

June 2026

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IMPORTANT DATES

- MFA & MSQP AGM
14 August
- MFA Conference & Awards
14 August
- AQNZ & NZMIC AGM
13 August
- Q3 Light Audits Due
31 July

Mike Mandeno's GM Comment

It's been a busy time since the last MFA Newsletter. Much of that time has been dedicated to preparing for and attending the Environment Court hearing of an appeal by the Clova Bay Residents Association. They objected to the location of marine farms in Clova Bay under the new Marlborough Environment Plan.

The hearing took place across a week in the Nelson District Court, and we're now awaiting the court's decision. For the MFA this will mark the end of proceedings related to the Marlborough Environment Plan. We can now focus more time and resources on opportunities that add value to industry.

Speaking of opportunities: The association is one of five aquaculture organisations that have lodged a Fast-Track application for new farming sites in the Marlborough Sounds. The farms would help the sector adapt to climate change, especially in relation to spat survival, and significantly increase production of mussels and oysters. There is more detail in a separate article on the MFA's site in Papatua, Port Gore.

NES-MA

The government recently amended the National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture: -

- It will be easier to undertake experimental or trial farming
- Species changes will be easier
- Reconsenting will be simpler
- There will be more opportunity for farming of *Undaria* and finfish

These are positive changes for our sector and more info can be found on MPI's website¹

Applied PhD Funding for Bioprocessing and BioTechnology

The Government introduced the Applied Doctoral Scheme² two years ago to have the tertiary sector work more closely with industry, train industry-ready graduates, and help industry meet research needs. The theme of the 2027 round is Biotechnology & Bioprocessing – which has some alignment with activities in the aquaculture industry.

The funding supports PhD research students to work on an industry-based project for ~3 years, with some of the time spent with the industry partner.

The MFA AGM

The MFA AGM and awards dinner is coming up on 14 August and will be held at the Nelson Yacht Club. As always, we'll have a range of interesting speakers and an enjoyable evening function. It's a great way to network with colleagues and reward yourself and your team with a great day (and night!).

We're also looking for sponsorship for the event. Sponsorship is a fantastic way to promote your business to the industry, while also supporting this long running and important MFA event.

El Nino is coming (probably)

Experts are predicting a very strong El Nino event this winter. This would be expected to bring SW winds and low rainfall to the East Coast of the South Island. If El Nino persists into spring, we *should* see condition come up in the Sounds. Watch this space.

¹ <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/aquaculture-fish-and-shellfish-farming/national-environmental-standards-for-marine-aquaculture>

² <https://applieddoctorates.nz/>

Remembering Nevil Patterson: MFA's First Life Member

This month marks just over one year since the passing of one of the marine farming industry's pioneers, Nevil Patterson, aged 85.

Nevil played an important role in the establishment of the industry and was one of the original executive members of the Marlborough Sounds Marine Farming Association, serving as secretary and treasurer from 1974 to 1980. He carried out these duties from Lower Hutt, where he lived and ran an accounting firm that also provided valuable support to the Association.

In those early years, much of the work of establishing and representing the industry relied on the dedication of volunteers. Nevil was an advocate for marine farming, and his knowledge, commitment and lobbying expertise were highly valued by his peers. In recognition of his service, he was made the first MSMFA Life Member in 1983.

A regular visitor to South East Bay, Nevil lodged an application for marine farming there in 1974, with longlines installed the following year. He was also known for his practical ingenuity, making waterproof navigation lights from old glass test tubes for use on the farm.

"People like Nevil gave their time, skills and energy to help build an industry that was still finding its feet," said MFA President Jonathan Large. "The contribution of volunteers in those early years was invaluable, and we remain grateful for the dedication of those who helped establish the foundations of both the Association and the industry."

Fellow MFA Life Member and original marine farmer Bruce Hearn remembered Nevil as a respected member of the Association's executive. Bruce said they were grateful when Nevil put his hand up to help, bringing valuable expertise to the Association. Above all, Bruce remembered him as "a bloody nice guy".

Nevil passed away peacefully a year ago, but his contribution to the foundations of the marine farming industry in Marlborough continues to be remembered and appreciated. The MFA Board acknowledges the contribution he made to both the Association and the wider marine farming sector.



Marine Farm Compliance Audit Programme

Declarations are Due
31st July 2026

If you have not sent in your declaration for the 3rd 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) |

