

SEAFOOD

NEW ZEALAND

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25 years of sustainability for hoki
Springs Box closure's 10th anniversary
Catchin' up with Rex Chapman



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From the Chief Executive

This issue marks an important milestone for our sector.

New Zealand's hoki fishery has reached 25 years since it became the first whitefish fishery in the world to be independently certified as environmentally sustainable. It has now been recertified for the fifth time. That reflects decades of hard work by fishers, scientists and regulators working together to manage this fishery carefully and responsibly.

Hoki is managed within New Zealand's Quota Management System as eastern and western stocks. Catch limits are based on regular scientific surveys and monitoring, and are adjusted when needed. In the 2023–24 fishing year, around 107,000 tonnes of hoki were landed, generating approximately NZ\$230 million in export value and supporting jobs in coastal communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. This anniversary is not just about certification – it demonstrates what long-term commitment to science, transparency and continuous improvement can achieve. That's worthy of celebration! You can read more about the milestone and the people behind it on page 8.

In the meantime, 2026 has got off to an incredibly busy and challenging start for our sector. We are experiencing unprecedented attention from politicians, media, NGOs and other marine users. Seafood New Zealand has been working hard to ensure our industry's voice is heard clearly and constructively across the political spectrum and in the public domain. You can read more about that work in our Director of Communications and Engagement, Nirupa George's column on page 18.

With that increased attention comes scrutiny. At times, that can feel frustrating. But it is important we remember who we are and what we stand for:

- » **We are guided by science.**
- » **We operate within one of the most robust fisheries management systems in the world.**
- » **We invest in better technology and better practices.**
- » **We adapt when we need to.**

We are not perfect – but we are always working to improve. That is something we can be proud of.

To meet the demands on our sector in this election year, we have taken a careful look at how we are using our finite communications resources – time and money. We need to ensure our efforts and energy are focused on where they will have the greatest impact. As a result, we have made the decision to reduce the frequency of the magazine for 2026 – this means the next issue will likely be in spring 2026, to align with the start of the new fishing year.

This will allow us to prioritise proactive storytelling beyond our sector, stronger digital engagement and direct advocacy – ensuring we are actively shaping the conversation and telling the full story of what our people do every day to a wider audience.

We are also excited to be launching our new website soon – a platform that better reflects the scale, professionalism and importance of this vital primary sector.

The hoki milestone reminds us that long-term progress is possible when we stay focused and work together. Now is the time to carry that confidence forward. Stand proud.

Lisa Futschek

Chief Executive, Seafood New Zealand



Seafood is health food

Seafood has plenty of protein, is packed with vitamins from A to E and many species boast significant levels of omega-3s. It's full of nutritional necessities. But do those of us who work with it every day really appreciate just how good this original super food is for us?

- By Fiona MacMillan

If you want to see the word “necessary” used in a positive way, look at the health benefits provided by the nutrients, such as the vitamins and minerals, found in various New Zealand seafood species.

Take snapper. This beloved staple contains vitamin D, iodine, B12, potassium, selenium and more. And it is, of course, a source of protein.

Protein is necessary for the growth and maintenance of muscle mass. B12 is necessary for neurological function. Vitamin D is necessary for normal bone structure. All of these are claims permitted under our Food Standards Code. Snapper meets the regulatory definition to be called a “good source” of these nutrients and so much more.

And that's barely scratching the surface of the health benefits provided.

Seafood's nutrition is something to celebrate, but do we sometimes forget just how beneficial it is for human health, given all the talk about fishing in other contexts?



Trevally is a good source of protein, vitamin B3, vitamin B12, vitamin D, selenium and omega-3 fatty acids.



The President of the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen thinks so. Doug Saunders-Loder has been in the seafood business for 40 years, and he thinks the story of seafood's health benefits definitely gets lost.

"We hear so much negativity about commercial fishing and people dismissing its sustainability. In fact, we know that seafood in New Zealand is sustainable thanks to the way our fisheries are managed. But we talk about that side of things so much, we sometimes forget to talk about how healthy it is.

"I'm really proud of it. It's a great story. We need to remember to tell people about it."

As with all foods, there are both restrictions and permissions around what can be claimed. This allows industry and marketers to promote benefits whilst protecting consumers from misinformation.

Our Food Standards Code includes a list of pre-approved health and nutrient claims. These focus on the nutrients within the food (eg, protein for muscles) rather than the food itself. This is why claims tend to be twofold: "Fish is a good source of protein, which supports muscle development."

Julie North is a Nelson-based consultant with many years of experience both in seafood and in food health claims. She explains that the rules are there for a reason.

"There is good science behind our approved nutrient claims and they are there to be used. The great news for seafood is so many species boast a wide variety of nutrients – so there is plenty to say! The trick can be in making the story interesting, using language that resonates and appeals to consumers, without stepping over the line and avoiding any temptation to exaggerate.

"The Food Standards Code can be restrictive for sure, but it is designed to protect consumers from rogue players making fantastical claims. Leave that to TikTok. Respecting regulation is obviously sound business practice. The good news is that seafood has a brilliant story to tell."

That story includes numerous health benefits from the nutrients found in seafood.

How about protecting from free radical damage at the cellular level, which can increase your risk for diseases like cancer? Selenium helps with that, and is found in many Kiwi fish such as blue moki, grey mullet, gurnard, hoki, kahawai, kingfish, rig, snapper and tarakihi.

Potassium 'contributes to the normal growth and development of children.' It is found in species such as lemon sole, trevally, snapper and many more.

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Potassium 'contributes to the normal growth and development of children.' It is found in species such as lemon sole, trevally, snapper and many more.

Feeling fatigued? Try jack mackerel! It's a natural and delicious source of iron, which can help you feel a little less tired.

And iron, which 'contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue' can be found in jack mackerel, kahawai, orange roughy, trevally and more. Or as Julie would suggest:

"Feeling fatigued? Try jack mackerel! It's a natural and delicious source of iron, which can help you feel a little less tired."



Check out our comprehensive table outlining New Zealand seafood's nutritional benefits at www.seafood.co.nz/resources/seafoods-health-and-nutrition-benefits

25 years of hoki: a success story worth celebrating

A fish and chip staple and a favourite on Kiwi tables, hoki is synonymous with great New Zealand kaimoana.

Most people know hoki as an easy, reliable dinner option. What many don't realise is that it is also part of one of New Zealand's longest-running sustainability success stories – and this year that story reaches a major milestone.



Hoki is a fish and chip staple, and a favourite on Kiwi tables.

It's been 25 years since New Zealand hoki became the first whitefish fishery in the world to achieve certification to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard. Now, a quarter of a century later, it has been recertified for the fifth time.

That kind of longevity doesn't happen by accident.

It comes down to decades of people working together – fishers on the water, scientists tracking the stock, government setting limits, and iwi and other ocean users and guardians helping shape how the fishery operates. Different roles, different perspectives, but a shared commitment to getting it right.

Because sustainability isn't something you tick off once and move on from. It's something you keep working at.

The hoki fishery hasn't always had an easy run. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the western stock came under pressure as fewer young fish survived to adulthood. It was a moment that tested both the system and the people behind it.

Catch limits were cut significantly. Management settings were tightened. And the industry adjusted.

Those decisions weren't easy, but they worked. Over time, the stock rebuilt, and today the fishery is in a healthy state.

It's a story that still gets talked about because it shows something important – when the science points to change, the system responds.

The fishery operates under New Zealand's Quota Management System, with hoki managed as two interconnected stocks – eastern and western. Scientific surveys, modelling and fishing data all contribute to understanding how those stocks are tracking and how catch limits should be set.

But science doesn't exist in isolation.

It's a story that still gets talked about because it shows something important – when the science points to change, the system responds.



Twenty-five years after hoki became the first whitefish fishery in the world to achieve certification to the Marine Stewardship Council standard, it has been recertified for a fifth time.

