles



Stay 50 metres away from any whale or orca



Stay 200 metres away from any baleen/sperm whale with a calf



Do not swim with whales or orca



Stay 20m away from seals on shore. Dogs on a lead at all times.



www.doc.govt.nz/sharingcoasts

Climate Action Week 2024

Climate Action Week was hosted across Marlborough last week with 150 diverse leaders, organisations, thought leaders, change makers and passionate community members coming together to be the change.

Knowing that it really will take a village, the team at Climate Action Marlborough were excited by the extensive awareness, education and action being undertaken by our business community.

Each day explored a diverse topic, had hands on immersion experiences at local organisations, facilitated round table discussions, celebrated local organisations and speed dating to further connect our business community to come together to fast track the action.

Throughout the week, Collaboration Activator sessions were hosted to grow a seaweed project supported by Kiwibank and we are excited to learn more about the diverse economic development opportunities that this offers whilst drawing down carbon emissions.

The next event is on Thursday 30th May focused on carbon, energy, and waste. Three evolving topics for impact.

- *Catherine van der Meulen*



Jones wants expansion in aquaculture and fisheries

The new Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, Shane Jones, is no stranger to controversy and is relishing his new role.

We've seen two sets of comments from him that touch on aquaculture and the wider fisheries industry – all in the black and white tones you might expect from him.

Seafood NZ's GM of Communications and Marketing Fiona MacMillan interviewed Hon. Jones on his vision for the fishing industry and aquaculture.

She wrote that what was clear throughout the interview is that Minister Jones was happy to be back in both politics and in the space of fisheries. He intends to be a voice for industry and will not be afraid to advocate for change where it's needed.

"If I can start with aquaculture, I want to be the politician that convinces my colleagues that as pressure grows in terms of our terrestrial industries, we can turn and ranch and farm the ocean.

That we in the future will begin to emulate what Norway has achieved in terms of its ocean environment.

And that can only be done by stripping the obstacles and creating a facilitating environment through the law that rewards people who are going to make an effort, take a risk and spend money expanding aquaculture out into the ocean. "

"So, underlying all of that is a willingness to be an advocate, is a willingness to be fair and also an acknowledgment that I have to operate in a statutory framework.

But if the statutory framework needs to be refined or changed then I'm willing to lead those debates, endeavour to convince my colleagues and keep the confidence of the people at the top of the government, not least of which is the Prime Minister and my own leader and also work with my colleagues from the ACT party, so that they understand that when we are



trying to deregulate, deregulate means making it easier for industries to flourish.

And just because we're going to do a bit of deregulation, it shouldn't turn into a catastrophisation that all of a sudden, we're going to plunder Tangaroa, or plunder what's left of our coastal fish-based resources.

And you know, there's trade-offs. But the industry itself realises there are trade-offs and politicians have to make decisions but let these decisions in my case be driven by information not just from the loud discordant voices from the NGO sector, but the voices of the industry as well through their various peak bodies."

As for the recent media attention, Minister Jones saw this coming back in December.

"The first thing that will be said is that Shane is in the pocket of the industry because they have supported him through donations," says Minister Jones.

"That is a legitimate part of the democratic contest. If New Zealanders obeying the law, following the disclosure requirement of a democratic election, want to contribute towards our party or indeed to myself as a candidate, that is fully declared.

And people can endeavour to demonise my personality through that association, it however will not dent my professional duty as a senior New Zealand politician to be a steward of the entire sector but also stand up against intimidation..."

"The people in the fishing industry are not bad people. The industry creates a great deal of wealth, a great deal of positive economic output for the industry. They deserve respect and with me at the helm they're going to find someone who will boost their fortunes in the public discourse." *

In later introductory remarks to an industry stakeholder meeting last month the Minister talked of the key role the fishing industry, including aquaculture has to play in the Government's economic objectives.

Hon. Jones said he's looking at how to get better value from fisheries and he had 'zero interest' in further imposts on the industry. "Nor those attacking the revenue gathering capacity of industry without viable alternatives."

He said MPI was the industry's regulator but also wanted to see it grow; for industry itself developing and maintaining the social licence for that growth was important.

The Minister says he wants the industry to identify for him and Cabinet how it can unleash opportunities for revenue, with the quality of its management and important factor while providing better opportunities for regional New Zealand.

**The full Seafood interview with Minister Jones will be available to read in the March issue of Seafood magazine. Our thanks for being able to use the extract.*



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