



# THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



## A goodbye to Peter Stevens - a guest column by his mate, Daryl Sykes

At a time when the QMS seems to be under increasing scrutiny by ill-informed critics there is perhaps a certain irony that one of the most fervent champions of fishing reforms in the 1970s and 1980s has passed away in his retirement. For all those who knew him and many who knew of him, Peter James Stevens was a formidable character in his younger days.

As a fisherman and a stalwart of both the Wellington Trawlermen's Association and the Napier Fishermen's Association, Peter ramped up the pressure on the Government of the day to prohibit foreign flagged vessels and to reform fisheries legislation. The 1983 Fisheries Act came about because of his lobbying of Fisheries Minister Duncan McIntyre, backed up by the membership of port associations around New Zealand and the threat of a massive flotilla of commercial vessels blockading the port of Wellington (a tactic put to good use on another later occasion but not on the same scale as planned for April 1979).

The Effort Reduction Scheme that he promoted through his links to the NZ Federation of Commercial Fishermen was a catalyst for the development and implementation of the Quota Management System. Peter coined the expression '*too many fishermen chasing too few fish*'. (He also quite famously remarked in a speech to a Federation annual conference that '*he who owns quota is king*', not that he would ever know himself – he missed the relevant catch history years because of his representation and advocacy work and did not qualify for even a notional history and ITQ allocation).

When he became aware of aspects of the QMS that negatively impacted on incumbent fishermen Peter went to bat for the buy-back scheme, what we now know as 28N rights,

aggregation limits, and minimum quota holdings; and got all of them over the line despite the reluctance of officials.

One of his most notable achievements and in short order also one of his greatest disappointments was the design and implementation of a species to species trade known as the “by-catch trade off scheme”. Peter was alarmed when political pressure was brought to bear on having the scheme dismantled because he knew that unreported discards were inevitable in the mixed species demersal fisheries.

In his years as Executive Officer to the Federation, Peter strengthened the network of port associations around the country and forged strong links with fisheries and transport agencies and with the science community. Peter was persistent and persuasive in his dealings with various Ministers and officials and he made good use of the media, or even threats of the media.

His original four-page Federation newsletter published in 1982 was expanded to become a monthly full colour magazine that was without peer for a period. You are showing your age if you recall the poetry of Black Pete or the *Mutter from Sandfly Beach* and/or *Mother of Ten* from Waitara, and if you don't recall, then rest assured you have missed some extremely entertaining and informative writing.

Peter was author, photographer, researcher, editor, and sold the advertising space as well. When he left the Federation, he was recruited by the Fishing Industry Board and then SeaFIC to produce the *Professional Fisherman* magazine which he did through to his retirement in 1998.

Peter departed the fishing industry with little fanfare or public acknowledgement. There were no gongs in the various Honours Lists but the friendships he forged during the years in which he had influence and authority endured to the end of his life. His fishing industry friends from the *Forces of Good and Evil* were there to help when needed and Peter was always very appreciative of their efforts and the occasional contact.

Peter died peacefully in Lower Hutt Hospital on July 16<sup>th</sup> and in accordance with his wishes, a private cremation was held. His ashes are to be scattered at the boundary of the bush and ocean where he hunted and fished as a young boy with his father. RIP.

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## **Bluff pāua farm brewing opportunities for Southland**

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Bluff Ltd have signed a five-year memorandum of understanding to transform a pāua farm into an aquaculture centre.

The 50-hectare Ocean Beach site, located in Bluff, is currently used as a freezing works.

The research conducted at Ocean Beach is hoped to breed resilient shellfish, fish, algae and seaweed and optimise their growth to promote a sustainable future.

AUT marine biologist professor Andrea Alfaro is leading the project, with re-establishment of pāua farming in Bluff a central focus of the project's first stage.

Using a high-tech approach in collaboration with AUT, the target is to produce 200 tonnes of pāua by its first harvest. With 500,000 juvenile pāua already growing, the project is on track to meet that goal by 2023.

"If we can continue to develop the production with research underpinning it, we'll continue to grow in this specialty market," Alfaro said.

Inclusion of other species, such as a salmon hatchery and Bluff oysters, is also on the agenda, with extensive research to enable sustainable growth, innovative practices and technologies.

Bluff's cool, clean waters make it an ideal region for remodelling the site into an aquaculture hub, particularly given the thermal stresses of global warming, said Alfaro.

"Virtually every wild fishery species is under pressure or undergoing significant change from acidification of the ocean through global warming," she said.

Thousands of jobs are expected to be generated too – a welcome relief as the region's smelter closure looms.

"The people who live there are intimately familiar with these industries. It would make sense for the growth to happen where you can utilise that historical capacity," Alfaro said.

According to Bluff Ltd managing director Blair Wolfgram, aquaculture has the opportunity to sustainably grow export earnings and create high-skilled jobs now more than ever.

"One of the biggest obstacles is having enough trained and skilled people in the workforce. Because we are dealing with sensitive living organisms it's critical our team understand the full life cycle and welfare of the species they are responsible for," Wolfgram said.

"We can only authentically achieve this through high-quality, hands-on research and education."

The collaboration will also include education, research projects, staff and student exchange programmes, internships, post-doctoral research fellowships and funding applications.



Image; [Ocean Beach](#).

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## Seafood Standards Council website

A new-look [Seafood Standards Council website](#) has launched with the purpose of providing relevant and easy to access information to the seafood sector.

A members-only section contains detailed information that is only relevant to industry members. To gain access to this section, you will need to complete an application form. Once approved, login details will be provided.

Apply for access [here](#).

Seafood Standards Council communications will now also be distributed through an e-newsletter designed to keep members informed on the latest food safety and market access information.

If there are people within your organisation requiring updates on food and safety and market access information, please forward this newsletter on to them. Or, contact [Cathy.Webb@seafood.org.nz](mailto:Cathy.Webb@seafood.org.nz) to subscribe.



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## News

The Ministry for Primary Industry's (MPI) new website on jobs was welcomed by the seafood industry this week. The [Opportunity Grows Here](#) website was launched on

Monday and aims to encourage New Zealanders into jobs in the primary sector. Seafood New Zealand Chief Executive, Jeremy Helson said traditionally it has been difficult to fill jobs in the industry, particularly seagoing positions, and this will be a great resource for employers. Fishers, farmers and growers will be essential to spearhead the export-led growth that will be needed to cushion the economic effects on New Zealand post COVID-19. "There are great jobs in the seafood industry both land-based and at sea and there are plenty of opportunities to advance into high-paying careers," Helson said. "We need more New Zealanders in our industry, whether it is in science labs, processing factories or on the water. The primary sector of New Zealand has always been the backbone of the New Zealand economy and we are pleased that the seafood industry, as well as other farmers and growers of New Zealand's premium produce will be part of New Zealand's recovery from economic recession."

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