COVER FEATURE



Hoki is one of the country's most valuable seafood exports, generating around \$230 million annually and supporting hundreds of jobs across harvesting, processing and science.



The latest MSC Fisheries Standard.

Fishers are often the first to notice when something changes. In 2018, crews began seeing fewer hoki in parts of the fishery, even before it showed up clearly in official assessments. The industry responded by pushing for reductions, resulting in a voluntary cut of 35,000 tonnes over two years.

It's a good example of how experience on the water and scientific insight work side by side – and how the fishery has built a culture of responding early, when it really counts.

Of course, sustainability isn't only about how many fish are in the water.

Over the past 25 years, the hoki fishery has also strengthened how it manages its wider environmental footprint. Midwater trawl methods mean much less contact with the seabed, and monitoring shows limited interaction with non-target and protected species.

The way the fishery is monitored has also come a long way. High levels of observer coverage, electronic reporting and digital tracking systems now provide a detailed, near real-time picture of fishing activity.

That kind of transparency matters. It builds trust – not just with regulators, but with markets and the public as well.

And hoki is a big deal in New Zealand's seafood sector. It's one of the country's most valuable seafood exports, generating around \$230 million annually and supporting hundreds of jobs across harvesting, processing and science.

Chief Executive of Seafood New Zealand, Lisa Futschek, says this milestone is really about the people who made it happen.

"It's about the people behind the fishery. It is the skippers and crews out on the water, and the scientific community guiding their efforts.

"It reflects years of hard work and care. Achieving this milestone has not been easy – it has been earned, and it helps keep confidence strong in our hoki and its place on dinner plates in New Zealand and around the world."

That long-term commitment is part of what defines the hoki story.

The demand for seafood continues to grow so in that context, hoki offers something valuable – a long-term example of what can be achieved when science, industry and regulation stay aligned.

But there's no sense of 'job done.'

If anything, the past 25 years have set the expectation for what comes next – continued improvement, continued science and continued collaboration.

Another world first

After two years of engagement with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the Association of Sustainable Fisheries, a pathway was secured enabling hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting to begin reassessment under version 3.0 of the standard – an achievement reached by only a handful of fisheries worldwide.

That work has since delivered another global first, with all four fisheries becoming the first in the world to be certified under MSC's updated version 3.1 standard.

The reassessment tested management systems, environmental protections and stock sustainability. Only three conditions were applied across all fisheries – a strong result that reflects the strength of New Zealand's fisheries management system. In MSC terms, conditions are targeted improvements required over time to maintain certification.

"Achieving MSC certification for our hoki, hake, ling and southern blue whiting fisheries is an independent verification of the strength and integrity of our fisheries management system here in New Zealand," says Aaron Irving, General Manager Deepwater, Seafood New Zealand.

"This certification reflects years of planning, preparation and detailed evidence gathering under a very challenging standard. I'm incredibly proud of our fishers, whose work at sea underpins this achievement."

Today, around 60% of the catch from New Zealand's deepwater fisheries is certified sustainable to the MSC standard.

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Collaborating on closures: the Napier Springs Box fishing agreement turned 10

Off the coast of Hawke's Bay, the Springs Box closure agreement between local commercial and recreational fishers has just finished celebrating its 10th anniversary – the tin anniversary, for anyone keeping track of those milestones.



Commercial fisher Mike Terry Senior. Inset: The Springs Box coordinates.

Springs Box may appear to be an unassuming 230 square kilometres of ocean east of Napier Port, but the area is where popular species like snapper and gurnard are thought to spawn during the summer months. It's not an official marine protection enforced by Government, but fishers agree to close the area to bottom trawling and Danish seining (though commercial trolling for albacore tuna is still allowed).

The annual closure, which just concluded for the season on 28 February, is entirely voluntary – and has led to long-term, positive relationships among all members of the region's fishing community.

Way back in 2015, recreational representatives from the Hawke's Bay Sports Fishing Club and LegaSea got together with local commercial fishers to find a way to simmer-down tensions about stock levels.

Hawke's Bay Sports Fishing Club life member Wayne

Bicknell was one of the key figures on the recreational side. He describes the initial meetings as "pretty straightforward," if a bit fiery. But once the "argy-bargy" was out of the way, discussions were productive, leading to a proactive compromise that everyone could work with.

"It was good because we knew each other. Young Mike Terry [Junior] plays cricket with my son and [fisher] Rick Burch, his son married my daughter."

Mike Terry Senior, a third-generation commercial fisher in Napier, has spent over 60 years on the water. Along with Wayne, he was also at that first, pivotal meeting to set up the Springs Box area.

"It was a pretty good effort by all the guys in the Port," he says of the long-standing agreement. "Everyone is all on board with it. Just getting on with each other, there should be a lot more of that, getting everyone on side. It all developed from there."

It's something we're quite proud of, really, because we're one of the only regions in the country that has an agreement between recreational and commercial fishing. I reckon this should be a great model for a lot of areas – we're lucky in Hawke's Bay. There's no other group like this anywhere around the country, and we're able to take things on a local basis.



Brett Rigby's son with a snapper caught in Springs Box in December 2025. Supplied.

Since 2019, the recreational Club has conducted a more rigorous Colin Murray Ramp Survey for fishers and competitions to record details about any recreational catches from Springs Box, which is critical to monitoring the overall state of the fishery.

Their data shows increases in snapper, and Wayne thinks bottom fishing is "probably the best it's been in 20 years."

Mike says the current fishing year has been "exceptional" and thinks the next one will be even better. "The Springs Box area is not too far for mums and dads to go with the kids. There's lots of snapper. Everyone is all happy days at the moment."

The next generation of fishers, too, are embracing the Springs Box agreement, setting it up for further decades of success.

Napier local and third-generation recreational angler Brett Rigby has stepped into many regional roles, including Captain of the Hawke's Bay Sports Fishing Club and co-chair of the finance committee for the New Zealand Sports Fishing Council. He agrees that in the past decade fishing in the area has improved dramatically.

"It's something we're quite proud of, really, because we're one of the only regions in the country that has an agreement between recreational and commercial fishing. I reckon this should be a great model for a lot of areas – we're lucky in Hawke's Bay. There's no other group like this anywhere around the country, and we're able to take things on a local basis."

Wayne, Brett and Mike all believe the collaborative model developed in Hawke's Bay could and should be replicated elsewhere. Wayne's advice?

"Sit around the table, look each other in the eye and talk about it. First pick the low fruit, and then once you gain each other's respect anything's achievable, I reckon. And that's the way, in my view, fisheries should be run – just dialogue, just getting on with people."

"It's a good thing," Mike agrees. "I think we'll keep it going for a while."

CATCHIN' UP WITH...



Tokatu captain Rex Chapman.

Catchin' up with Rex Chapman

A recent star of our *Faces of Fishing* video series (check out our Facebook if you haven't seen it!), we thought it timely to catch up with seasoned deepwater skipper Rex Chapman. Rex fills us in on growing up in 1970s Nelson to how new technology keeps you on the ball.

How did you get into the commercial fishing industry?

Like many kids growing up in 1970s Nelson, I was always around the fishing industry and recreational fishing. Like many of my generation, when you left school young you were destined to work in the primary industry sector – I was happy with fishing, farming or forestry as a future career. My father was a coal miner, then a bushman all his life. I worked on farms and in forestry, but wanted to go to sea. I got the opportunity through friends to go to sea in 1985 on the *FV Cordella* when I was 20 years old.

What is your role and what do you enjoy most about it?

My present role is captain on the Sealord trawler *Tokatu*, which has been challenging, but with overcoming these challenges comes a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment. I enjoy and appreciate many things in my role from the great people I work with, the fantastic ocean environment we have and working on the great ship that the *Tokatu* is.

What's the best piece of advice you've received about business or working in this industry?

One of the best pieces of advice I have received about working in this industry is that if it's what you want to do it (as it's not for everyone being away for long periods of time from friends and family) and you put in the effort, you can go as far as you want your ambition to take you.