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AQNZ Export Data



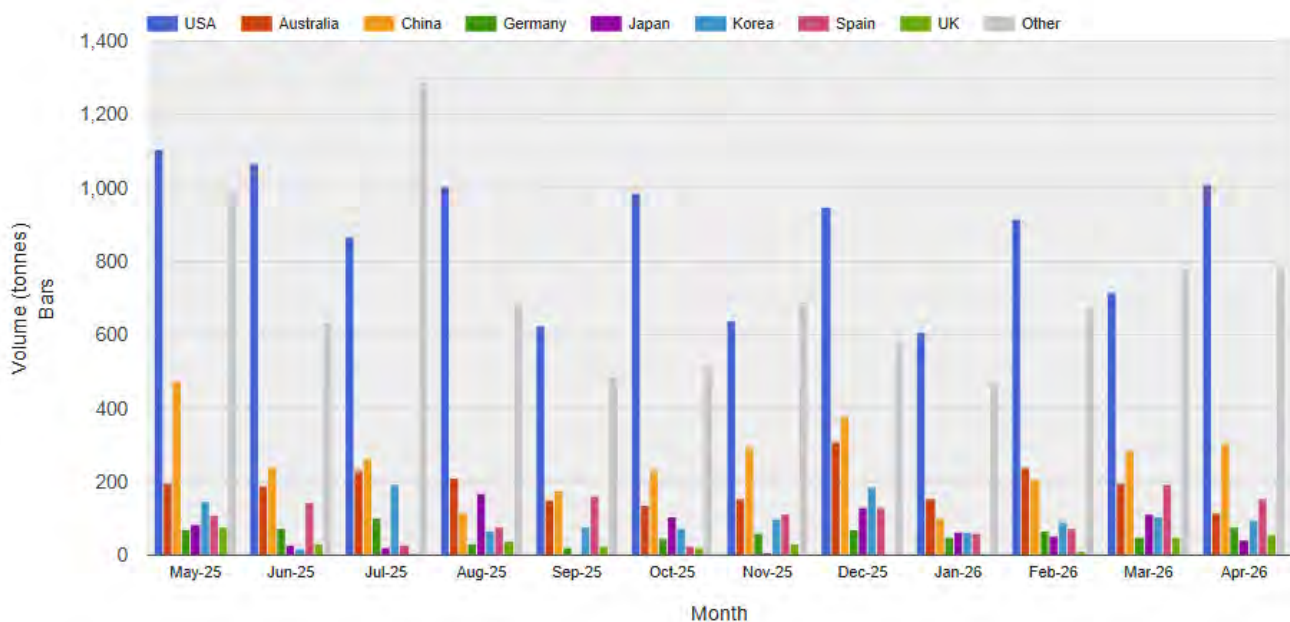
Mussels – All Exports



All countries

\$374.3m ↓11%

28,779 tonnes ↓6%



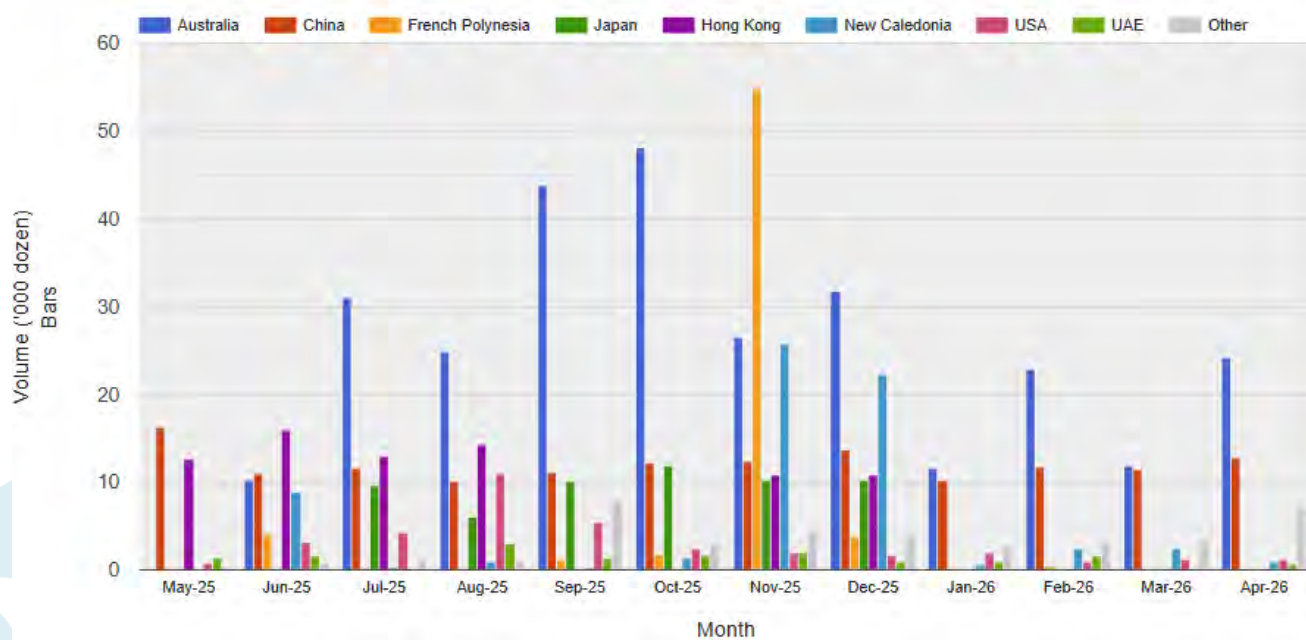
Oysters – All Exports



All countries

\$13.3m ↑4%

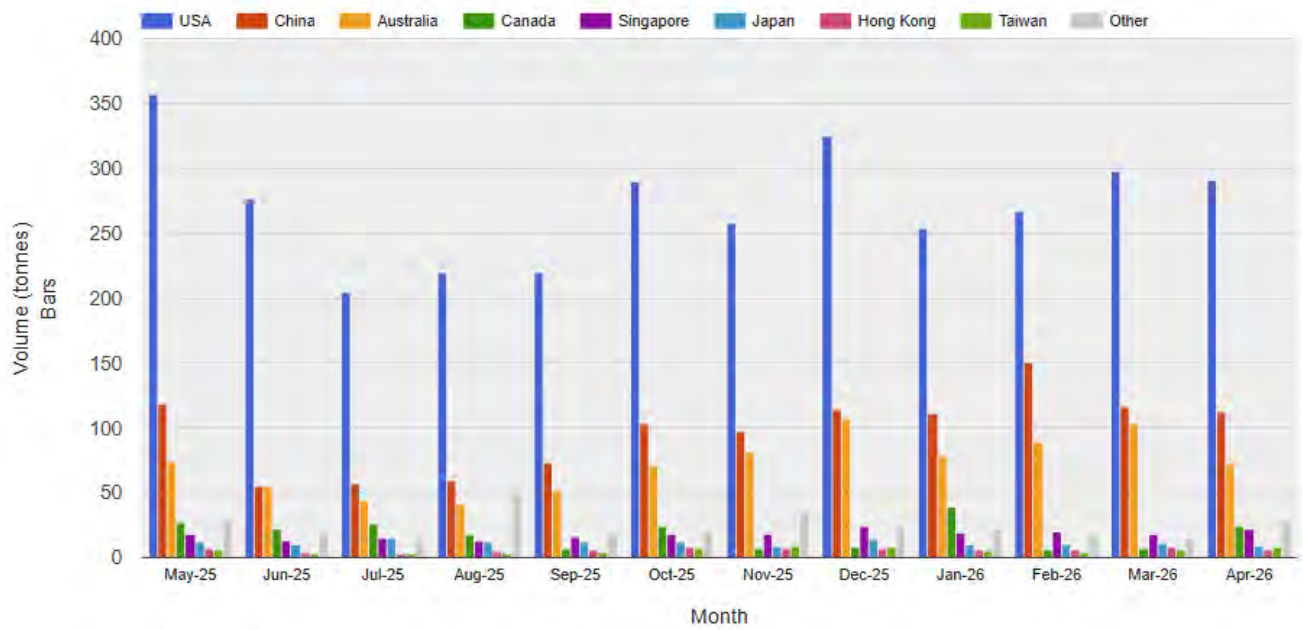
789 '000 doz ↑12%



Salmon – All Exports

All countries

\$213.9m ↓ 5% 6,290 tonnes ↓ 13%



Tickets are now available

MFA MSQP AGM & Conference

Date: 14 August 2026

Start: 9:00am

Location: Nelson Yacht Club



To secure your tickets, or support via sponsorship, contact: office@marinefarming.co.nz

MFA's Fast-Track Application and Opportunities for Members

By now, I'm sure many readers will have heard about the Fast-Track application lodged by MFA and four other applicants, for new marine farm sites in the Marlborough Sounds. The Fast-Track process allows important proposals to be assessed quickly on their costs and benefits.

The MFA is seeking a new nursery site, located at Papatua (also known as Pig Bay) in Port Gore. The site would have 96 lines, each with a backbone length of 180m, and is intended to help members adapt to climate change.

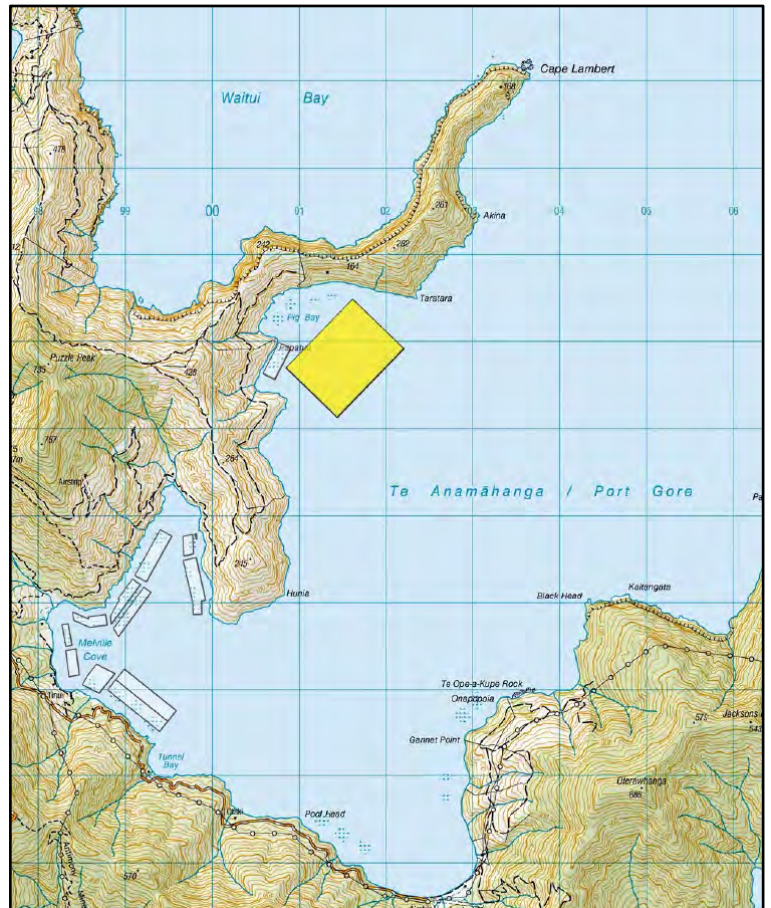
Port Gore is close to the cool, fast moving and nutrient rich waters of Cook Strait. It's known as an excellent spat holding area. The new site (if approved) will provide a safe nursery site for deploying spat and growing it in favourable conditions.

Healthy spat are resilient spat. They can be safely reseeded onto seed holding sites or crop farms. Better retention and survival of spat will result in increased crop volumes, employment and exports.

