



# THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



## Some bright spots in gloomy environmental report

An environmental stocktake shows most markers around the state and impact of New Zealand's seafood industry are improving.

The Environment Aotearoa 2019 report, compiled three-yearly by the Ministry for the Environment and Statistics New Zealand, draws on interim reports in five fields – air, freshwater, marine, atmosphere and climate and land.

The outlook is bleak in a number of areas and challenges abound.

Almost 4000 of our native species are deemed to be currently threatened with, or at risk of, extinction, including 90 percent of seabirds.

However, there are some significant improvements in the fishing sector, which unsurprisingly have been dismissed or ignored by media and the doomsters.

Fishing pressure has eased, the report says.

The total marine catch peaked at nearly 650,000 tonnes in 1997 and 1998 but has since stabilised to less than 450,000 tonnes since 2009.

“Between 2009 and 2017 more than 80 percent of New Zealand's assessed fish stocks were considered to be managed sustainably, and almost all of the annual catch was from these stocks.”

It notes the introduction of the Quota Management System in 1986 reduced the pressure on inshore fish.

The extent of trawling has markedly declined, although still seen as significant.

The report notes the number of seabed-contacting tows has “nearly halved from nearly 60,000 in 1998 to 26,000 in 2016”.

(The maths are wonky there – the reduction is actually nearly 60 percent.)

It seems unaware, or chooses to ignore, that 30 percent of New Zealand’s vast Exclusive Economic Zone out to the 200 nautical mile limit, the world’s fourth largest, is protected from trawling and dredging.

And in another positive development, bycatch of protected species has reduced, although still rated a threat.

The number of seabirds reported caught has almost halved from 9185 in 2003 to around 5000 every year since 2008.

The industry contribution to that is the introduction of threat management plans for every vessel and new technology trials to keep birds away from longlines in particular.

Past activities are seen as still having an impact, including huge albatross mortalities caused by Japanese longliners in the Southern Ocean in the mid 1980s – said to be some 44,000 birds annually.

The incidental catch of sea lions and seals has also decreased since the turn of this century.

However, some of the reporting concerning the fishing industry is disappointingly sloppy.

“Recreational and commercial fishing sustains 16,000 jobs and generates about \$4.2 billion in total economic activity,” the report says.

In fact, that revenue figure relates to commercial fishing alone, provided by economic forecasters BERL. Aquaculture’s contribution is on top of that.

The report then further confuses the issue by attributing \$1.7 billion of the total to recreational fishing economic activity, which is in turn, a spurious figure that lumped in tourism.

The authors also struggle with the classification of the overall catch.

“The QMS gives quota holders a right to harvest a fish stock up to a maximum level – the total allowable catch (TAC).”

In fact the TAC includes recreational and customary take, although the former is at best an educated guess.

The report also conflates Hector and Maui dolphin deaths, claiming eight were caught in fishing gear between 2011-15.

This is wrong.

In that time - and up to the present - no Maui dolphins have been confirmed as commercial fishing-related mortalities.

Extensive observer coverage backs that up.

The report does recognise the marine environment faces increasing pressures from activities outside fishing.

“Our coastal environments receive excess sediment and nutrients from rivers,” it says.

“Our waterways are polluted in farming areas.

Plastic pollution is a global issue that affects every ocean and many species of seabird, turtle and marine mammal.

Seabirds have also been affected by introduced predators on the mainland and offshore islands, loss of nesting habitat and disturbance.

Climate change is projected to have major impacts on the marine environment from ocean acidification and warming.”

On the plus side, the report notes conservation status has improved for 26 species in the past 10 years.

And those longer in the tooth will remember when tui song was absent from our city suburbs and raw sewage and meatworks’ offal was routinely discharged into our estuaries and harbours.



**New Zealand Seafood Industry  
Conference and Technical Day**

## **Registrations open**

Registrations for the 2019 New Zealand Seafood Industry Conference and Technical Day are open.

This year the conference will move to New Zealand’s tourism capital Queenstown, with the technical day taking place on Thursday 8 August and the conference on Friday 9 August.

The theme for this year’s seafood conference is Blue Growth – Charting Seafood’s Future, looking at how one of New Zealand’s key primary sectors can best position itself for future growth and success.

We have a great array of speakers, details of the full programme will be available soon on the [Seafood New Zealand website](#).

Seafood New Zealand has negotiated accommodation rates at the conference venue and neighbouring hotels. Details are on the [Information](#) page of the website along with links to Air New Zealand for group flight bookings.

Get in quick to secure accommodation and flights at reasonable prices.

[Register now.](#)

## 2019 Technical Day research posters

Seafood New Zealand is calling for research posters to display at the 2019 Seafood Industry Conference and Technical Day.

Researchers are invited to show their posters throughout the technical day on 8 August and at the networking function that evening. They will also be displayed at the conference on 9 August.

Posters must align with one of the following themes:

- Our Marine Environment
- Quality Safe Seafood
- Innovation

View more information on the poster specifications [here](#).

Submissions close 28 June 2019.

