

SEAFOOD

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Seafood for Thought - 2025 Conference

Jenny Marcroft: 'Keep doing what you're doing'

Strait Speared: Reviving a fishery one butterfish at a time



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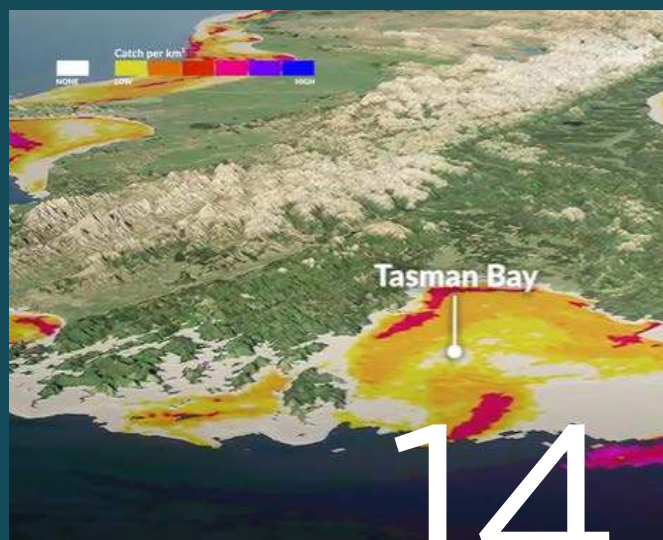
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EDITORIALS

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From the Chief Executive

Hoki season is here, as are the colder winter days and, from time to time, the very rough weather that makes it too hard for some of our smaller vessels to get to sea. Generally, our fishers need a very good reason to stay home. They had one at the end of May, with the annual conference of the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen in Christchurch.

It was my first time attending a Feds Conference – one of my last “firsts” as I approach my one-year anniversary as CEO of Seafood New Zealand. I absolutely loved the conference and meeting so many of our front-line fishers in one place. It reinforces to me what wonderful people we have in this industry. Genuine, caring New Zealanders who contribute so much to our communities. And some of them are absolutely classic Kiwi characters to boot! We have a summary of highlights from the Feds conference on pages 21-23.

Speaking of great characters who care about our industry, can I suggest you check out pages 16-20, where you can read about the Strait Speared crew who are on a mission to keep Wellington's butterfish fishery alive. I can testify to their delicious fare, having recently dined on spear-fished butterfish at a Wellington eatery – divine!

Another person who is passionate about the seafood industry is Parliamentary Under Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries Jenny Marcroft. She has made it her mission to get to all corners of Aotearoa, meeting the people who drive this industry and who have devoted their lives to putting fish on our plates. We get to know a lot more about her on pages 5-8. We find out why she is strongly urging our people to keep doing what they're doing, what she thinks about the misinformation problem and the one seafood she really doesn't like.

Another well-known and much-loved character in the seafood world is television host Graeme Sinclair. We have a revealing one-on-one chat with him about how he went from recreational fishing icon to hosting a show about the commercial sector. He also shares with us how his multiple sclerosis (MS) diagnosis is deeply tied to his desire to keep bringing us the stories of fishing and fishers. Plus, Graeme has some thoughts about the recent *Ocean* documentary, hosted by Sir David Attenborough. Check those out on pages 24-25.

It's courageous characters all the way in this edition. On pages 28-29 you can meet Mike Terry Senior. He's also worried about the misinformation facing our industry. And he has also overcome some tough times to make a life in seafood. In his case, the death of his dad, who was lost at sea when Mike was young, meant Mike had to find his own way in fishing.

Misinformation is something of a theme for us at the moment. On pages 14-15 you can find out more about new videos created by the Feds for all of us to share. They help explain the facts about modern trawling, rather than the outdated or just plain wrong ideas that are shared in some quarters.

And I can't finish without mentioning Zak Olsen and Tamar Wells. Both are great cooks and great characters, and they bring you the second in their must-watch recipe series (see pages 36-37) with a delicious curry that's perfect for a cold winter day.