Under some assumptions, the MFA site will enable production of up to 35,000 GWT of mussels per year, 208 million in new export revenue and 342 new full-time jobs. Further economic benefits would be expected from any investment in new vessels, water space development or new processing capacity.

The site will be hugely beneficial for MFA members who lease lines. However, members won't be the only people to benefit. MFA will reserve 20% of its lines for lease by Te Tau Ihu iwi, who are MFA members. In addition, \$40,000 per annum would be made available for community and restoration initiatives, via an MFA Community and Environment Fund.

The application has been 'referred' by Minister for The Environment Hon Chris Bishop. This means the proposal meets the eligibility criteria and is accepted into the FastTrack process. From here, a full application is developed and evaluated by an expert panel. All going well, we expect a decision on the application this year.



Thousands Turn Out for 2026 Havelock Mussel Festival

The Marine Farming Association was proud to once again support the 2026 Havelock Mussel & Seafood Festival, with another fantastic day celebrating local seafood, the marine farming industry, and the wider Marlborough community.

Despite a drizzly start to the morning, the crowds still turned out in force, with approximately 4,500 people coming through the gates throughout the day — an increase on last year. Once the weather cleared, the festival site quickly filled with people enjoying the seafood, entertainment, cooking demonstrations, and relaxed atmosphere that has made the event such a favourite on the Marlborough calendar.



*Thousands showed up to the Havelock Domain for an amazing day out
Photo credit Leroy Bull*

Seafood was naturally front and centre all day long. Around 360 dozen oysters were enjoyed across the festival, while one stall alone served approximately 300kg of mussels which is a pretty good reminder of just how popular our local seafood continues to be with both locals and visitors alike.

One of the standout features of the day for the MFA was the Industry Tent, once again proudly sponsored by the Association. The tent provided a great opportunity for the public to engage directly



Popular festival snack, bacon wrapped mussel kebabs - Photo credit Leroy Bull

with the marine farming industry and the people who work within it.

Throughout the day, the tent was buzzing with activity and positive conversations. Visitors were able to learn more about how Greenshell mussels, oysters, and salmon are farmed in Te Tau Ihu, while also gaining insight into the environmental work, innovation, and day-to-day operations that go into producing world-class seafood.

It was especially encouraging to see the genuine interest people had in the industry. Whether it was questions about farming methods, environmental initiatives, career opportunities, or life working on the water, the festival once again proved how valuable these face-to-face conversations can be in helping the public better understand the industry and the people behind it.

Another crowd favourite was the ever-popular mussel opening competitions, which drew crowds and plenty of friendly rivalry throughout the afternoon.

The competitions continue to be one of the festival's signature events and are always a great way to showcase the skill, speed, and personalities within the industry.

The festival also continues to deliver important benefits back into local community groups and organisations. While final figures are still being worked through, organisers estimate that approximately \$8,000 has already been returned to community groups through this year's event.

A huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes to make the festival happen each year, and the MFA would like to acknowledge the efforts of the organising committee, volunteers, vendors, sponsors, performers, and everyone else involved in delivering another successful event.

The MFA would also like to thank the organisations and exhibitors who helped bring the Industry Tent to life and shared the industry's story with festival-goers throughout the day:

Aimex

MDC Harbours
team

MPI Fisheries NZ

Earth Sciences NZ

MBM Unique
designs

Craig Pritchard,
Cawthron Institute

First Mate

Port Marlborough

Aquaculture New
Zealand

Marine Services NZ

University of
Auckland

The Better Beaches
Project



Both Marlborough Oysters serving fresh oysters in the shell (top) and Talley's with their battered mussels (below) were a hit with attendees – Photo credit: AQNZ



The MFA industry tent was a popular spot throughout the day. Photo credit: AQNZ



2026 Leadership Hui

12-13 October

Are you ready to invest in the future leaders of New Zealand's aquaculture sector?

The 2026 Leadership Hui is more than a workshop – it's an investment in leadership succession, team retention, and the future of our industry. It is a powerful professional development opportunity designed for leaders who are ready to grow, connect and take the next step in their leadership journey.

Programme Snapshot

12 October

Arrival in Nelson

- 10am pick up at Nelson airport
- Team building, speaker and dinner

13 October

- Core training with Leadership development facilitator, breakout workshops and BBQ

14 October

- AQNZ conference

Who is it for?

This residential hui is tailor-made for new leaders in aquaculture from all roles who:

- » Have been in the industry for 1-5 years AND
- » Are in their first leadership role, between 1-4 years AND
- » are committed to building resilience, confidence and effective communication as a leader

If this sounds like someone in your team, now is the time to show them they are valued – and that you are invested in their growth and long-term future with the organisation.

What's Included

- » Fully hosted residential hui in Nelson (12-13 October)
- » All accommodation and meals
- » Exclusive leadership workshops and activities
- » Registration for day 1 of the 2026 Aquaculture NZ conference in Nelson
- » Ongoing engagement and connection

(Travel and optional conference night accommodation not included)

Applications Now Open

- » Apply online by 26 June 2026
- » Only 12 residential spots available
- » Successful applicants will be notified by 3 July

Any enquiries contact:

kirsten.norfield@aquaculture.org.nz

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Mussel Opening Competitions Draw Big Crowds

The ever-popular mussel opening competitions once again proved to be a standout attraction at the 2026 Havelock Mussel & Seafood Festival, drawing large crowds and plenty of friendly rivalry throughout the day.

Teams and individuals were challenged to open 100 steamed mussels in the fastest time possible, with judges assessing both presentation and technique throughout each round. Competitors needed to balance speed with accuracy, as penalties were given for damaged shells or poorly opened mussels. The fast-paced nature of the event made for a great spectacle for the crowd while also showcasing the level of experience and coordination involved in professional mussel processing.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of volunteers worked steadily steaming mussels on site and keeping fresh trays moving through to competitors and judges.

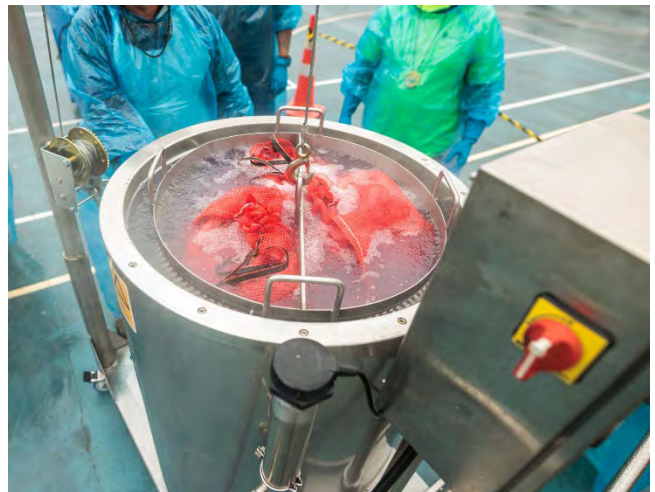
The factory teams' competition proved particularly entertaining, with fierce competition between crews. Taking out the overall win was HMF Team 1, made up of Tommy Broughton, Michael Feng, Aaron Greenhow, and Hayden Feaver, with an impressive, combined time of 6:11:44 for 100 mussels each.

Close behind in second place was Talley's Blenheim 1, featuring Carl Joshua, Hyundong Noh, Jericho Babao, and Daejin An, finishing with a time of 6:25:97.

The individual competitions were equally competitive, with extremely fast times recorded. Aaron Greenhow claimed the fastest overall individual time of the day, opening 100 mussels in an impressive 2:23:46.

He was closely followed by Tommy Broughton with 2:30:34 and Daejin An with 2:40.

Other strong performances came from John Carlo Montalan at 2:49:81, Jericho Babao at 2:54:91, and Hyundong Noh at 2:57:13.





The winning team!

The wider field also produced some excellent times, including Tonton Matedios at 3:12:62, Michael Feng at 3:15:72, Reymark Llanto at 3:37:88, Ong Chin at 3:43:28, Hayden Feaver at 3:44:87, and Carl Joshua at 3:44:22.