What skills do you think are most important for someone working in this industry?

Resilience, respect, a strong work ethic and the ambition to keep learning.

Have you noticed much change in the fishing industry since you started?

A lot has changed over the last 40 years in the deepsea fishing industry, as it is a lot more professional than in the early days. Technology has and is progressing at a rapid rate, giving us better information and a lighter footprint. Regulation and stock management have both grown exponentially in their respective areas and when you are running vessels worth \$80 million-plus you need to be 100% on the ball.

As I get older, I find myself searching more for one thing: the truth. Good decisions can only be made with good information – whether that's on board a ship making fishing decisions, or at a government level setting policy and quota levels. Good, fact-based information leads to the best outcomes.

Is there a common misconception about commercial fishing or the seafood industry you'd like to set straight?

Common misconceptions and/or outright lies about the New Zealand commercial fishing industry and commercial fishers are something that needs correcting.

For one, the message from the mainstream media, some politicians, personalities, recreational fishing groups, and eNGOs that try to portray fishermen and the New Zealand fishing industry as untrustworthy, uncaring for the environment and out there to destroy the ocean and its biodiversity is so far removed from reality and insulting.

The reality is the New Zealand fishing industry has a lot of hard-working people out to run successful businesses and protect the resource and the environment. The fishers who go to and live on the sea are a lot of hard-working men and women who are trying to earn an honest living and none of them want to destroy the sea and its biodiversity, which they rely on for their livelihoods and their children's futures.

The bad press about bottom trawling and documentaries showing bad practices overseas with the intent of saying New Zealand is the same are very disingenuous. I have fished in many parts of the world and I know the New Zealand fishing industry is by far the best-managed and most heavily regulated fishing industry on the planet.

What's been your most memorable day at work?

I have had many memorable days at work over the last 40 years, and each different ship and crew have had memorable moments. The great people I have worked with and the places the fishing industry has taken me – from the power and the beauty of nature in the Southern Ocean to the west coast of Namibia and transiting the Panama Canal – have all been great experiences.

If you weren't working in the seafood industry, what do you think you'd be doing instead?

I would more than likely be working in the agriculture sector in some capacity.

What is your favourite seafood?

Turbot fillets (battered) and oysters in any form.



The *Tokatu* braving some rough seas – another day in the office for Rex.

Outside of work, what do you enjoy doing?

I enjoy the quiet life at home in Golden Bay with my wife, Jennifer, and our dogs. I enjoy catching up with our four boys when we can and playing around with a couple of old V8s we have.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about what you do or the industry?

The fishing industry has been good to me, and I have been fortunate to have had some great mentors along the way. It has had its tough times, good times, scary times and funny times and I have a treasure trove of memories and have made a lot of good friends.

As I get older, I find myself searching more for one thing: the truth. Good decisions can only be made with good information – whether that's on board a ship making fishing decisions, or at a government level setting policy and quota levels. Good, fact-based information leads to the best outcomes. On the flip side, bad or misleading information, often used to play on people's emotions, does no one any favours and can have unintended consequences that harm innocent people.

Keen to share your story in "Catchin' up with"?
Want to nominate someone else? Email us at
editor@seafood.org.nz



Marine ecologist and professor Kura Paul-Burke.

Curiosity is the start of science

Marine ecologist professor Kura Paul-Burke (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Whakahemo, Ngāti Māhino, Ngāti Pūkeko, Irish) has made her career combining mātauranga Māori and marine science knowledge systems to restore marine taonga species. In September 2025, Paul-Burke received both the the Tangata Kaitiaki Award and the Seafood New Zealand-sponsored Supreme Sustainability and Innovation Award. She sat down with *Seafood* to discuss her research and the power of community-led science.

Tell me more about the current projects you are working on.

I am so lucky to be working on projects all over the country! One project is called Te Wahapū o Waihi where we converted a 30-hectare dairy farm into wetland and saltmarsh. We have planted 160,000 native plants, fenced 16 kilometres of waterways, conducted blue carbon trials and assisted 30-plus local farmers with funding to establish environmental plans. But, the real force of that project was to protect and care for Waihi Estuary. It's a partnership with five iwi, Regional Council and the Ministry for the Environment. We aim to put a kōrowai, or a cloak of multiple wetlands around our estuary to help filter out pollution and sedimentation coming from the land. We have a whakatukī (proverb) that guides the project that says; He oranga te wahapū, he oranga te iwi – if the estuary is healthy, the people are healthy.

Another project is called Pou Rāhui in Tikapa Moana / Te Moananui-a-Toi (Hauraki Gulf). The five iwi on the project

have rāhui in place or temporary closures preventing all humans from harvesting shellfish at designated places. The intergenerational project is inspiring. We have trained taiohi (youth from the five iwi) to become qualified free divers and to do mātauranga Māori-led surveys alongside marine science, with us in the ocean. The surveys identified the pāua population in an abysmal state of collapse. We had to do something to help the pāua and our moana. So, in 2025 after a lot of effort, we reseeded 80,000 baby pāua back into the ocean and our taiohi were working right alongside us in the water. We also removed 5,000 kina as they were dominating pāua habitat. Working with iwi, we will keep going back to care for the pāua.

Then there is the kuku or green-lipped mussel project in Ōhiwa harbour. Working with kaumātua (elders) we implemented traditional knowledge and resources to help restore the mussel population from 80,000 in 2019

to 45 million in 2024. We created biodegradable spat lines made out of dead tī kouka (cabbage tree) leaves to help grow baby mussels and at the same time reduce plastic pollution in our moana and kaimoana. This project is close to my heart. The restored mussel bed is the one my daddy used to take us to collect kuku when I was a child. My daddy and our Ngāti Awa tōhunga were a part of the project from the beginning. It is bittersweet that they didn't get to see how important a role their mātauranga or knowledge played in the success of this work. I think they would be very proud to see our harbour cleaner and the traditional mussel bed thriving again.

What's the benefit of incorporating a mātauranga Māori approach to marine science?

Both approaches have much in common. They both aim to better understand the world in which we live. Both perspectives are well established and include teaching and learning techniques. They are systematic and seek to solve and explain phenomena. Both approaches highlight different ways to arrive at legitimate knowledge. Mātauranga Māori stands on its own merit as a body of knowledge as does mainstream science.

What is important is recognising our ocean is declining, at an unprecedented rate. The best thing we can do is to incorporate as many tools and innovative approaches to help us help our ocean. Or there will be nothing left for anyone. Combining mātauranga Māori with marine science has generated some outstanding tangible results. It is better when we combine our knowledge pools and work together.

Random question, but, what is science to you?

I think pūtaiao or science is fun, it's all about problem solving. It obviously has complexity, but so does learning another language. Pretty much everything we do in life can be complex, or we can strip it back and translate the complexity into accessible, logical and achievable actions. I love the pragmatic nature of working in the moana. Trying to figure out traditional solutions for contemporary environmental problems. If we look back to the learning and teaching of our ancestors we can sometimes help to find real-world answers.

What was your reaction to receiving both the Tangata Kaitiaki Award and the Supreme Sustainability and Innovation Award last year?

I was so surprised – I didn't even know that there was a supreme award. Seriously, when they were leading up to the announcement of the winner, I was sitting with a person from MPI debating the desserts, and I was very committed to that conversation. Halfway through that debate, I stopped and said, "Wait, is that me they are talking about?" I almost cried walking up to the stage because everyone stood up and was clapping and cheering. It was quite overwhelming. There were so many amazing people doing great things in the room and it was a real honour. It was a humbling experience.



Seafood New Zealand Chair Greg Gent presenting professor Kura Paul-Burke with the 2025 Supreme Sustainability and Innovation Award.

What would it mean to see more mātauranga Māori incorporated into government projects?