Finally, can I encourage you to register for the Seafood New Zealand Conference happening in Nelson in August. We have some incredible guests joining us (see pages 26-27). I would love to see you there.

Stay warm, stay safe and best wishes to all who are out there bringing in the kaimoana for the benefit of the rest of us.

Lisa Futschek

Chief Executive, Seafood New Zealand



Under Secretary Jenny Marcroft: ‘Keep doing what you’re doing’

Tasked with engaging with New Zealand’s seafood sector, Jenny Marcroft brings a passion for people and progress to her role as Parliamentary Under Secretary to the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries.

With little knowledge of the kaimoana sector before stepping into the role, Seafood New Zealand was keen to hear what she’s picked up so far, the challenges and opportunities she sees, and her vision for the future of the sector.

For those wondering, what is the role of the Parliamentary Under Secretary to the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries?

My role is to support our very busy Minister by engaging directly with stakeholders across the seafood sector. I travel the country, meet with people in the industry, hear their concerns and ideas, and report back to the Minister.

Even though the Minister already knows the sector really well, he wanted to make sure there’s consistent government presence and engagement across New Zealand. And that’s where I come in.

I just love meeting people and hearing their stories. We’ve got some amazing brains in this industry as well. And so much potential. I get lots of invitations and am working hard to get around the country and meet with as many in the sector as I can.

In my office I have maps of the North and South Islands, and I pin all the locations I visit. It’s a great visual way to track my progress.

Most New Zealanders have a connection with the ocean and seafood. What experiences in your life have shaped the way you see the seafood sector?

Well, I think you’re right, we all have some connection to the ocean and seafood somehow, in some way, shape or form.

As a kid, my family spent a lot of time at our family bach in Pukehina in the Bay of Plenty. Mum loved surfcasting; my father would take us out hand lining down at the estuary. And then there was tuatua. We were always collecting and scoffing tuatua. My father ate them raw out of the shell, but I wasn’t so keen. All of this was just part of our life growing up as a typical Kiwi family in the ‘60s and ‘70s.

“In my office I have maps of the North and South Islands, and I pin all the locations I visit. It’s a great visual way to track my progress.”

“I just love meeting people and hearing their stories. We’ve got some amazing brains in this industry as well. And so much potential.”



NZ King Salmon Processing factory in Nelson with Chief Executive Carl Carrington in March 2024.



Otago University Portobello Marine Research Facility with Professor Miles Lamare in August 2024.

Can you share a bit about your background and how you ended up in this role?

I first started out as a teacher, then moved into media, where I spent over 30 years. Radio really was my first passion. Then, I suppose because along the way you learn a lot of communication skills, a natural fit for me was to get into politics.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to join New Zealand First and entered Parliament. After that term, the party didn't return to Parliament. However, I came back with New Zealand First in 2023 and had the absolute pleasure and privilege of being appointed as a Parliamentary Under Secretary. Minister Shane Jones – Matua Shane – was looking for support in the Oceans and Fisheries portfolio, and I was honoured to be offered the role.

What's your vision for the seafood sector?

This is a really productive sector of our economy. That aside, seafood is an undervalued source of clean, sustainable protein.

We're lucky we can get the freshest of fish, we can harvest tuatua, we can go gather mussels in various parts of the country and we can eat this beautiful protein that's really good and healthy for us. My vision is to make sure we maintain access to this.

I've seen over the last number of years that the industry's taken an absolute hammering from environmental groups. But I think what's often missing from the conversation is just how valuable this protein is for our health. I'd love to see less misinformation about the sector and for it to be embraced and valued more by every day, regular Kiwis.

There's a lesson we can take from what the dairy industry has done – pushing back on disinformation and actively reporting on and marketing the valuable properties of clean, lean protein.



The New Zealand Abalone Company in the Ocean Beach Aquaculture Facility in Bluff in August 2024.



Visiting Lee Fish in Leigh, June 2024.

Since you've been in this role, what's stood out to you about New Zealand's seafood industry?

It's always the people, right? Whether it's a one-man-band fisher or a big commercial outfit, everyone is so passionate. Whether they're out on oyster or mussel farms or the big boats, they all love what they do. They understand the importance of a sustainable fishery with healthy fish stocks for our future generations.