Later in the afternoon, a separate mussel opening competition hosted by Mills Bay Mussels took place in front of the main stage, bringing another burst of energy and entertainment to the festival programme.

Timed to help keep the crowd entertained ahead of headline act Shapeshifter, the competition drew plenty of public interest and crowd support, with competitors putting their skills to the test in one of the festival’s busiest areas. Congratulations go to Aiden Gane for taking out the Mills Bay Mussels title.



Aiden Gane won the Mills Bay Mussels competition for 2026.

Photos credit: Leroy Bull

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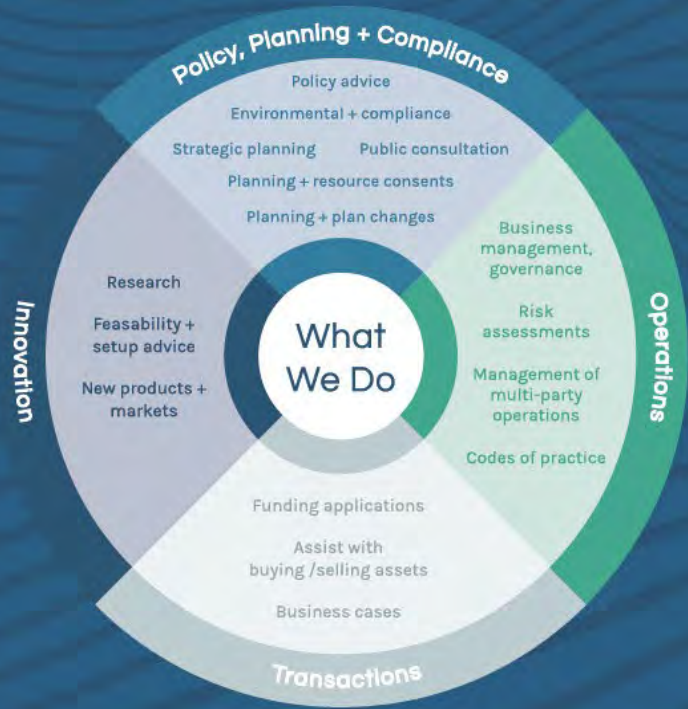


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Safety Around Gantry Hook Storage

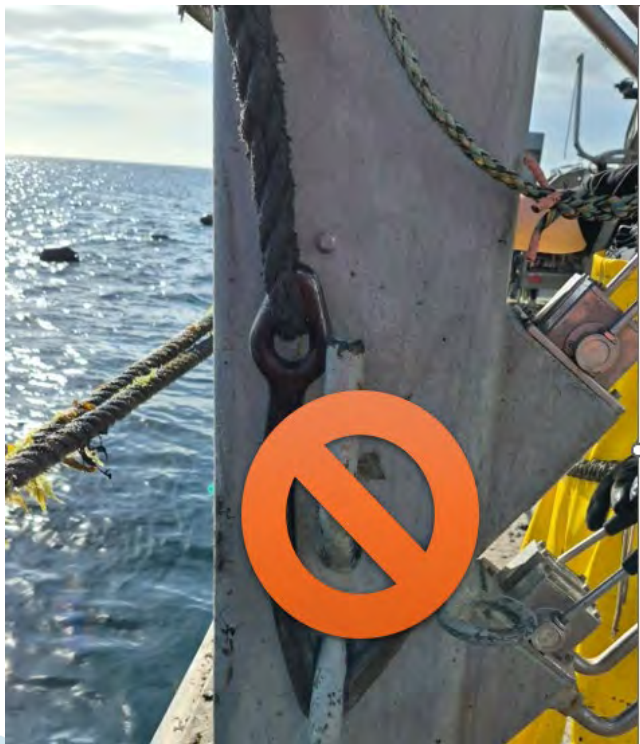
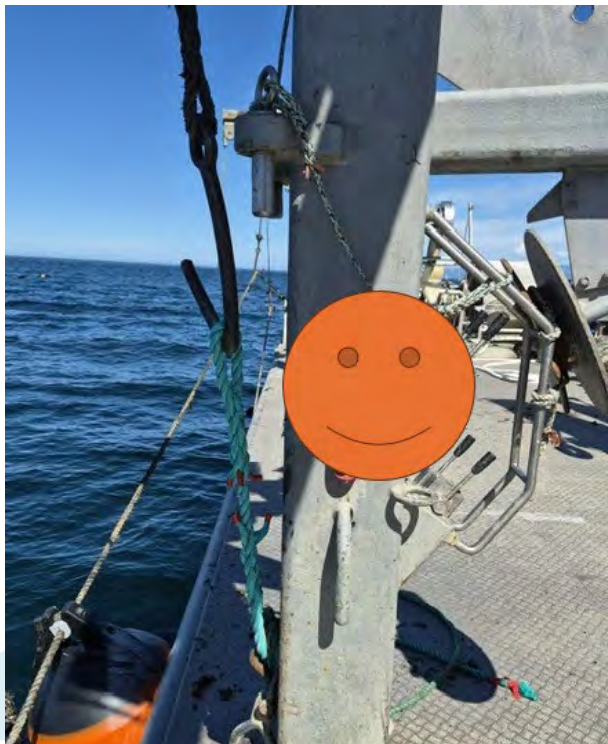
A recent onboard incident has prompted one marine farming company to review and update the way gantry hooks are temporarily secured during operations.

The incident occurred while a crew member was working on the backbone and attempted to secure a swinging gantry hook out of the way to avoid it moving around near head height. The hook was clipped under a cleat before tension was applied to the gantry rope. As the rope tightened around the gantry post, the hook was pulled hard against the pole, trapping the crew member's finger and causing a serious injury.

Following the incident, Clearwater Mussels have introduced a change to their onboard procedures. Crews have now been instructed not to clip gantry hooks directly under cleats, rails, or other hard points on the vessel when stowing hooks temporarily.

Instead, hooks are now required to be secured into a spliced eye on a rope that is tied or spliced off to the gantry or another suitable location. This allows the hook to be positioned safely before tension is applied, reducing the need for hands to remain near potential pinch points while gantry ropes are tightened.

Clearwater is sharing the experience as a practical reminder for others in the industry to review how hooks are being secured onboard and to consider where pinch or crush hazards may develop as equipment comes under load.



Tiny algae, big tanks: Growing local live feed for New Zealand shellfish aquaculture

Every healthy oyster or mussel spat depends on something far smaller than itself: microalgae. These microscopic algae are the live feed used in hatcheries and nurseries to support juvenile shellfish through their most delicate life stages. They provide the nutrients young shellfish need to grow, survive, and develop before being transferred into larger production systems. For shellfish aquaculture, reliable microalgae production is not just a laboratory detail, it is a major part of the engine room.

However, producing live microalgae is not always easy. Cultures need regular monitoring, careful handling, suitable light and temperature, and protection from contamination. When cultures grow well, they quietly keep a shellfish hatchery humming along. When they struggle or crash, feed supply can quickly become a bottleneck or a famine for vulnerable small shellfish.

For many hatchery and nursery operations, live microalgae production remains one of the most labour-intensive and costly parts of raising juvenile shellfish.

My PhD research is focused on this challenge. I am investigating whether locally isolated New Zealand microalgae could become useful live-feed options for the shellfish aquaculture industry. Rather than relying only on standard strains already used in aquaculture and imported from overseas, I am exploring whether microalgae from New Zealand waters can be isolated, identified, cultured, and tested under conditions relevant to local production.

Among the three summer microalgal species isolated during my first year PhD project, *Chaetoceros calcitrans*, *C. tenuissimus*, and *Conticribra weissflogii*, one species has especially caught my attention: *C. calcitrans* (**Figure 1**).