There is a lack of skilled and experienced practitioners (Māori and non-Māori) able to work across disciplinary areas of mātauranga Māori, marine science, ecological restoration and knowledge communication transfer, which is a significant challenge for our country. Currently, not one government department employs a Māori marine scientist. If you look across the ministries, departments and funding agencies there are no Māori marine scientists, which means there are no Māori scientists in senior managerial positions participating in marine science policy and decision-making conversations. This outdated approach then translates through to most universities. We are educating the next generation of marine scientists and policy managers with only one way to view and work with the ocean. To date, that approach has not retained the health of our ocean nor has it accessed the depth of indigenous innovation still waiting to be realised. Removing those old-world systems thinking and barriers, to create meaningful space for mātauranga Māori, doubles our chances of leading the world on cutting-edge, fisheries practice. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Where do you see the commercial industry fitting in?

All sectors (commercial, customary, recreational) extract from the ocean. Those same sectors also want a thriving ocean with plentiful fisheries. I am very interested in looking at ways we can assist each other across the sectors to better care for our moana. I would love to do more within industry around collaboration for blue economy and restoration. The potential is immense.

Seafood at the ballot box

Seafood New Zealand's Director Communications and Engagement Nirupa George weighs in on the growing role of seafood, sustainability and commercial fishing in upcoming election conversations.

With just over eight months to go until New Zealanders head to the polls, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: seafood, commercial fishing and marine sustainability are emerging as key election conversations.

A recent media article described fisheries as an unexpected political battleground, highlighting the growing attention on food production, environmental performance and social licence. For comparison, last election, most parties didn't even have an oceans or fishing policy a month before the election. This time, we are seeing them being rolled out as some of the first policies of the campaign.

For some in our sector, that framing may feel confronting. But it shouldn't. For us in the industry, heightened political interest is not a threat, it is an opportunity.

Seafood is a cornerstone of many regional economies. From Northland to Stewart Island, the industry supports thousands of jobs on vessels, in processing plants and across supply chains. It contributes billions in export earnings and helps position New Zealand as a trusted producer of high-quality protein. For many Kiwis, seafood is also a taste of home – snapper on the barbecue, pāua fritters at the bach or mussels shared with whānau.

At the same time, like all primary industries, seafood operates within a complex and evolving policy environment. Regulation, science, environmental expectations and public perception all shape how we work. That means political engagement is not optional. It is essential.

Over the coming months, Seafood New Zealand will continue to engage actively and constructively with political parties from across the political spectrum. Our approach is not about partisan alignment. It is about informed decision-making.

Recently, Seafood New Zealand met with members of the Rural National Party team to discuss the realities facing our sector – from regulatory pressures and sustainability performance to regional economic contribution and future growth opportunities. These conversations matter. They allow policymakers to hear directly from industry participants and to understand the practical implications of policy decisions made in Wellington.

Importantly, our engagement does not begin or end with one party. We are meeting, and will continue to meet, with representatives from across Parliament in the lead-up to the election, and we will maintain those relationships afterwards, regardless of the outcome. Governments change. Our role does not. We advocate for the seafood sector with whoever holds office.

We want policymakers to understand what modern seafood production looks like in New Zealand. That includes significant investment in innovation, monitoring technology and science-based management. It includes the progress made in sustainability performance, as well as the very real pressures facing businesses. We will also talk about the opportunities ahead for growth and development.

Over the coming months, Seafood New Zealand will continue to engage actively and constructively with political parties from across the political spectrum. Our approach is not about partisan alignment. It is about informed decision-making.

Internationally, New Zealand is widely regarded as a leader in responsibly harvested, high-quality seafood. Maintaining that reputation requires stable, predictable policy settings and ongoing collaboration between industry and government. It also requires conversations grounded in evidence and practical outcomes for communities.

As the election campaign gathers pace, we will be encouraging all political parties to engage directly with the seafood sector – to visit coastal communities and speak with the people whose livelihoods depend on healthy oceans. We also encourage industry to take part in these conversations and share their stories and challenges.

Regardless of who forms the next government, Seafood New Zealand's commitment remains constant: advocating for a thriving, sustainable seafood sector that delivers value for the economy, the environment and our communities.

Because ultimately, strong oceans policy is not about politics. It is about New Zealand's future.



Nirupa George

*Director Communications
and Engagement*

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SEAFOOD
NEW ZEALAND

2026 CONFERENCE

26-27 May | Tākina Wellington

Realising the vision:

why you should be at the Seafood New Zealand Conference 2026

At a time when seafood is generating more conversation than we've seen in recent years, it's more important than ever for industry to come together. The Seafood New Zealand Conference 2026 offers exactly that – a chance to connect, reflect and look ahead at what comes next for one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most important sectors.

Seafood is a \$2.2 billion industry, supporting jobs and communities from Northland to Stewart Island. It feeds New Zealanders, underpins regional economies and contributes significantly to our export story. But beyond the numbers, it is an industry built on people – and this conference is about bringing those people together.

A milestone worth marking

This year's conference, on 26–27 May at Tākina in Wellington, centres on the theme Realising the Vision.

It marks 40 years since the introduction of New Zealand's Quota Management System (QMS) – a system built on long-term thinking, science and sustainability. Four decades on, it remains one of the most comprehensive fisheries management systems in the world.

But this milestone is not just about looking back. It's about asking what comes next.

As expectations shift, technology evolves, and environmental and market pressures grow, the industry must continue to adapt. This year's programme will explore how we build on strong foundations and continue to lead.

A fresh perspective on the QMS

Helping bring that reflection to life is special guest **Seamus Marten**, co-host of the popular *Between Two Beers* podcast.

Known for his engaging storytelling style, Seamus will take a look at the 40-year journey of the QMS through a different lens. His session promises to be insightful, entertaining, and a chance to reflect on how far the industry has come – and where it might go next.

Right: Seamus Marten, co-host of the *Between Two Beers* podcast, will lead a reflection on 40 years of the Quota Management System and where it might go next.



Looking ahead in an election year

With 2026 being an election year, the conference also comes at a critical time.

Seafood, commercial fishing and sustainability are becoming part of broader national conversations in a way we haven't seen in previous election cycles. Understanding how political parties view the sector – and what policies may be on the horizon – will be a key focus.

Alongside this, the programme will cover the latest research on the value of the seafood sector to New Zealand, as well as updates across science, policy, and innovation.

This is about being informed, prepared and ready to engage.



Harold Hillman, one of the keynote speakers at the 2025 Seafood New Zealand Conference in Nelson.



The conference provides plenty of networking opportunities.

More than just a conference

While the programme will be packed, the value of the conference goes well beyond the sessions.

This is a rare opportunity to connect face-to-face with others from across the sector – from those on the water to those in science, policy and beyond. Conversations had over coffee or at the end of the day often prove just as valuable as what happens on stage.

Networking functions will be held at the end of both days.

Celebrating our people

Day two will also feature the 2026 Seafood Stars Awards, recognising the people and organisations doing exceptional work across the sector.

From emerging talent to long-standing leaders, storytellers to innovators, these awards celebrate the strength and diversity of our industry.

Nominations for these awards are open through to 5pm, Friday 24 April.

Nominate a seafood star at seafood.co.nz/seafood-stars

The awards will be followed by the Seafood Showcase Cocktail Function – a chance to enjoy some of New Zealand's best kaimoana while continuing conversations in a relaxed setting.

Right: The 2025 Seafood Stars Awards ceremony.



Delegates enjoying the fresh kaimoana from across the motu.





The 2025 New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen Conference.

One week, two conferences

This year also brings something new.

The Seafood New Zealand Conference is being held back-to-back with the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen Conference on 28 May, also at Tākina. Bringing these events together creates a unique opportunity to connect across the full breadth of the industry – and to get more value from a single trip.

Be part of it

The Seafood New Zealand Conference 2026 is about looking ahead with confidence.

It's about recognising what we've built, understanding the challenges ahead and making sure the voices of those in the industry are part of shaping the future.

Most of all, it's about people.