As my maps show, I've travelled nearly all over and been so impressed. In the Far North, Te Aupōuri Fisheries mussel spat project is awesome – raising them bigger for better survival. Down in Bluff, Manāki Whitebait is doing exciting things. Nelson and Marlborough are leading with blue carbon and other science work.

Whangaruru was a highlight – Ngātiwai ki Whangaruru want to set up marine gardens. I went out on the harbour with them and then had one of the best seafood feeds of my life. Incredible hospitality and vision.

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the commercial fishing sector right now?

Well, for a start there's too much misinformation out there. The sector is innovating and improving all the time, and it deserves more recognition. It's not the 1980s anymore.

Then there are the economic challenges. Take the age of the fleet, for example. I've talked to fishers whose boats are over 40 years old. They don't have the financial reserves to upgrade their vessels. These older boats need more fuel, and fuel prices have been high. These costs have really impacted them. If they could upgrade their fleet – or even a single boat – they would be able to use less fuel. So, these sorts of challenges sit on top of the social licence problems.



Jenny Marcroft with Seafood New Zealand Chair Greg Gent at the 2024 Seafood Saturday in Nelson.

Another big challenge is attracting, training and retaining Kiwi crew. That's something I've heard raised numerous times over the past year. It goes hand in hand with social licence. If fishers are constantly being targeted, why would rangatahi want to go work on a fishing boat, or for the local fisherman, if all you're seeing in the media – especially on social media – is negativity about the industry?

It's a real shame, because it can offer a great career path and a solid pipeline of work. And I think one of the exciting things we are seeing in the industry is the science – some really promising developments – and young people getting involved in that science and the growth of the aquaculture industry.

So, what are some of the opportunities for the seafood sector?

Well, we've got the Seafood Sustainability Awards coming up soon – it would be remiss of me not to mention that. I'm really looking forward to the nominations, especially seeing our rangatahi getting involved and celebrated.

FEATURE

There's some amazing work happening out there. We've seen great innovation too – Flip Farm Technology, hook pods and advances with the longliners. It's important we showcase that. As a government, we need to recognise the people and the collective effort that's contributed to nearly \$2.2 billion in export revenue. That's a huge achievement and deserves to be celebrated.

Seafood prices have been high with tight global supply, but we're hoping that recent fuel price drops will bring better returns next financial year, especially as demand picks up again in the China market.

Fisheries Act reform is also a big opportunity. It's about making decision-making more responsive and efficient, providing greater protection for onboard camera footage, and also the new rules around, in terms of the QMS fish that are caught – what must be landed and what may be able to be returned to sea.

What message do you have for the sector?

I think probably the most important thing is that this government sees them and understands their worth and value, and to encourage them to keep doing what they're doing, because we understand that it's not always easy.

The big question is what's your favourite seafood?

All of it – except kina. I'm not so keen on kina. It's really hard to choose just one favourite because it depends on the season. I've recently had some Bluff oysters, I love them. I also love Pacific oysters and pāua. I adore crayfish. A tuatua, any time of year, is also good by me.

I eat fish a couple of times a week. My favourite, when I can get it, is blue cod – just pan-fried in butter. That's all it needs. I'm all about eating seafood without adornment. Fresh, obviously, is best. With tuatua, just steam the shell open and eat them.

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Industry-led trawl survey delivers crucial FMA 2 data

This past summer, three of New Zealand's inshore fishing fleet were fishing the coast of the Hawke's Bay and Gisborne but this time it was all in the name of science.

In a first for New Zealand's inshore sector, Seafood New Zealand has successfully coordinated a multi-vessel scientific trawl survey off the east coast of the North Island, from Napier to Gisborne.

The survey, designed to monitor abundance, focused on tarakihi, snapper and red gurnard, along with several other important commercial species.

It's the first time since 1996 that a survey like this has been conducted in the area (known to industry as FMA 2), and it was a welcomed relief for local fishers who have been waiting for new data to better inform future management decisions for their fishery.