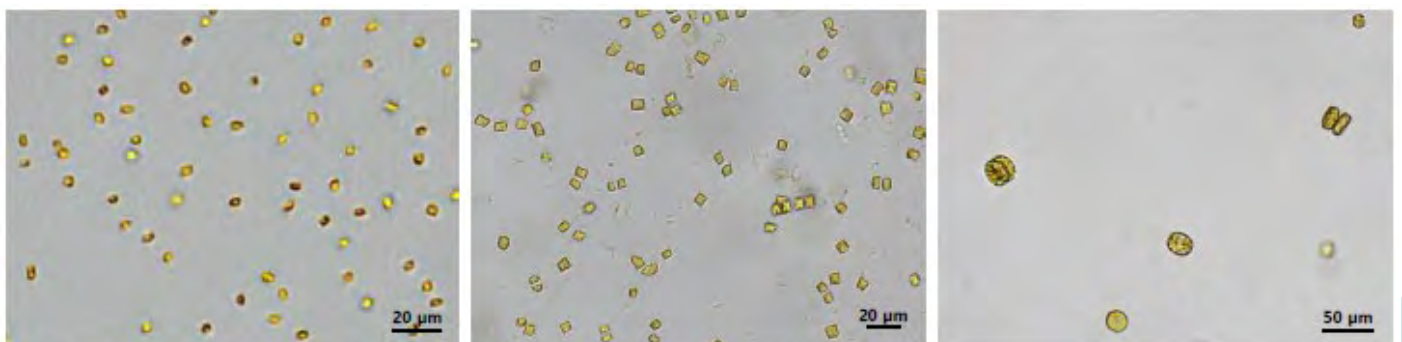


Figure 1. Microscopic images of isolated microalgae. *C. calcitrans* (left); *C. tenuissimus* (middle); *Conticribra weissflogii* (right)

This tiny diatom is already well known in shellfish aquaculture from strains originally imported from overseas. It is a suitable size for young bivalves and is widely valued as a live feed. But it also comes with a catch.

Although *C. calcitrans* is useful, it is often considered difficult to produce reliably at larger scales. In some hatchery systems, it may be easier to maintain in smaller, labour-intensive batch cultures, such as 20 litre bottles, rather than being easily expanded into larger tank systems.

That means more handling, more time, and less flexibility when larger volumes of feed are needed.

That is why our New Zealand strain was so interesting. As part of my PhD, I tested a newly isolated New Zealand strain of *C. calcitrans* under greenhouse tank conditions at Moana's hatchery near Nelson.

After being established and scaled up, the culture was grown in 500 litre volumes inside 1000 litre polyethylene tanks (**Figure 2**). There was no complex photobioreactor involved, and no highly specialised indoor system. The culture was grown in a practical greenhouse setting, with simple air bubbling used for mixing. And it grew.



Figure 2. 500 litre tanks with microalgae cultures in greenhouse tanks at Moana.

The 500 L tank results were encouraging when two types of grow nutrients were used. With Walnes nutrient (WP), the local *C. calcitrans* culture reached a mean cell density of 9 million cells mL^{-1} after 5 days and with F/2 nutrient, it reached nearly 6 million cells mL^{-1} after 6 days – that is more than a whopping 30 million cells in just a teaspoon of seawater – just what young shellfish love to eat. The local was also found to be the fastest growing species at this large scale among a variety of other microalgae species tested.

Put simply, this strain did not just survive in the 500 litre tanks. It grew strongly under two different culture media in a relatively simple greenhouse system.

For microalgae research, this step matters. A strain can look promising in a small flask, but a large tank is a different world. Light, temperature, mixing, contamination risk, and day-to-day handling all become more challenging. A useful aquaculture feed strain needs to be more than interesting under the microscope. It needs to be manageable, scalable, and reliable.

This research is not about replacing all existing microalgae strains used by aquaculture. The microalgae already used in aquaculture are used because they work. Relying on only a small group of feed species can make production vulnerable, hence, a broader “live-feed toolbox” that includes well-characterised New Zealand strains could make feed production more flexible and resilient.

There is still more work to do. I am now comparing local and reference strains, including summer and winter-associated species, for growth, nutrition, and feeding performance.

A promising microalgal strain must not only grow once; it must be reliable enough to become part of a practical production routine. For New Zealand aquaculture, local microalgae may offer a small but meaningful opportunity.

These organisms are invisible to the naked eye, but their impact on hatchery and nursery success can be large. The successful bulk cultivation of a New Zealand *C. calcitrans* strain in 500 litre tanks is one encouraging step towards a more reliable and flexible live-feed supply for our shellfish industry. It is still early days, but this tiny local diatom may have a useful role to play in growing the future of New Zealand shellfish aquaculture.

- Yulia Lee, PhD Candidate – The University of Auckland



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The Ronja King – NZKS’ New Wellboat Arrives in Picton

After a roughly 70-day journey from Norway, the Ronja King arrived in Picton this morning.

The Marlborough community will be used to seeing vessels of all shapes, sizes, and specialties gliding through the Sounds, but this is the first time anyone would have set eyes on a wellboat in the neighbourhood. That’s because this is the first time a wellboat for use in the New Zealand aquaculture sector has ever entered our waters.



The Ronja King arrives at Picton Port, Marlborough. Photo by Tim Cuff.

At 57m long, the Ronja King is a specialised vessel designed to transport live fish in large, carefully controlled seawater tanks. Often described as a “floating aquarium”, wellboats are standard infrastructure across the global salmon industry.

“Wellboat technology might be standard globally, but for our small-scale and niche king salmon industry here in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is a very big deal,” says CEO Carl Carrington.

This is truly a major step forward in the evolution of our farming operations and expanding our potential profitability as a company. The Ronja King is forecast to boost our annual harvest volumes by around 2,000 metric tonnes annually, which we conservatively estimate could generate an additional \$60 million in annual revenue – increasing even further once Blue Endeavour is operational and scaled.”

These are the kinds of productivity-enhancing initiatives we need to invest in for New Zealand’s future resilience, especially in the primary sector. The Ronja King is clearly a very welcome addition to our company,” says Carl.

The Ronja King is also key to unlocking NZKS’ new open ocean farm, Blue Endeavour. Today also marked the complete installation of the farm pilot infrastructure (anchors,

mooring grid, and two pilot pens). The two pilot pens were towed successfully from their inshore farm location in Te Hoiere/Pelorus Sounds to their permanent open-ocean location (7km off Cape Lambert) at Blue Endeavour, over a three-day period, arriving on Saturday. This significant milestone was announced to the NZX/ASX market this morning.

The most significant delivery the Ronja King will undertake initially will be transferring the inaugural cohort of our king salmon to the Blue Endeavour site in around a month's time.

The Ronja King is owned and operated by Sølvtrans, a global leader in wellboat services. The name "Ronja King" honours Sølvtrans' tradition – "Ronja" combines the names of the founders' children, with "King" recognising its connection to NZKS and the King salmon species.

"Watching the Ronja King enter through Queen Charlotte sounds this morning, and berth at Port Marlborough, was really watching history in the making for the New Zealand salmon sector," says Grant Lovell, GM Aquaculture.

I have worked for this company for 25 years, and I can't emphasise enough just how transformational this shift to a wellboat farming model is for our operations, our fish and therefore our shareholders, and our company as a whole."



Grant Lovell, General Manager Aquaculture, watching the Ronja King arrive into Picton

In the first few weeks, the Ronja King will be completing final onboarding and operational checks with our local maritime partners, alongside crew familiarisation and trial movements. Once fully operational, the vessel will begin carrying out normal farming support activities, which are primarily relocating stock around the sounds, with its main base of operations being Kura Te Au/Tory Channel. It will come into Port periodically for refuelling and supplies.

The Ronja King will be crewed by five team members, a mixture of highly specialised professionals. This is expected to bring a range of economic benefits for the top of the south region, through local berthing, servicing requirements, logistics, and maritime support.

Key benefits of a wellboat:

- Significantly enhances the performance of NZKS's inshore farms by enabling the utilisation of our feed discharge allowance, through the relocation of fish from higher-risk sites during seasonal changes, supporting improved welfare and optimal farm utilisation year-round.
- Essential for future open-ocean expansion, serving as the cornerstone asset for the Blue Endeavour project.
- Generates economic benefits for the Top of the South region, requiring local berthing, servicing, logistics, and maritime support.