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## Seafood Stars Awards

The 2019 Seafood Stars Awards are open for nominations. The awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our industry people and their achievements. This year's award categories include:

- Future Development and Innovation Award
- Young Achiever Award
- Longstanding Service Award

For more information on each category [visit our website](#), or [download the form](#) to nominate someone today.



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## Smartening up with marine sensors

Nearly 600 Marlborough Sounds mussel farms are in the pipeline to be fitted with sensors that will help marine farmers, DOC and Harbourmasters better manage the marine environment.

The Smart Services project forms part of the Smart+Connected Aquaculture framework – an industry-driven initiative that champions research, innovation, value and diversification of the region’s aquaculture sector and marine environment.

Each sensor will provide live environmental data that farmers and the council can use to ensure each farm is compliant. Sensors will also be installed at Department of Conservation and Harbourmaster sites.

The precision of the sensors means consent holders will also receive more accurate information on the steps needed to ensure compliance with their consent.

The project adds to existing work that used Smart Services to advance navigation and safety, said Marlborough harbourmaster Luke Grogan.

“It takes a fair bit of time and effort to check those for compliance.

“With these sensors on the farms, we could potentially have all that information at our fingertips.”

Sensors are operated remotely, meaning both farmers and regulators will be able to login to see their status, saving time, resources and reducing the need for boat visits to test each farm.

The technology could also bring greater transparency.

“We recognise that marine farming takes place in public space across considerable distances,” said Smart+Connected Aquaculture value and innovation working group chairman Zane Charman.

“Introducing technology which will provide live monitoring will give the public more reassurance about what is happening in the environment around farms.”

The Provincial Growth Fund has contributed \$99,000 towards the project and Marlborough District Council \$150,000.

The council plan to have the first sites operational by August 2020.

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## **Building a blue economy**

A \$329 million Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre is on the horizon and set to revolutionise how seafood and energy are sustainably produced.

Launched by Australia’s Federal Government last week, the new centre will be the first offshore research platform of its kind in the world.

Six countries and 45 international experts are contributing to the 10-year project, along with several partners from New Zealand, including Plant and Food Research, Cawthron Institute, New Zealand King Salmon, University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology.

The collaboration will use expertise in aquaculture, energy and engineering to deliver sustainable offshore developments that increase renewable marine energy and seafood production.

Five research programmes are the cornerstones of the project.

An Offshore Engineering and Technology programme will be responsible for designing and executing offshore systems and energy infrastructures, whereas the Seafood and Marine Products programme will focus on developing and testing innovative new products.

The Offshore Renewable Energy Systems programme will hold the role of supplying low-cost energy and ancillary products to offshore aquaculture, in addition to developing renewable energy solutions.

A fourth programme, Environment and Ecosystems will assess and measure the environmental footprint of each programme and the fifth programme, Sustainable Offshore Developments, will profile and advocate for regulatory frameworks that give confidence in aquaculture and renewable energy sectors.

Combined, the centre’s programmes are expected to generate more than \$4 billion for the economy - the equivalent of approximately 4000 more jobs each year and a \$400 million expansion of the marine and seafood production industry.

In the first five years, the CRC will develop and test offshore renewable energy and aquaculture technologies, later combining them into a single platform.

Blue Economy CRC research director Irene Penesis likened the offshore research platform to a living laboratory, where renewable energy and aquaculture technologies can be vertically integrated with other engineering activities like autonomous and remotely-operated vehicles.

“We’re confident that it will deliver groundbreaking research alongside commercially viable new materials, concepts, prototypes and monitoring systems – all informed by best practice and delivered in an environmentally sustainable way,” she said.

In addition to the Federal Government’s \$70 million cash investment, partners have contributed \$259 million to the project so far.



An artist's impression of the new Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre.

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## News

International advocacy group Mission Blue Foundation have renewed calls for the government to ban gill netting and trawling in order to save endangered Hector’s and Maui dolphins, *TVNZ* reported. The group is visiting New Zealand to learn more about the mammals. The government is currently reviewing the way Maui and Hector’s dolphins are protected and a threat management plan is set to be released which will then be open to the public. Otago University professor Liz Slooten has been fighting to protect the mammals for the past two decades. She said it’s important people have their say when submissions open. “It’s our only chance to save these beautiful species from extinction”.

Fisheries New Zealand is seeking feedback on proposed changes to the Fisheries (Seabird Mitigation Measures – Surface Longlines) Circular 2018 to apply to all surface longline vessels operating in New Zealand waters. This follows the adoption of a revised seabird conservation and management measure in December 2018 that allows for the use of approved hook shielding devices as a stand-alone mitigation measure. The consultation is open from 23 April to 10 May 2019.

Recreational catch limits have been introduced for recreational fishers targeting southern bluefin tuna, *NZ Herald* reported. Fisheries New Zealand said recreational catch for tuna

has increased significantly over the last five years, with catch at 24 tonnes in 2017. The increase has been attributed to favourable weather, good catch rates and social media posts resulting in anglers targeting the species more. To ensure the sustainability of southern bluefin tuna stocks, only one fish can be caught per person, effective June 1. Fisheries New Zealand are also working on long-term measures to manage the fishery.

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