A trawl survey involves a vessel (or vessels) undertaking trawls in randomly assigned locations using standardised protocols to measure biomass of fish in the area.



Three vessels took part in the trawl survey: Gisborne Fisheries' *Giovannini* (pictured) and Moana New Zealand contracted vessels *Torea II* and *Bianca*. Each vessel had to conduct between 20 and 23 tows in randomly assigned locations.

"It's hard to manage what you can't measure," says Gisborne Fisheries' CEO, Salve Zame. "We genuinely care about the areas we fish and take responsibility for looking after them. If the science shows our take should go up or down, we're on board with that – because the decision is backed by data."

Historically, the high costs of these surveys relative to the value of the fishery have meant limited data has been collected. As a result, there's been little to corroborate catch rate trends, which have been used for some assessments, but can be influenced by factors other than abundance. This has had an impact on stock assessments and management reviews for decades. In other words, decisions haven't been made because there is uncertainty about how many fish are in this area.

"For years we've missed out because the coalface data wasn't there, especially frustrating when it came to species like trevally and snapper," says Zame.

"This is really exciting," says Tiff Bock, General Manager Inshore at Seafood New Zealand. "For a species like snapper and gurnard in FMA 2, we haven't had robust fishery-independent information to support fisheries management decisions for a very long time. This project has shown that the industry can step up and help fill that gap where needed."

And what makes this survey so significant is not just that it happened – it's *how* it happened. It was a true collaboration.

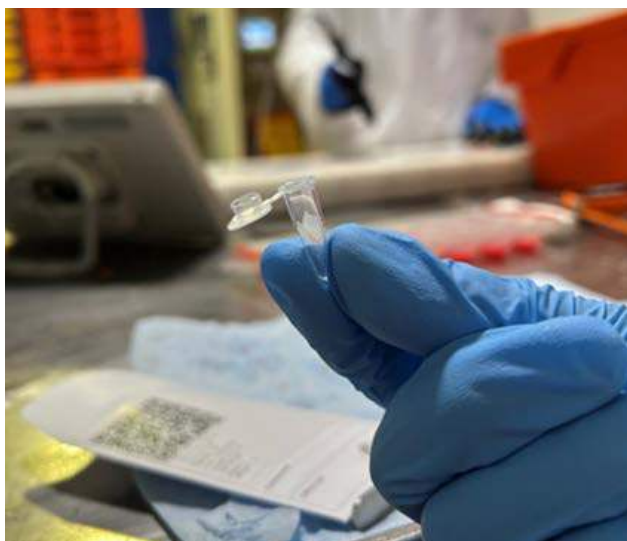
The survey was designed by fisheries scientist Adam Langley from *Trophia*, with technical support from NIWA. Three vessels participated: Gisborne Fisheries' *Giovannini* (skippered by Footy), and Moana New Zealand contracted vessels *Torea II* (skippered by Forest, owned by Andy Claudatos) and *Bianca* (skippered by Ross and Jason, owned by Hamish Qusted).

Then, between 20 February and 30 March, each vessel had to complete between 20 and 23 randomly assigned tows. NIWA were then responsible for the biological sampling, which was carried out in Gisborne and Auckland.

Over 6,500 fish were measured and more than 1,800 otoliths (fish ear bones, crucial in the ageing process) collected. Factory staff and skippers worked closely with NIWA's Darren Parsons and Brent Wood throughout to make sure research protocols were strictly followed.

Electronic reporting provided to NIWA also allowed the project team to validate data in near real-time – a breakthrough that improved accuracy and coordination.

FEATURE



An otolith or fish ear bone extracted from a tarakihi.
Photo: Oliver Evans (NIWA)

“The survey is a great example of what can happen when industry, science and regulators work together towards a shared goal,” says Richard O’Driscoll, Chief Scientist Fisheries at NIWA. “The level of buy-in from everyone was outstanding.”

Zame agreed that collaboration was key. “It was so refreshing working directly with NIWA, and there was great communication between everyone involved. It was a great trust-building exercise.”