If you are part of this sector – or connected to it in any way – this is your opportunity to be in the room.

Join us in Wellington this May as we come together to realise the vision for the future of seafood in New Zealand.

Register for the 2026 Seafood New Zealand Conference:

www.seafood.co.nz/conference

Register for the 2026 New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen Conference:

www.nzfishfed.co.nz/conference

Sponsorship

There are a limited number of sponsorship opportunities still available for organisations wanting to be part of the event and support the sector.

To discuss sponsorship opportunities or customise a package to meet your objectives, please contact Karen Olver at Karen.Olver@seafood.org.nz or call 027 436 5273.

Breeding Greenshell™ mussels to tolerate the heat

– By Cawthron Institute aquaculture scientists Jess Ericson and Megan Scholtens



Cawthron Institute aquaculture scientist Jess Ericson examining a mussel sensor.

Until the early 2000s, the Greenshell™ mussel (*Perna canaliculus*) industry in Aotearoa New Zealand relied entirely on wild-collected spat, offering little control over growth, survival or seasonality.

The variability of wild spat supply, often dependent on unpredictable beach-cast events, led to inconsistent farm performance and vulnerability to climatic stressors. Recognising these issues, Cawthron Institute partnered with industry and government to form Aotearoa New Zealand's first structured mussel breeding programme in 2002.

Working alongside SPATnz, BreedCo and other key partners, this initiative laid the scientific and operational groundwork for long-term genetic improvement. With a solid breeding platform in place and hundreds of selectively bred 'families' created, we are now able to conduct research on heat tolerance to support breeding for climate resilience and ensure future-tested broodstock.

The Cawthron Shellfish Aquaculture Research Platform (ShARP) has an established research programme investigating the effects of ocean warming and marine heatwaves on Greenshell™ mussel (GSM).

This platform, along with the availability of GSM family lines, allows ShARP scientists to investigate the role of genetics in heat tolerance. We've developed a chronic heat challenge (eg, exposing mussels to elevated seawater temperatures for several weeks to test if heat tolerance can be inherited) that can be used as a selective breeding tool.

Pilot trials revealed that for GSM, a 26°C chronic heat challenge was the most suitable method to tease apart different survival trajectories among families. The maximum sea surface temperature routinely recorded in northern New Zealand's coastal waters is 26°C, and is also the temperature threshold where we see an increase in GSM mortalities in land-based facilities (if ponds are not temperature-controlled).

Our survival trial exposes mussels from different families to a 1°C per day increase in seawater temperature up to 26°C (starting from the ambient seawater temperature at the time of the trial).



Megan Scholtens, a geneticist within the aquaculture group at Cawthron Institute, working in the wet lab.

Once the temperature reaches 26°C, it is held there until all of the mussels die. This “time to death” is the performance measure we then use to define ultimate heat tolerance. The devil is in the detail during this assessment: the ‘unresponsive’ endpoint needs to be carefully defined, corrected for the influence of individual mussel size and, above all, tank hygiene carefully maintained.

To date, we have conducted four trials in total, involving two generations of mussel families from two different companies (SPATnz and Te Huata). Trials have shown large family-level differences: some mussels die within six days, while others survive nearly a month.

In the field, Coromandel mussel farmers are familiar with high temperatures. They’ve observed local populations that have endured heatwaves and still continue to produce spat. Thanks to proactive support from Coromandel farmer Peter James, we’ve been able to

introduce some of these naturally selected mussels into our trials. These mussels did well, initially surviving longer than the Marlborough Sounds-derived families, but the selectively bred families ultimately proved more resilient.

For each survival trial we calculate a ‘heritability value’ indicating what proportion of the variation in survival in the tested population is due to genetics, and what proportion is due to other factors (eg, environmental). We’ve found that genetics play a very significant role in determining how GSM cope with high temperatures, indicating that genetic selection should improve heat tolerance over time. In comparison to milk production in dairy cows, for example, heat tolerance in GSM is substantially more heritable.

After running our trials on cohorts of adult families, we applied genetic evaluation methods incorporating the survival data and information from relatives to select and breed the next generation of families with varying levels of heat tolerance. This new generation was tested as juveniles. These trials confirmed large differences in heat tolerance among families, but their heat tolerance did not always align with what we expected based on their adult relatives. Their biology and priorities differ at this stage, meaning heat tolerance in juveniles and adults could be considered different traits.

To unpack this further we will be testing the full siblings of these animals once they reach adult size, to establish whether their heat tolerance better matches their relatives who were also tested as adults.

This industry-science collaboration has generated novel and valuable insights into breeding for heat tolerance in GSM in Aotearoa, highlighting the strong potential of this species for climate-resilience breeding. In shellfish, improvements of 10-20% per generation are common for growth traits, but resilience traits like heat tolerance tend to respond more slowly, requiring multiple generations. A targeted focus and greater investment could accelerate this work, providing the GSM industry with the tools it needs to stay ahead of ocean warming.

Future research should explore:

Genomics

- Genotyping (DNA mapping) families would provide more accurate estimates of heat tolerance levels and would enable accelerated genetic gains via genomic selection. This would facilitate identification of heat tolerant lines via a blood sample.
- Age-specific genome-wide-association studies to identify genetic markers associated with specific traits.

Quantitative genetics

- Treating heat tolerance at different life stages as different traits and calculating genetic correlations between them.
- Genetic correlations between heat tolerance and other traditional breeding traits.

Trials

- Surviving 26°C heatwaves is useful in its own right, but this trait is also likely to reflect broader resilience characteristics. Future work will therefore test whether a heat-tolerant mussel is also tolerant to other stressors (eg, ocean acidification, low salinity, disease etc).



NEWS

you can use



From skipper to school

In March, fisher Mike Terry Senior and his son, Mike Terry Junior, visited a local Napier area school to talk to students about the fish they catch, how fishing works and why looking after the ocean matters. They filleted a john dory and dished up some freshly cooked fish 'n' chips – so you can imagine they were a big hit!



Mudfish reigns supreme

Congratulations to the humble Northland mudfish, which has been crowned Te Ika o Te Tau / Fish of the Year 2026 after a come-from-behind win in the competition's final 24 hours. This freshwater fish, found in wetlands within a 25-kilometre radius of Lake Omapere, grows to about 10 centimetres in length and has a cigar-shaped body with thick skin and no scales.

mountaintosea.org.nz/fish-of-the-year



Fancy a shag?

We love these ceramic shag heads by Collingwood-based artist Sue Dasler. Each life-sized piece is hand-sculpted and cast, giving them plenty of personality. Comes with a key hole for easy wall mounting.

\$280 | suedaslerpottery.co.nz



Meet Seamus Marten

Seamus Marten is one half of the award-winning *Between Two Beers* podcast and is the original 'Hambassador' and a proud Solomon Islander.

Before finding his feet as a podcaster he dedicated over 20 years to football administration in various roles with FIFA, the Oceania Football Confederation, and New Zealand Football.

An experienced MC, Seamus speaks with authenticity and vulnerability about the challenges he has overcome from a career that has taken him around the world and to various highs and lows. He has an extensive and diverse range of personal and professional experiences and has worked across a variety of industries including sport, events, communications media, marketing, and broadcasting. Seamus will be leading a conversation on the Quota Management System's 40-year history and impact at our conference in Wellington.

More on page 21





Have you read our 2025 Year in Review?

This document is our annual summary of key events, challenges and achievements for both Seafood New Zealand and the industry we represent. In addition to an overview of activity from each of our business groups, this document contains data and facts from reputable sources which we hope you'll find useful throughout 2026.

Read it online at www.seafood.co.nz/publications/year-in-review

2026 industry events for your diary

Save the date for these upcoming workshops, hosted by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ), supported by Seafood New Zealand, the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen, Moana New Zealand, and Beers & Ideas events.*



Regional Commercial Fisher Workshops

April 1: Invercargill

May 6: Hamilton

June 10: Napier

June 12: Tauranga

June 24: Leigh

June 26: Whangārei



Beers & Ideas

June 10: Napier

June 24: Leigh

June 26: Whangārei

October 14 or 15: Nelson

* Dates are subject to change, visit www.seafood.co.nz/workshops for the latest information.