- Facilitates safer and more controlled movement of fish between sites, improved stock grading operations, and early removal of underperforming fish. This reduces biological risks and supports industry-leading biosecurity practices, such as single-year class farming and site following.
- The Ronja King features two well tanks, with a combined well capacity of 1,000 cubic metres, and gross tonnage of 1,276 tonnes.

About Blue Endeavour

Blue Endeavour will be New Zealand's first open-ocean salmon farm and the world's first of its kind for King salmon (Chinook). Open-ocean salmon aquaculture involves farming salmon in enclosed pens anchored to the seabed in exposed marine environments.

Located seven kilometres off Cape Lambert, outside the Marlborough Sounds, the farm will comprise two blocks of ten circular pens, occupying less than 12 surface hectares. Once fully operational, Blue Endeavour will have the capacity to produce approximately 10,000 metric tonnes of King salmon, with anticipated annual revenue of \$350 million.

Blue Endeavour pilot pens are already in Te Hoiere / Pelorus Sound, marking progress towards open ocean farming. [Watch the video here](#) to see the latest developments, and visit our website [Open Ocean – Blue Endeavour | New Zealand King Salmon](#) for more information on Blue Endeavour.

The Blue Endeavour pilot farm is co-funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries' Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund (replaced by the Primary Sector Growth Fund).

Further information:

To request a media pack, including images of the project to date, or request an interview, please contact Monique Hatfull, Head of Relationships & Communications, monique.hatfull@kingsalmon.co.nz.

MFA Newsletter Stories

Do you have a story you would like to see published in our newsletter?

For consideration, please forward it to:

office@marinefarming.co.nz

Our newsletter is released quarterly – March, June, September, and December



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Holding Strong; the Story Behind Retro Attach

One of the ongoing challenges for marine farmers is reducing the risk of floats working loose from backbones, particularly as lashings age or wear over time and in wild weather. Avoiding float loss not only helps reduce marine debris, but can also minimise damage to backbone systems, reduce repair work, and limit unnecessary downtime on the water.

“Retro Attach” is a retrofittable system that has been developed to address the issue, allowing standard mussel floats to be mechanically attached directly to the backbone without relying solely on traditional lashings. Importantly, the system is designed to work with existing floats and current moulds, meaning farmers do not need to invest in entirely new float systems to make the change.

The concept was developed by Mike Holland from Clearwater Mussels Ltd, who partnered with Wal (Brendon) Johnson from Sounds Engineering to bring the idea into reality.

Mike says the idea first came to him unexpectedly in the early hours of the morning back in June 2022.

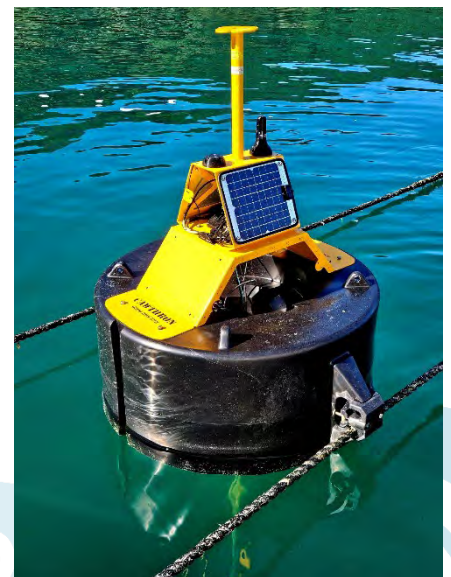
“Sleeping got replaced with thinking about stuff and the ideas started flowing. After about an hour and a half, I was too frightened to go back to sleep and risk losing the thoughts, so I got up and started writing everything down.”

After discussing the concept with Wal, whose company already carries out engineering work on Clearwater Mussels vessels in Havelock, the partnership between Clearwater Mussels and Sounds Engineering began.

The Retro Attach system was originally developed through a Marine Farming Association initiative aimed at reducing float loss from farms. Since then, the design has been refined and tested extensively.

Retro Attach systems are already seeing practical use in the field. Cawthron Institute has been using them to secure weather buoys around the New Zealand coastline and inlets, after previously relying on lashings that could occasionally break loose and result in lost equipment.

“Some of these weather stations are worth more than \$10,000, so reliability is critical,” Mike says.

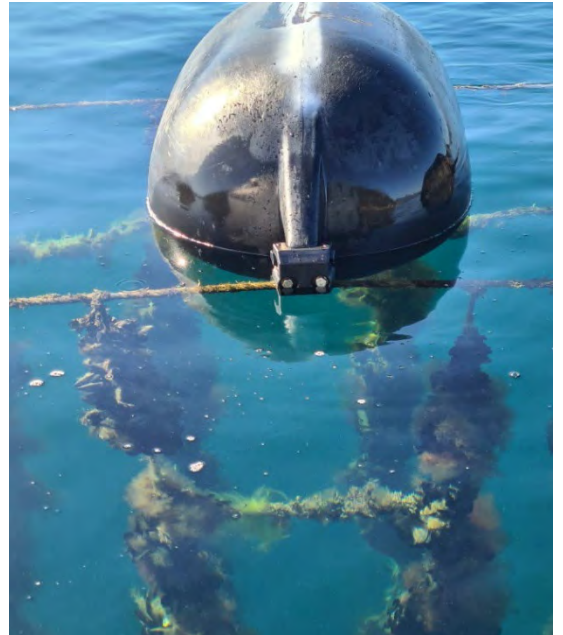


Clearwater Mussels is also using the system, with several other marine farmers trialling units on their farms.

Retro Attach is designed to fit most lashing-style floats currently in production, apart from some earlier float types. By allowing standard floats to be securely attached directly to the backbone, the system is intended to reduce the likelihood of floats breaking loose, particularly in more exposed or open water farming environments.

The developers say the system also helps reduce repetitive handling associated with re-lashing floats, while extending the working life of both floats and backbones. Unlike traditional methods, the system removes the need for single-use lashings, while still allowing farmers to continue utilising their existing float stock.

Testing has reportedly shown the mechanical holding power consistently exceeds traditional lashing methods, with unit load tested up to 2,500 kilograms. All componentry is reusable and recyclable, with the system expected to have a very long service life.



Beyond the direct operational costs of replacing or recovering lost floats, Mike says there is also a broader industry benefit in reducing debris entering the marine environment.

“Floats belong attached to farms, not washing up on beaches,” he says.

Mike and Wal believe the retrofit approach could provide a practical and cost-effective way for farmers to reduce debris loss while continuing to utilise existing infrastructure.

“We’re confident Retro Attach can solve a lot of the problems associated with floats coming loose from farms,” Mike says.

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Skipper Training NZ's New School of Marine Engineering

Skipper Training NZ is continuing to build its reputation on practical, hands-on training delivered in ways that suit the learner, with the recent launch of its new School of Marine Engineering. Beginning with MEC 5 (Marine Engineer Class 5) and MEC 6 (Marine Engineer Class 6), the school also has plans to expand into higher-level and internationally recognised qualifications in the future.

At the heart of the expansion is a purpose-built engineering workshop designed for real-world learning. Located in the former Kernohan Engineering workshop at Port Nelson, the facility includes newly renovated offices and classrooms built around the school's "one room school house" concept, where nautical and engineering learners can work around rotational schedules and reduce time away from whānau and work commitments.

The school has also invested in a marine common rail diesel engine test bench, where tutors can remotely introduce faults electronically and simulate real-life onboard vessel issues. Local fishing and engineering firms have shown support for the initiative, donating engines, pumps, and specialised training equipment to help build practical learning opportunities for students.

Senior engineering tutor **Tomo Arai** leads the practical delivery programme. Originally from Japan, Tomo met Milo, Skipper Training NZ founder, almost 20 years ago while working with Solander. He brings years of international marine engineering experience and is passionate about building confidence in others. His teaching style is calm, hands-on, and focused. Tomo, like all the tutors, wants students to really understand how systems work, not just memorise theory.