Bock also praised the fishers’ commitment to delivering the science effectively, saying, “This wasn’t just a case of fitting research in around commercial fishing – fishers were fully committed to making this pilot survey a success.”

The survey was funded primarily by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) as a proof of concept, and the cost has



Samplers measure a snapper in the Moana fish factory in Auckland.
Photo: Oliver Evans (NIWA)

been significantly less than other estimates and in line with the overall value of the fishery.

“With traditional research funding under pressure and increasing public scrutiny of fishing practices, industry-led surveys like this could play a vital role in the future of fisheries management,” says Bock.

FNZ also provided research ACE (Annual Catch Entitlement), meaning the survey had a minimal financial impact on participating fishers. This was key to securing fisher involvement.

“The model shows how we can achieve high-quality, credible science in a cost-effective way,” says Bock. “It’s an approach we hope to replicate in other parts of Aotearoa.”

What the survey showed

Preliminary results suggest the survey may provide a valuable index of abundance for snapper, gurnard, school shark, rig and John dory in FMA 2. Early indications also point to a significant increase in snapper abundance since the last survey in 1996. However, results for tarakihi were less conclusive, indicating some adjustments to survey timing and locations may be needed in future years.

“Important to note however is that a single survey doesn’t provide a stock trend – it’s the consistency across multiple years that will build a robust abundance index,” says Bock. “To achieve that, the survey will need to be repeated annually for at least three years.”

Planning for the next survey is already underway, and continued participation from vessels and companies will be crucial to its success.

“We’ve proven this can work, now we need to stick with it,” says Bock. “Long-term, this approach has the potential to transform how we collect data in our inshore fisheries, but it’s going to take sustained commitment from all of us.”

The initial survey results will be presented to a science working group late June, where the methodology and findings will be formally assessed.



Snapper pen trials could prove new possibilities

The offspring of tāmure (snapper) from Tasman Bay played the part of pioneers in a long-running aquaculture science programme that could have positive spin-offs for wild-capture fisheries.

Photos by Steve Hussey, supplied by Plant & Food Research

FEATURE



Previous page: In March, Plant & Food Research's prototype open ocean fish pen was brought to its mooring in Tasman Bay by barge. The feeder buoy that distributes exact amounts of feed to the snapper was towed to the site by Plant & Food Research's vessel *Tuhiata* and adjusted into place.

Above: In April, 2,000 snapper were carefully transferred to the pen, from tanks transported by barge. Here, senior scientist Louise Kregting scoops fish from the tanks before placing them in a chute connected downwards to the sea pen – letting gravity and a flow of water do the rest of the work.

Raised in captivity at Plant & Food Research's Nelson Research Centre, approximately 2,000 young tāmure were transferred to a sea pen near Rangitoto ki te Tonga, D'Urville Island, at the Top of the South Island in April.

The pen is part of Plant & Food Research's first prototype open ocean aquaculture system, comprising the pen, a feeder buoy, mooring and supporting technology. The transfer of the fish marked the first time a new finfish species has been trialled in New Zealand away from the sheltered coastline; currently only Chinook salmon is raised commercially in sea-based aquaculture.

Dr Suzy Black leads the Whakapōhewa ki ahumoana – Re-imagining Aquaculture programme for Plant & Food Research in Nelson. She was delighted to see the snapper settle into their new ocean home after more than nine years of research towards the development of a low-impact, open ocean mobile aquaculture system designed around the needs of the fish.

"We transferred our snapper to the pen in April because the sea was still comparatively warm then, which they like.

"These are snapper raised from wild stock held in our finfish facility onshore, so the ocean is very much home for them. Although this particular generation may see a few interesting sights for the first time – with potential visits from fur seals, sharks and other new friends," Dr Black says.

During the project consultation and resource consenting process, iwi in Te Taihū o te Waka-a-Māui said it was important to them that the first fish to go into the pens were a native species.

"These are the offspring of tāmure that come from the same oceans – so the fish in those pens are as close to the wild type as possible. It means that, in the unlikely event of accidental escape, those fish will be 'at home' in the ocean with little impact to other fish," Dr Black says, adding that iwi representatives were appreciative of the team's focus on the animal – its physiology and preferences.