Seafood Directions 2026 tickets available now

28-30 July: ICC Sydney

Seafood Directions is an opportunity to promote Australia's seafood industry, discuss industry issues, workshop solutions, teach best practices, share knowledge, and plan for the future of the sector. From ocean to table, the conference will explore how we can respond to evolving consumer expectations, harness emerging technologies, build a resilient workforce, and safeguard long-term access to resources. This year's program is built around six key sub-themes: Seafood and its consumers; Technology and innovation; People and workforce; Nature and climate change resilience; Security, access and food; and Market access and trade.

Register at seafooddirections.com.au/registration

When scallops were everywhere

– By *Liam Hansard, Project Manager for Save Our Scallops, EnviroStrat*
and *Liam Arthur-Hunt*



Liam Hansard at work.

Save Our Scallops

This was the background to the Save Our Scallops venture, which is piecing together the science and aquaculture methodology needed to rebuild what was lost.

Save Our Scallops was created, funded and is owned by Ocean Regeneration Aotearoa (ORA).

The Save Our Scallops venture has been piloting farming and hatchery development, alongside restoration of wild stocks. The aim is to restore scallop abundance through unlocking a new aquaculture industry which restores healthy wild stocks.

Save Our Scallops is funding three PhDs through the University of Auckland; two are looking at aquaculture (hatchery protocols and farming techniques respectively) and a third is about developing methods to optimise restoration.

Much has been learned in the two years since the venture began.

There was a time when scallops could be harvested close to shore and were embedded in coastal life. For many New Zealanders, scallops were not a luxury seafood, they were simply there. They were a familiar part of summer, of family gatherings, of local fishing stories passed down without much thought.

Across New Zealand, scallop fisheries are now closed or heavily restricted. Scientific surveys show populations reduced to a fraction of their former size, with some beds effectively gone. Scallops have vanished from places where they once thrived, leaving behind only sediment and broken shell.

This story is not unique to New Zealand.

Across continents, scallop fisheries followed a similar trajectory with long periods of apparent abundance, rising efficiency of harvest, and a slow accumulation of damage that only became obvious once populations collapsed. In most cases, the warning signs were subtle – declining catch rates, patchier beds, poorer recruitment – until suddenly there was very little left.



A lantern net, used to farm scallops.



From left, Lucas Evans, Liam Hansard and Hamish Howard.

Why recovery is so elusive

One of the most consistent lessons from collapsed scallop fisheries overseas is how difficult recovery can be. Whilst closing a fishery stops further decline, it does not guarantee rebuilding of wild populations. In many overseas cases, scallop beds failed to return even after years of closure, because of habitat alteration and/or because adult populations were too sparse to enable recovery. Without enough breeding scallops, larvae simply drift away or die.

Recovery is further complicated by the fragmented way scallops have historically been managed. Scallop fisheries are affected by a mix of land use smothering the seabed with fine sediment, along with fisheries decisions and commercial and recreational dredging.

Monitoring has often been intermittent, data is spatially limited and management responses are reactive rather than proactive and adaptive. Without aligned processes for data collection, shared decision-making and timely responses, recovery efforts struggle to gain traction. At the same time, fishing is predominantly by dredging, which has negative impacts on the benthic environment, often leaving scallops damaged by the physical impacts of dredging.

New Zealand is now confronting the same reality with our scallop fishery – closed since 2022 for most of the North Island, and earlier in Kaipara (2018) and Nelson/Marlborough (2017). Many scallop beds remain empty years after fishing ceased.

The challenge is not just biological, but institutional and social; rebuilding scallops requires coordination across sectors, sustained effort over long timeframes, and management systems designed to respond to ecological signals, not just regulatory thresholds. Sediment from land use continues to impact beds, and there is limited understanding of how best to restore scallops beyond closure of the fishery.

Lessons from overseas: a familiar pattern of decline

Wherever scallop fisheries have collapsed, the causes look remarkably similar.

Overfishing is often the starting point. Scallops live close together to reproduce successfully. As fishing removes adult scallops and populations thin out, fewer larvae are produced and survival drops. In many overseas fisheries, catches declined gradually before collapsing altogether, a pattern now familiar in parts of New Zealand once famous for scallop fisheries.

Dredging compounds the problem, not only removing scallops directly but also indirectly affecting populations by disturbing sediment and degrading habitats over time. Overseas experience shows that once the seabed is repeatedly disrupted by dredging, scallop beds struggle to return even after fishing stops.

There is an opportunity to think differently about how scallop populations are rebuilt, one that aligns restoration, farming and fisheries rather than treating them as separate problems. It suggests stronger protection where recovery is possible, better feedback between data and management decisions, and a more deliberate approach to how and where intervention occurs.

Sedimentation and declining water quality is less visible, but a very important cause of population decline. Stemming from land-based activities like forestry and urban subdivision, fine sediments interfere with feeding and growth by burying young scallops and reducing their ability to feed. In Golden Bay and Tasman Bay, habitat conditions were degraded so significantly that reseeded young scallops struggled to survive, despite years of closure.

The warning and the opportunity

International experience shows that scallop collapse follows a predictable pattern. Apparent abundance masks slow damage. Efficiency of fishing outpaces ecology. Recovery, when it happens, takes far longer than expected, and sometimes never comes.

But it also shows that collapse is not inevitable.

Overseas fisheries that have stabilised or begun to recover did so by changing how scallops were managed. Reducing sediment coming off the land, seabed disturbance through changing fishing methods, protecting scallop grounds, improving monitoring and accepting that recovery operates on ecological timescales, not economic ones. This requires collaboration from both the commercial and recreational sectors, government, science community and stakeholders. Often, pressure from the end consumer plays an important role in catalysing management change.

New Zealand now sits at a similar crossroads.

Scallops here are not extinct. But they are depleted, vulnerable and slow to recover. At the same time, New Zealand holds ingredients that many other regions lacked when their fisheries collapsed: extensive aquaculture



Liam Hansard, Project Manager at EnviroStrat, holding a pocket net.

experience, growing scientific capability across hatchery, farming and restoration, and increasing recognition that fisheries and aquaculture do not need to sit in opposition but can be complementary.

There is an opportunity to think differently about how scallop populations are rebuilt, one that aligns restoration, farming and fisheries rather than treating them as separate problems. It suggests stronger protection where recovery is possible, better feedback between data and management decisions, and a more deliberate approach to how and where intervention occurs.

There is still a narrow window to choose a different ending. What that choice would involve, and what a credible recovery pathway for scallops in Aotearoa could look like, is the conversation that must come next.

Contact Liam at liam.hansard@envirostrat.co.nz for more on this work and how you may be able to support it.

"catch fish...not cables"

There are a number of international submarine cables which come ashore in the Auckland area. These cables supply international communications for both New Zealand and Australia to the rest of the world.

New Zealand is a very isolated nation and as such is extremely reliant upon global communication via submarine cables. Here in New Zealand over 98% of all international communication is carried via submarine fibre optic cables. These cables are a key component of New Zealand's infrastructure and play a significant role in our everyday lives, the general economy and future growth of New Zealand.

These cables are laid in three submarine cable corridors in the greater Auckland area where anchoring and fishing is prohibited under the Submarine Cables & Pipelines Protection Act.

These areas are:

- **Muriwai Beach** out to the 12 mile territorial limit where both anchoring and fishing is prohibited.
- **Scott Point to Island Bay** in the upper Waitemata Harbour where anchoring is prohibited.
- **Takapuna Beach** this runs from Takapuna Beach in the south to just north of the Hen & Chicken Island (opposite Taiharuru Head) where anchoring and fishing is prohibited.

Note: These protected areas are monitored by sea and air patrols.