For operators and crew looking to strengthen engineering capability while limiting time away from whānau and work, the development adds another local training pathway for the wider maritime sector.

Skipper Training NZ can be contacted via info@skippertraining.ac.nz – give the team a call and see how they can help.





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- Jo, 2023 SRL Graduate



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The Blessing of the Fleet

The 24th annual Blessing of the Fleet was held in Nelson on 23 May, drawing thousands of people to the waterfront for a day of remembrance, reflection and celebration of the region's maritime industries.

Originally scheduled for earlier in the month, the event was postponed due to weather warnings, but organisers were rewarded with near-perfect conditions for the rescheduled date. Crowds gathered at the Seafarers Memorial and along Wakefield Quay to take part in honouring those lost at sea while celebrating the people and industries that continue to make their living from it.

An ever-popular part of the event is the Vessel Parade, featuring a wide range of commercial fishing, aquaculture and maritime vessels. Aquaculture was well represented by Arista Cat, Tai Ata, Victory and Blaze 2, alongside Kiwi, Natalie J, Okorito, Tempest, Transition, Wave Runner, Ta Atia, Argo, Carol Maree, Talisman, Nelson Ferry, Pelorus, Gleam, Kathleen G, the Nelson Tugs, Tui and Annie.

The parade provides an opportunity for the public to see the diversity of vessels operating in our region and gain a better understanding of the industries that support Nelson's thriving blue economy. Visitors also enjoyed fresh seafood, family activities and displays from a range of maritime organisations throughout the day.

While the event showcases the contribution of the seafood and maritime sectors, the blessing itself remains at the heart of the occasion. The ringing of the bell, sounding of vessel horns and the minute's silence provide a poignant opportunity to remember those who have been lost at sea and acknowledge the risks faced by those who work on the water.



Havelock Marina Redevelopment: Project Update

We had great interest in the Havelock Channel and Marina Redevelopment Project at the recent Havelock Mussel Festival. Thank you to everyone who visited our stand in the MFA tent to speak with the project team. It was encouraging to hear the level of support from both the local community and industry.

All necessary consents for the redevelopment have now been received. This is a key milestone and allows us to move forward with the next stage of the project.

Construction packages that make up the project have now been released to the market for tender. These include:

- Jetty works: piling, installation of new floating concrete jetties, gangways, and assembly
- Dredging works: removal of ageing jetty structures, dredging of the marina basin and channel, and careful management of dredged material in line with consent conditions
- Landside works: including pavements, rock revetments, and the provision of power, water and communications to the new jetties



These are complex work packages, designed to ensure the redeveloped marina functions well operationally while also improving the overall marina aesthetics.

Material that is dredged will be managed on land in a controlled and considered way. It will be dewatered on a Port Marlborough site in the marina to reduce the moisture and saline content of the material, then taken by truck to a designated deposition area for placing, this area will be restored to pasture following the deposition activity, with planting to enhance surrounding waterways.

This approach has been carefully designed in collaboration with environmental planners to meet consent requirements and support positive long-term environmental outcomes. It also requires detailed planning and staging, which is being worked through as part of the overall project programme.

With consents in place and procurement underway, we are working towards confirming project costs and timelines for construction.

Works are expected to begin later this year, starting with channel dredging. Jetty redevelopment will be staged to keep the marina operational throughout the project. Further detail on timing, staging and berth transitions will be confirmed once contractors are engaged and the construction programme is finalised.

What this means for marina users

Our project team is continuing to refine staging and transition planning to minimise disruption for customers.

This includes exploring berth relocation options across the wider Marlborough Sounds Marinas network and maintaining priority access for users with operational or residential needs in the Sounds.

As the programme is confirmed, impacted customers will be contacted by our marinas customer service team to discuss timing and arrangements.

Berth holders displaced by the redevelopment will have priority to return to the new jetties once construction is complete.

Staying informed

We will continue to provide updates as the project progresses. For more information, visit the project page:

<https://marlboroughmarinas.co.nz/havelock-redevelopment-project/>



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Showcasing Maritime Careers to the Next Generation

The Marine Farming Association was pleased to support a recent Maritime Careers Day sponsored by Aquaculture NZ and Seafood NZ, giving senior students from across the Nelson Tasman region the chance to experience the wide range of career opportunities available within the maritime and aquaculture sectors.

The experience brought together a cross-section of industry including AQNZ, MFA, Talley's, Guard Safety, The Gleam Trust, NMIT, and Young Fish, all helping provide a practical and engaging introduction to life and work on the water.



The day began with a morning trip hosted by Darren Guard and the team from The Gleam Trust, alongside Ben from Young Fish, who shared their own experiences and career pathways within the maritime industry. Students heard firsthand about the realities of working on the water, including opportunities within commercial diving and other marine-based careers that many students may not previously have considered.

One of the highlights of the day was a visit to Haulashore Island, where students were able to enjoy a hands-on seafood experience featuring Greenshell™ mussels from Talley's, alongside a tasting session comparing King salmon and Atlantic salmon. The comparison certainly sparked some discussion, with plenty of students quickly deciding they were fans of New Zealand King salmon.



The group then visited Talley's and toured the Amaltal Enterprise deep sea fishing vessel, giving students a closer look at the scale and complexity of commercial fishing and seafood operations. Representatives from NMIT also spoke with students

about the many different career pathways available within the maritime sector, including engineering, electrical trades, hospitality, seafood processing, and vessel operations.

For the MFA, supporting opportunities like this is an important part of helping build awareness of the diverse and rewarding careers available within the marine farming and wider seafood industries. While many young people may initially think of roles working on vessels, the sector also relies on a huge range of skills including environmental management, engineering, logistics, science, compliance, processing, technology, administration, and health and safety.

Days like this are invaluable for helping students make real connections between school subjects and future career opportunities. Giving young people the chance to step onboard vessels, meet industry professionals, and hear authentic stories from people already working in the sector helps make those career pathways feel far more tangible and achievable.



Event Partners: MARLBOROUGH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL | MARLBOROUGH GIRLS' COLLEGE | MARLBOROUGH BOYS' COLLEGE

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Keeping Mussock Protected and Ready to Work

A practical new option is helping improve the way Mussock socking is transported and handled on mussel farms, with the introduction of the “Mussock DryBag” from Ritex. Developed alongside the New Zealand mussel farming industry, the reusable heavy-duty PVC bags are designed for the realities of working in marine environments.

Mussock socking plays an important role in mussel farming, with the biodegradable cotton socking helping hold spat securely onto growing rope during the early stages of production. The material goes through a demanding journey before it reaches the farm, often exposed to weather, UV, saltwater, and constant handling.

The DryBag system has been designed to help keep socking protected and in good condition during transport and storage, helping reduce reliance on single-use plastic wrapping and coverings. The bags are built with full under-bag lifting loops and are compatible with both crane and forklift handling and their heavy-duty construction is intended for use over multiple seasons.

The Mussock DryBag measures 2.1m x 1.2m x 1.0m when fully opened, while the companion rope bag measures 0.9m x 0.9m x 1.4m. Custom sizing options are also available for different operational requirements.

The development reflects the continued innovation happening across the aquaculture sector, with suppliers and farmers working together on practical solutions that improve efficiency and durability in challenging marine conditions. It also highlights the importance of fit-for-purpose equipment.