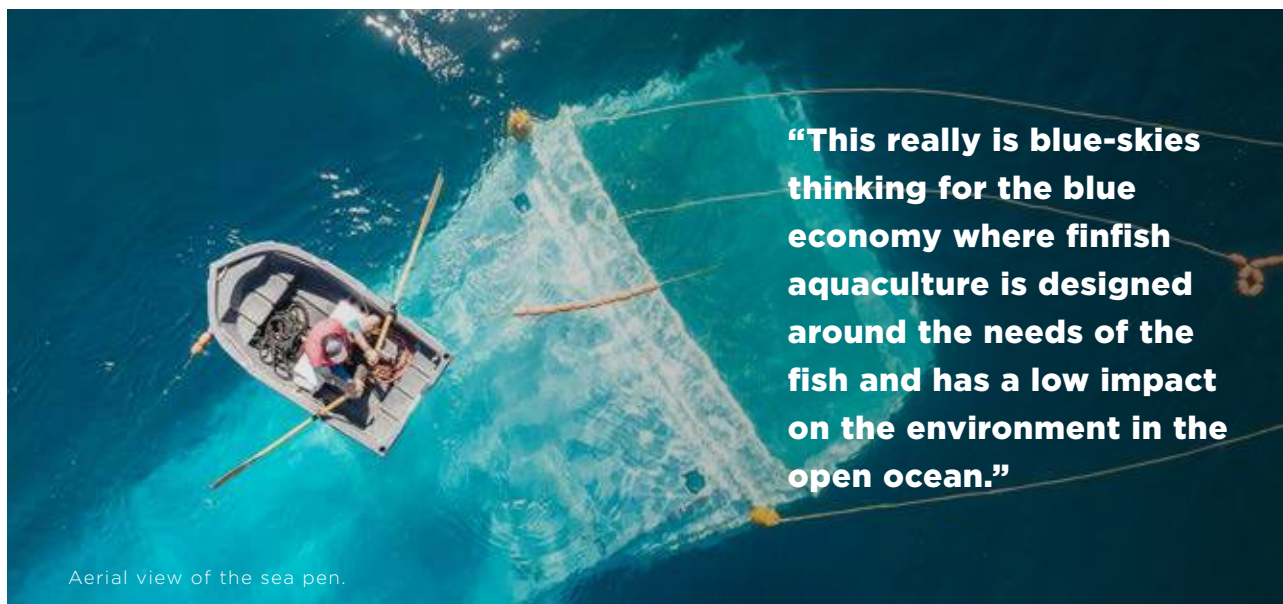
Transferred to the pen at six weeks old and weighing around 200 grams each, the tāmure were doing very well after their first month – coping with the big weather events in early May, says Dr Black. Being submersed below the waves and tidal surges protected the fish from most of the bad weather.

"The pen is made from flexible plastic mesh with a 'soft engineering' approach compared to the rigid 'oilrig-type' aquaculture you see overseas," says Dr Black.

"This is novel aquaculture technology, but it's very scalable and designed to be built using available components, making it low-cost."

The pen is submerged approximately 10–15 metres below the surface to protect the fish from the turbulence of waves. The prototype is tethered to the sea floor via a mooring and will swing around the mooring naturally every 12 hours with the tides, within the bounds of four navigation aids that mark the four corners of the trial area.

It is the largest of the prototype fish pens to hit the water and the focus for this research trial is very much to establish how the fish grow and cope in the pen, says Dr Black.



Aerial view of the sea pen.

“This really is blue-skies thinking for the blue economy where finfish aquaculture is designed around the needs of the fish and has a low impact on the environment in the open ocean.”



Plant & Food Research's Glen Aspin installing the sea pen.

“We have done a lot of modelling and physical testing of different pen types to get to this point, and of course our fish biology experts know a lot about snapper and salmon, so we have been able to combine this knowledge and experience to get to this exciting stage of the programme – field trials in open water.”