Spark
New Zealand



What should you do?

- If you are going into any of these areas, be sure to check your marine charts and/or GPS plotter so you know the exact locations of the prohibited zones. The relevant charts are NZ53, NZ5322, NZ532, NZ522, NZ52, NZ42 and NZ43. The symbols used to mark the zones are detailed in Figure 1.
- If you suspect you have snagged your anchor or fishing gear on a submarine cable in one of these areas, don't try to free it. Note your position, abandon your gear, then call 0800 782 627.

What happens outside the prohibited areas?

These cables are covered by the Submarine Cables and Pipelines Protection Act regardless of whether they are inside or outside a prohibited area. Beyond the confines of the "anchoring and fishing prohibited" areas, the cables are clearly marked on the appropriate marine charts.

Considering possible positioning inaccuracies and repaired cable section deviations, fishermen are advised to keep a minimum distance of one nautical mile from either side of charted cables.

Note this number:

For any queries regarding submarine cables call: **0800 782 627**

Symbols Relating To Submarine Cables

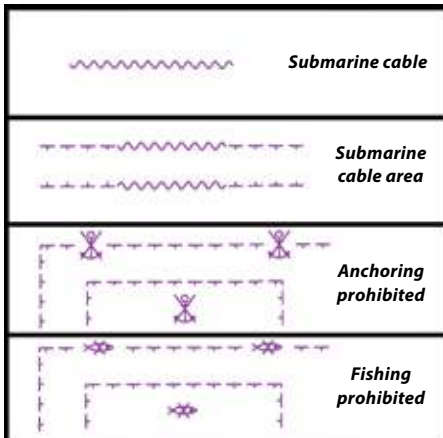


Figure 1.

These are some of the penalties

- A maximum fine of \$20,000 for a non-commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$100,000 for a commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$250,000 for damaging a submarine cable.

In addition to the fine for damage, the cable owners would inevitably pursue the recovery of costs associated with repairs, this could be up to \$100,000 plus a day; a typical repair can take up to two weeks.

Be Aware

These International submarine cables carry up to 10,000 volts to power the system repeaters along the cable.

For more detail refer to appropriate marine charts.





The Westport Deep Sea Fishing School cohort.

Getting hooked on a career at sea

On the West Coast, the Westport Deep Sea Fishing School is opening doors for people keen on a career at sea. Described by its director Peter Maich as a “gateway to the seafood industry,” the school offers a practical, immersive introduction to deep sea fishing.

“What we’re doing is taking people who have an interest or passion for the industry – or even just curiosity – and putting them through a residential training programme,” Peter says. “We give them experience on a boat, take them out catch a crayfish, see if they get sick and help them understand what the work is actually like.”

The school has been running for more than 30 years and was created to help people take their first step into seafood careers. Through a six-week programme, students gain NZQA Level 2 qualifications while learning the core skills required on board a vessel. This includes processing skills, health and safety, firefighting and essential sea survival training.

“We think that’s a good way to get started,” Peter says. “From there, we help connect students with seafood employers and hopefully set them up for long-term careers they’ll love.”

For Braden Currie, born and raised in Westport, the course offered a practical alternative to further study. Before enrolling, Braden completed a Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) programme, spending six weeks on a military base developing discipline and teamwork. “It was quite intense,” he says. “I really enjoyed it.”

Living locally meant Braden already knew about the fishing school. After weighing up polytechnic study, he decided this path made more sense. “It didn’t cost as much, and it felt more hands-on,” he explains. A bonus has been the people. “The tutors are really funny and easy to be around. That’s made a big difference.”

So far, Braden has completed deep sea survival training, learning how to use survival suits, life jackets and life rafts – skills he knows are critical for working offshore. After finishing the six-week course, he plans to return for Level 3 training and then head to sea. “I’ve got a mate who works on one of the bigger boats and I hope to work with him,” he says. When asked his favourite seafood, Braden smiles “Hoki or flounder. I don’t mind anchovies, either.”



The Westport Deep Sea Fishing School’s hands-on training vessel, *Legionaire II*.

For Maria Save, the journey to the West Coast began much further north. Originally from Auckland, Maria also completed the LSV programme before hearing about the fishing school at an expo. “I was really interested because of the travel,” she says. “You can go far away from home, and that really appealed to me.”

Now studying sea survival, Maria has been learning how to work as part of a team, put on survival suits and prepare for real-life emergency situations. With assessments coming up, she’s focused on completing the course and then moving straight into employment. “Hopefully I can get employed when I finish,” she says, ideally in a factory role on board a vessel. When asked her favourite seafood, she laughs: “Fish and chips!”

For Peter Maich, stories like Braden’s and Maria’s are exactly why the school exists. By providing hands-on, real-world training, the West Coast Deep Sea Fishing School is helping build a capable, confident workforce – one crew member at a time.

There are training providers throughout New Zealand that provide a variety of maritime training, find more information visit our website
www.seafood.co.nz/maritime-training-providers

Wellbeing support continues as FirstMate secures future funding

FirstMate has recently heard that it's been successful in securing funding from the Ministry of Primary Industries' Rural Wellbeing Fund, enabling the charity to continue supporting New Zealand's fishing and marine farming communities through to 2029. Combined with the ongoing support of sector partners, including Seafood New Zealand, Aquaculture New Zealand, Pāua Industry Council, NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council and other industry contributors, the funding provides stability for the years ahead.

For FirstMate Chair Justine Inns, the funding represents an important milestone.

"Fishing and marine farming can be demanding, isolating and unpredictable. FirstMate exists so people in the sector have someone to talk to and somewhere to turn when things get tough," she says.

"This funding helps ensure we can continue offering that support for the long term. We can continue to provide free, confidential wellbeing support to fishers, marine farmers and their whānau working across the seafood sector."

FirstMate's Navigators, based around the country, remain at the heart of our offering. They offer practical support, a listening ear and connections to further help where needed.

"We're here for the support people need," says Justine. "Our Navigators understand the realities of the sector and are there to talk things through, whether it's stress, financial pressure, family challenges or simply needing someone outside the immediate circle to listen."

Alongside improved funding continuity, FirstMate has made several behind-the-scenes changes as the charity moves into its next phase.

A key development is the appointment of Brendan Woodnutt as Lead Navigator, who will work alongside the team to strengthen the service and ensure support remains accessible to those working in our communities.

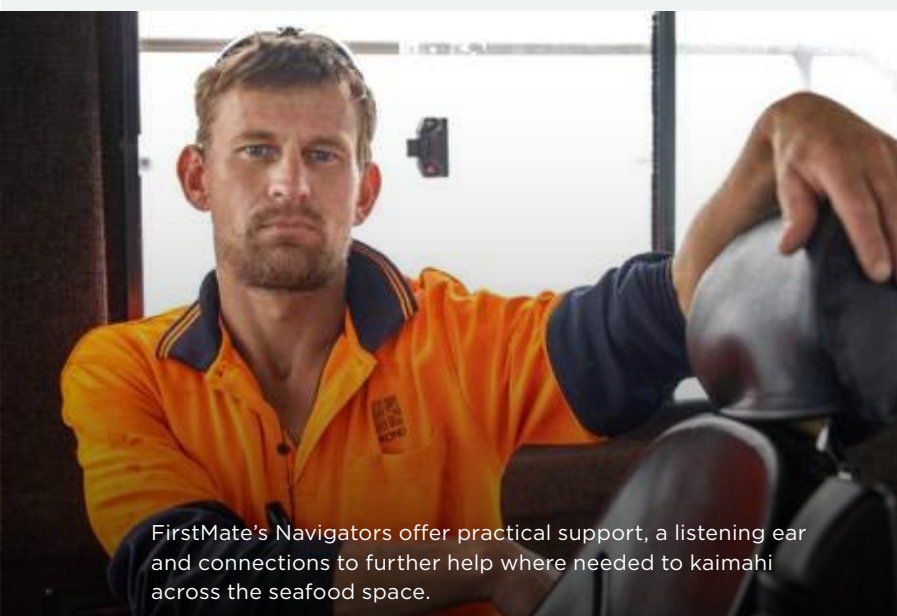
Excitingly, a new mental health and wellbeing sector reference group is being set up, bringing together representatives from across the fishing and aquaculture industries. The group will help ensure mental health and wellbeing remain visible priorities within the sector and that FirstMate's work continues to reflect the needs of those it serves.