DryBags ready for work. Credit: Ritex

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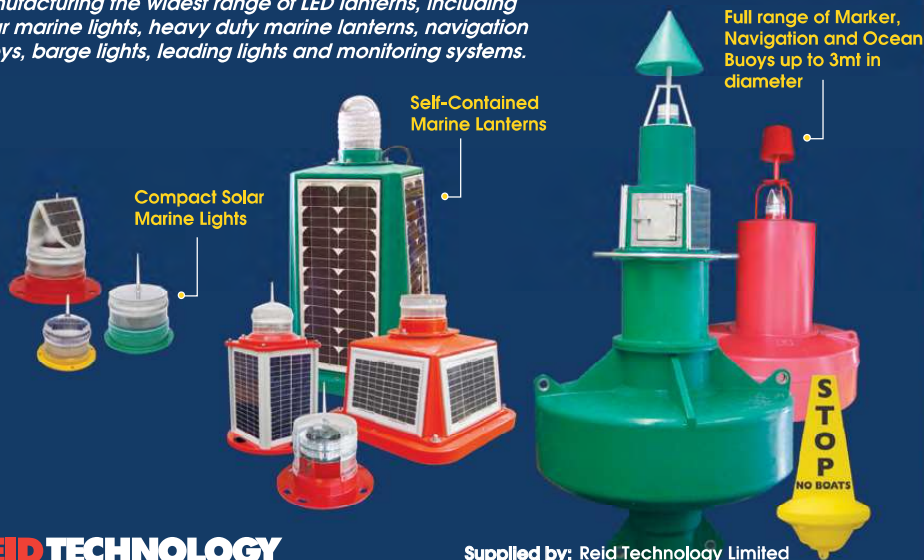
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Washed up Whale in Totoranui Golden Bay

The Humpback whale was seen in the evening of the 20th of March at the end of Goat Bay beach in the Abel Tasman already deceased and floating not far from the shore.

Totoranui DOC staff visited the whale on the 21st and found it beach cast amongst the rocks.

On the 22nd after discussions with Iwi it was decided to attempt to move the whale by boat over to Farewell Spit where other whales have been tethered to decompose in the intertidal zone, away from public interactions and marine farming.

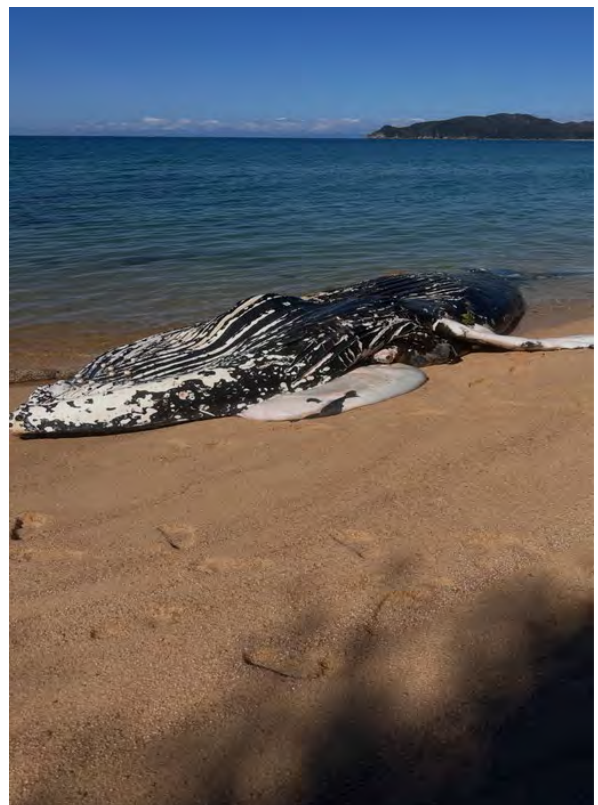
The attempt however was not successful due to a falling tide, and because of the size and decomposition of the whale so instead it was tethered to a rock in situ so it would not move away and become a boating hazard or wash up in an even more public area. DOC staff were able to take some data measurements and skin and blubber samples which will be analyzed and may give us an indication as to cause of death and what family group it belonged to.

If you find injured or deceased marine mammals or birds the best thing to do is call the DOC Hotline 0800 362 468 with a good description of the animal and its location and any other useful information. From there they are able to contact a DOC staff member on duty in the area who will start a response, which may require a phone call back to the person who found the animal if any more information is needed.

With the potential of the bird flu affecting our shore birds if large numbers of deceased birds are found then please also call MPI on 0800 008 333

More information on bird flu can be found here:

[Don't let bird flu take flight | NZ Government](#)



- Amanda Harvey, Principal Ranger, Department of Conservation



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Who sighting in Te Hoiere

Te Hoiere awa revealed an exciting surprise the first weekend of May, as a pair of who (blue ducks) were spotted near Department of Conservation huts, located mid-catchment in Mount Richmond Forest Park.

The who were spotted by Nick Eade, a longtime volunteer of Forest & Bird's Te Hoiere Bat Recovery Project, and Willi Borst, Te Hoiere Project Co-ordinator. They spent three days in the area retrieving a series of acoustic bat monitors as part of the pekapeka (long-tailed bat) recovery project. On the Friday night at Rocks Hut, they met a trumper who had spent the previous night at Roebuck Hut and spoke about a pair of who he had seen in the awa there.

The next day, Nick and Willi set off for Middy Hut and met another trumper who told them about a pair of who he had seen an hour before, just below the swing bridge.

"We could hardly believe what we were hearing," said Nick. "We knew that who hadn't been sighted in Te Hoiere for years, if not decades."

Amazed, but not shocked, Nick and Willi found a pair of who waiting for them underneath the Middy Hut bridge later that day.

"In the evening, we looked out of the hut window towards the river and saw the pair sitting on rocks. We walked down and sat at the river watching them for quite a while. They even swam over to us, which was beyond exciting," said Willi.

The last recorded sightings of who anywhere near Te Hoiere have been near Maungakura (Red Hills), east of the catchment.



- Te Hoiere Project

Who were found in May 2026 near Middy Creek Hut in Mt Richmond Forrest Park

!



**HILTON
HAULAGE**



Te Hoiere Project

HAERE, KAKEA
TE ARA POKA HOU

2026 Event Calendar

Rarangatia a Te Hoiere – Weaving for the Waterways 20.05.26

A hands-on day learning with expert weavers to create plant guards and harakeke ropes that support fish passage in Te Hoiere. Tamariki will explore the connection between weaving, river restoration, and kaitiakitanga while making their own taonga to help the awa.

Wānanga tiaki i te Awa – Ngāti Kuaia Cultural Monitoring Day 01.09.26

A day led by Ngāti Kuaia Cultural Monitors, sharing iwi history, tikanga, and methods for understanding the health of marine ecosystems. Participants will learn cultural monitoring practices, deepen their connection to Te Hoiere, and gain insights into Ngāti Kuaia's role as kaitiaki.

Te ara toa – Te Hoiere Tamariki Challenge Date in Nov TBC

A fun and energetic outdoor challenge where the schools of Te Hoiere compete in a family-friendly rogaine, racing through forest and river-side trails and completing nature-based obstacles and activities along the way. A celebration of teamwork, resilience, and exploring the wild spaces of Te Hoiere.

Rā mātai i te awa – Snorkel & Stream Health Day 21.04.26

Back up date with poor weather is 23.04.26. This will be an exciting Conservation Week adventure where participants snorkel in Te Hoiere awa to discover the underwater world, then learn how to assess stream health using SHMAK methods. A perfect mix of science, exploration, and kaitiaki learning.

Te whakanui i a Matariki 09.07.26

Join us for a Matariki morning gathering at Te Hoiere, where community can come together to hopefully see the Matariki cluster, share hot chocolates and listen to kōrero and pūrākau that celebrate the rising of Matariki, the Māori New Year, and the stories of our whenua. This gentle, family-friendly event offers a moment of reflection, learning, and connection as we honour the stars, the season, and the hopes we carry into the year ahead.

Noho tiaki pekapeka – Pekapeka Camp at Te Hoiere Date in Dec TBC

An immersive overnight camp held during the Christmas school holidays, where tamariki will learn about pekapeka, explore the ngahere after dark, use monitoring equipment alongside Forest & Bird, and experience the night life of Te Hoiere. This is a unique opportunity to connect with one of Aotearoa's most special taonga species. To apply, tamariki will need to write a short letter explaining why they are passionate about pekapeka. Camp participants will be selected based on these letters.

Parents or caregivers must accompany their tamaiti. Spaces are very limited and are reserved for tamariki who show a strong interest in pekapeka.

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