



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



NZ's clean-green image backed by environment survey

Perceptions of the New Zealand environment are improving, according to a long running survey by Lincoln University researchers.

That is despite the gloomy "we're all doomed" tone of so much environmental reporting.

The survey, the ninth since its inception in 2000, is said to be the only long-running one of its type in the world.

And despite the relentless demonising of the commercial fishing industry by Forest & Bird and Greenpeace in particular, the survey reported marine impacts are diminishing.

Water related issues were again rated as the most important environmental issue facing New Zealand, while greenhouse gas emissions and climate change was again the most commonly identified global issue.

A higher proportion of younger people responded and were seen as far more optimistic than those responding to the previous survey in 2016.

Management of all components of the environment was considered to be adequate to good, with management of national parks rated the highest. Rivers and lakes, marine fisheries, coastal resources and beaches, and groundwater were judged to be the worst managed parts of the environment.

Across the surveys, rivers and lakes have consistently been rated amongst the worst managed environmental sectors.

Management of farm effluent and runoff continued to be perceived very negatively.

Kiwi are perceived as the species most in need of protection, as per the 2016 result.

Kakapo were second followed by Hector's and Maui dolphins, a reversal of the previous result.

The comical, endangered mountain parrot, the kea, moved up the public concern rating to fourth, reflecting the decline in its fortunes.

The authors of the electronic survey of 2073 people are Ken Hughey, Geoff Kerr and Ross Cullen.

The Quota Management System is credited with improving profitability and efficiency of fisheries, the report said.

However, a glaring omission in the report commentary is acknowledgement of the QMS' contribution to sustainability.

"While aspects of New Zealand fisheries management were viewed internationally as world-leading, within New Zealand there is debate about some other aspects of fisheries and sea floor management," it said.

"Bycatch of various types is declining in New Zealand waters but still poses risks."

The estimated fur seal bycatch fell from 1443 in 2005 to 387 in 2014; bycatch of fish and invertebrates fell 72 percent to 32,000 tonnes in the 10 years to 2012; the number of seabirds caught each year fell from 7736 in 2005 to 5075 in 2014; the number of sea lions estimated to have been caught fell from 51 in 2005 to 34 in 2014.

These figures are outdated and the downward trends have continued.

There is a similar story with trawling.

"Between 1997 and 2014 the number of trawl tows reported each year decreased more than 50 percent and the number of dredge tows decreased 83 percent.

"Total trawled area fell from 80,000 square kilometres in 2003 to 40-44,000 during 2008-2018. "

These findings are consistent with the Environment Aotearoa 2019 stock take issued by the Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ.

An international Environmental Performance Index ranked New Zealand 17th out of 180 countries, down from 1st in 2006.

This country was assessed to be performing "very strongly in marine protected areas and air".

Biodiversity loss and fertiliser usage contributed to a New Zealand ranking of 18th of 171 countries in a separate international comparative study led by the University of Adelaide.

Natural forest loss, habitat conversion, marine captures, water pollution and carbon emissions were other factors.

While we have undeniable issues, New Zealand's comparatively high ranking reinforces the public's view that we live in a cleaner and greener environment than is found in many developed countries.

Inaugural Seafood Sustainability Awards finalists announced

Industry men and women leading the way in sustainability have been recognised by the New Zealand Seafood Sustainability Awards.

The 12 finalists were announced by [Fisheries New Zealand](#) on Monday.

Deputy director-general of Fisheries New Zealand, Dan Bolger said everyone has a part to play in ensuring the sustainability of New Zealand's kaimoana.

"These awards are a chance to recognise the innovation, commitment and excellence of a group of people from across the community who are leading the way," he said.

"They have been selected by an independent judging panel including representatives from commercial, recreational, and customary fisheries sectors as well as aquaculture and environmental NGOs [non-government organisations]."

[Judging panel](#) chair and WWF-New Zealand chief executive, Livia Esterhazy, said the finalists represent an exciting and diverse range of individuals, teams, businesses, research organisations, iwi, schools and communities who contribute to the long-term health and sustainable use of our moana.

"The quality of the entrants has made it a challenge for the judging panel to select the finalists. We are inspired by the calibre of people who are putting in the hard mahi to ensure we can protect, restore, and sustain our ocean," Esterhazy said.

Finalists and winners of the Supreme Sustainability Award and Minister of Fisheries' Award will be announced on the evening. All award recipients will be announced at a dedicated dinner in Wellington on 18 March 2020.

Operational Innovation Award

- CRA8 Rock Lobster Industry Association Inc
- Precision Seafood Harvesting
- Richard Wells – Resource Wise

The Lee-Fish Limited Award for Market Innovation and Value Added

- Awatoru Enterprises Ltd.
- Better Fishing
- Gravity Fishing
- The New Zealand King Salmon Co Ltd.