The message for the industry is simple: the service is here and easy to access.

With stable funding now in place, FirstMate is looking ahead to the coming years with a clear goal: continuing to support the people who keep New Zealand's seafood sector running.

"Wellbeing is fundamental to a strong, sustainable industry. When people are supported, the whole sector benefits," says Justine.

Support is available through the FirstMate helpline (0800 ADRIFT / 0800 237 438), the website www.firstmate.org.nz or through the charity's social media channels.



FirstMate's Navigators offer practical support, a listening ear and connections to further help where needed to kaimahi across the seafood space.



Innovation to support our fisheries



- By Dan Bolger / Deputy Director General, Fisheries New Zealand

At the time of writing in March 2026, the conflict in the Middle East has meant challenges for businesses, including those of you in the fishing industry, particularly with the rapid increases in fuel prices.

As we continue to navigate these impacts, I encourage you get in touch with us about how this is affecting your business. We're committed to keeping the sector updated and working with you to navigate any volatility. You can find information and updates on the Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI) website under 'Support for food and fibre exporters during the Middle East conflict 2026'.

Here at Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ), innovation is an important part of both how we work and how we support the fishing industry.

Our processes for assessing fish stocks are well-established and provide a solid scientific basis for decision-making. But these can involve lengthy and manual processes, sometimes taking 18 months or more to complete. In some fisheries, this means we can miss opportunities to adjust limits, especially where we see rapid changes in abundance.

Every day, commercial fishers provide electronic catch and position data, giving timely insight into what is happening on the water. This data, combined with other environmental indicators, gives us insight that can be used to manage our fisheries more actively. We are investing in tools that help us quickly analyse trends in fleet behaviour, bycatch, seasonal patterns and more. With the right controls in place, this can feed directly into decisions on catch limits and help tighten the relationship between abundance and catch limits.

A good example of this shift is a recently commissioned project to automate updates of 'catch per unit of effort' (CPUE) metrics. Through automation and in-housing, we can avoid some of the manual processes and associated costs of traditional approaches. This provides a scalable model to give routine insight across more stocks than is possible today.

This wealth of information speeds up our ability to identify what's happening within a fishery and spot opportunities for improvement, whether that's about allowing more use of the fishery or imposing necessary restrictions.

We've also been working with industry to support innovation in the sector. FNZ's sector support and innovation team has met with many fishers over the past two years as part of regional

and gear innovation workshops, together with Seafood New Zealand, the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen and Moana New Zealand.

The workshops have provided an opportunity for fishers to come together, share ideas and experiences, hear about innovations and things that affect their business, and raise issues. An area of focus has been innovation in fishing approaches to support both economic and environmental performance. As part of this, attendees have heard from Australian counterparts who presented on how they're working with fishers on gear trials, training and funding for innovation.

If you are working on innovative ways to improve fishing methods and practices, you may wish to explore options available through MPI's funding programmes to support your projects.

The Primary Sector Growth Fund (PSGF) provides support on a co-investment basis to help you innovate and achieve your goals faster. There's also an option through Māori agribusiness funding, which helps Māori landowners and agribusinesses achieve their goals, including Māori-owned fishing and seafood businesses.

The PSGF has co-funded some larger projects like the award-winning FloMo (previously Precision Seafood Harvesting) system, which is now in the stage of being operationalised within our inshore fisheries. Another is New Zealand King Salmon's Blue Endeavour, which is a world-first in farming the King Salmon species in the open ocean.

Information about MPI's funding programmes, including the application process and criteria is available on MPI's website. FNZ's sector support and innovation team can support you with advice and connections - you can contact them by email at fisheriesSSI@MPI.govt.nz.

Finally, the work underway to reform our fisheries management system to be more efficient and remove unnecessary obstacles to grow the fishing industry is progressing through the parliamentary process. I encourage you to provide feedback on the Fisheries Amendment Bill through the select committee processes.



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GAR3, 7, 8	LDO1	SQU1T	
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5619 FAST IMAGE ALLOY CRAY & NET BOAT

LOA 14.25m x B4.6m x D1.3m
Caterpillar 3406 580hp. Twin Disc 2:1
Shaft & 4 blade propeller drive.
21 knots. Inverter 2kW/
Fuel 2,200 litres. Water 200 litres
2 berths – 1 under house & 1 saloon
Basic galley. Toilet/Shower in fore peak
Pot hauler whizz wheel
Luff hauler & net chute with roller
Coastal Survey expiry 2028

POA



5598 SURFACE LONG LINER
L17.5m x B5.7m x D2.00m
Built Alan Barnett Tasmania
Main Iveco 8210 330hp
Isuzu 20kVA genset
Cummins 6BT for hydraulics
Fuel 12,400. Water 4,400
Refrigerated hold 24.5m3,
Bait freezer 7.14m3,
Wet well 10t or 20t RSW
VERY GOOD CONDITION

\$1,200,000



5491 STARKS NEW BUILD
TIMBER STERN TRAWLER
L14.5m x B4.84m x D2.6m
Completed & surveyed 2024
Scania DI 09 300hp 2.95:1 box
Kohler 20kVA genset
Ice hold 26 m3
Stark trawl winches, net drum
Stark Bros wing stabiliser
Survey Offshore 100 miles
Expiry 24/04/2029

ALL OFFERS CONSIDERED



5599 TWIN JET WORK &
PASSENGER BOAT
L15.3m x B4.55m x D0.7m
Built Legend Boats, 1996
2 x Scania DSI 16
2 x Hamilton Jet 362
Fuel 3400 L, water 200 L
3 berth, table settee. Galley
Toilet/Shower. Anchor
drum winch. Raymarine
GPS/Plotter/Radar, sounder

POA



5605 IMAGE TWIN PROP
CATAMARAN.
Passenger & fishing survey
LOA 14m x B5m x D0.7m
2 x Caterpillar C7 engines
Max 18 kts, 11 kts @ 800rpm
Galley with table & seat for 7
Hydraulic pot hauler
Survey Fishing NZ Coastal,
Passenger Inshore 22 people
Date of expiry 14/06/2028

\$220,000 NEG



5614 TROLLER POTTER
L12.47m x B3.96m x D1.6m
Kauri - Athol Burns design
Built 1970 CB Boat Builders
Doosan L136 200hp (2013)
SI Industrial gearbox
4 tonnes ice hold
4 berths. Galley. Hot water
Toilet/shower
Pot hauler & tuna poles
Coastal survey expiry Sept
2027

\$70,000



5596 TRAWLER VERY WELL
PRESENTED – ONE OWNER
LOA 13.47m x 4.42m x 1.6m
Built Alf Saunders 1973
Kauri planks on Hardwood
Scania DI 12 300hp new 2007
Fuel 2000 L, water 400 L
Speed max 11 service 8 knots
Ice hold 100 bins. 5t bulk tuna
Large wheel house. Survey
Restricted Coastal to 07/2026

POA

5609 CONQUEST 55 MAXI-VISION GRP CRAY

LOA 16.66m x B4.92m x D1.2m
Built by Seachrome Australia 1995
Scania DI13 825hp 6500 hours new 2021.
Max 20 knots. ZF 400A gearbox 1.964:1
Coelmo 7.5kVA genset.
4 berths, galley saloon. Toilet/Shower
Good electronics. Eberspacher Diesel heater
Pot hauler & side hauler. Coastal survey
expiry 02/2027. Hull repainted 2023
decks & house repainted March 2026

\$585,000



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