Kaitiakitanga Award

- CRA8 Rock Lobster Industry Association Inc
- Aaron McCloy – Papa Taiao Earthcare
- Richard Wells – Resource Wise
- Scott and Sue Tindale

Emerging Leader Award

- Josh Wyber – High Country Salmon
 - Maegen Blom – Mills Bay Mussels
 - Nate Smith – Gravity Fishing
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Microplastics in the food chain

Microplastics are increasingly being found in rainwater, sea salt, air and the food chain.

A recent University of Canterbury [study](#) found seafood is not immune, finding the presence of microplastics in New Zealand green-lipped mussels.

Samples were taken from nine sites from around the country for a clear picture of how microplastic concentrations varied.

After the mussels were collected and shucked, researchers physically extracted the microplastics and counted each particle under a microscope.

What they found was microplastics were present in six of the nine sites the mussels were collected from.

Abundance ranged from zero to 1.5 particles per mussel and the particles themselves varied in size, from 50 to 700 micrometres.

Polyethylene, the most commonly-used polymer in New Zealand, was the most common type of microplastic present.

Despite the findings, concentrations are still at the lower end of what has been reported for mussels in the Northern Hemisphere, said environmental chemist Sally Gaw.

"We were surprised that the concentrations found did not correlate with population density as has been found overseas," said Gaw.

"This may be due to New Zealand's overall lower population density."

Gaw noted the research was a small pilot study that only aimed to determine if there was an issue – which meant the team could only draw on a limited number of mussels from a small number of sites.

Microplastic contamination among the mussels was also "very variable".

"This is because we are literally looking for small bits of plastic and the number, types, colour and size can be very different for mussels collected from the same site at the same time," Gaw said.

The findings have prompted further questions that need addressing.

"We need to determine the types and concentrations of microplastics in shellfish with different feeding mechanisms.

"We also don't yet know if there are human health implications for people consuming shellfish containing microplastics."



News

Ōpōtiki is getting a new harbour and 1850 new jobs will be created in the eastern Bay of Plenty because of it, *NZ Herald* reported. The region is the big winner in a new round of regional services funding announced this morning by Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones. The harbour has treacherous sandbanks and is currently unusable by most ships. It will receive \$79.4 million towards redevelopment, to make it safe and fit for purpose for the seafood industry. Jones said of the 1850 jobs this would create, 730 would be in Ōpōtiki itself. "Building a new harbour to support the growth of aquaculture is the biggest transformational investment the Provincial Growth Fund has made to date," he said. "World demand for sustainable seafood is increasing rapidly and large scale aquaculture requires a safe, accessible harbour for harvesting produce and servicing boats. Today's announcement will provide safe access for more boats into the harbour, allowing Ōpōtiki to become a major servicing base for aquaculture and other marine related industries." Jones named mussel farming as one of the beneficiaries of the development. He said it would be "the catalyst for private investment in marine related industries, wharves and a residential development". A \$190m spending package was also announced by Jones as part of the \$300m earmarked for the regions in the Government's new \$12 billion infrastructure programme. Technically, the money does not come from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF), but instead is part of a new spending initiative called the NZ Upgrade Programme. It will be administered by the Provincial Development Unit. "This funding boost has allowed us to get projects under way that may not have been an exact fit with the Provincial Growth Fund criteria but were worthy investments nonetheless," Jones said.

The Antipodean albatross has new international protection for its 100,000km annual migration, thanks to collaborative efforts led by New Zealand, Australia and Chile. One hundred and thirty countries agreed to strictly protect the bird at the Conference of Parties on the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in India. International cooperation is critical to bring the Antipodean albatross back from the brink of extinction, said Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage. "This agreement will help create stronger measures to reduce instances of Antipodean albatross being inadvertently caught by fishing vessels - including on the high seas – so these birds can migrate safely."

Otago's rock lobster industry faces a double-whammy as the chaotic impact of coronavirus coincides with the consultation period to consider a huge marine protection area off the region's coast, *Otago Daily Times* reported. The timing of DOC's announcement was "totally inconsiderate" and was causing stress for those involved, said Otago Rock Lobster Industry Association executive officer Kate Hesson. DOC and Fisheries New Zealand were seeking public feedback on a proposed network of marine protected areas off the southeast coast of Otago and the rock lobster industry appeared set to take a big hit. The submission process was advertised on February 17 and submissions close on April 17. Hesson said she believed there was not enough time to have an informed process. She also wrote to Doc director-general Lou Sanson when the consultation was announced, asking for a postponement, but had not heard back. "This is an important proposal with big effects for everyone," she said. "We need to get it right, not get it fast. The consultation process means a hell of a lot of work for people to put in good submissions, and it's just tone deaf for politicians to be ignoring what's going on in the real world."



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