Dr Black's team monitor the fish from land via a live video feed from cameras within the pen.

“We need to know that they are content, healthy, that they are being fed and are growing well, and that the water flowing through the pen is at a comfortable flowrate for them,” Dr Black says.

While fish health is the focus of this trial, the ultimate aim is the creation of a mobile system that can move around the ocean, development of which continues onshore.

“This really is blue-skies thinking for the blue economy where finfish aquaculture is designed around the needs of the fish and has a low impact on the environment in the open ocean.”

Proving possibilities for fisheries management and seafood production

With blue-skies science often comes exciting spin-offs and lateral applications. The snapper trial is a milestone in a bigger project towards fully remotely operated, mobile aquaculture systems. This could open up possibilities for safer systems for people.

“One of the design concepts is to minimise the need for people to work in dangerous open ocean environments. Instead, the fish pens can be monitored in real time and operated, remotely using cameras,” Dr Black says.

And because the sea-pens will be mobile, they could be used to boost a wild species' population. This could be done by first raising fish in captivity (as has been proven with Plant & Food Research's finfish facility-raised species), transferring the young fish to pens and then releasing the fish to the wild once they have grown enough.

Being mobile, pens of ready-to-release fish could be moved to where they need to be released – all from the safety of shore with real-time monitoring.

“Our role as scientists is to prove concepts in the field and then demonstrate the possibilities. If science-led technology can give you options, then it's good science,” Dr Black says.

More information and an FAQ are available at:
plantandfood.com/en-nz/open-ocean-aquaculture

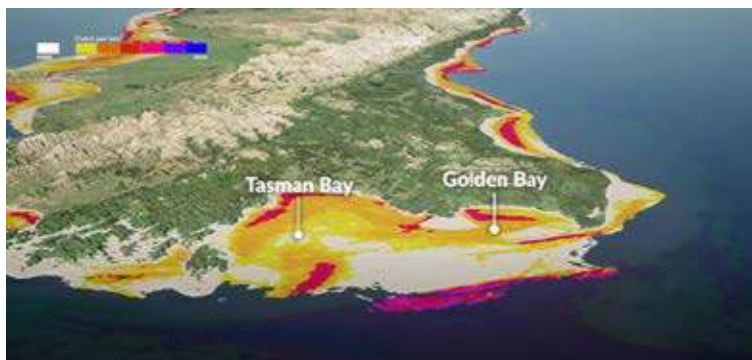
A new perspective on trawling

The New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen (Federation) recently debuted a series of educational videos, using innovative 3D modelling to give viewers a new look at industry's ever-evolving trawl net technology and inshore trawl footprint. Claire Williamson talked to Federation President Doug Saunders-Loder about why it's essential for the industry to invest in new ways of visual storytelling.

These videos – nine of them! – took the better part of a year to develop. Tell me about them.

One is a “drain the seas” trawl footprint video. We’ve taken fishing spatial data within our 12 nautical mile inshore limit from the Ministry for Primary Industries and transformed it into a heatmap – to show just how compact the inshore fishing trawl footprint is. This video focuses on the South Island, but it’s really the tip of the iceberg.

The other is a look at the “anatomy” of a trawl net, with a 3D representation of how a net actually looks underwater that breaks down the different parts of a net and some of our current and developing innovations. There’s both long versions and shorter social cuts, to make them easier to share.



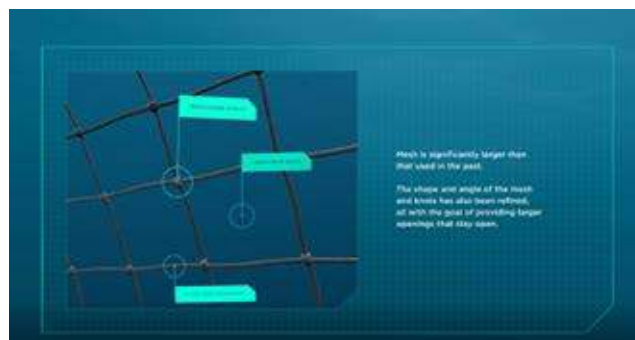
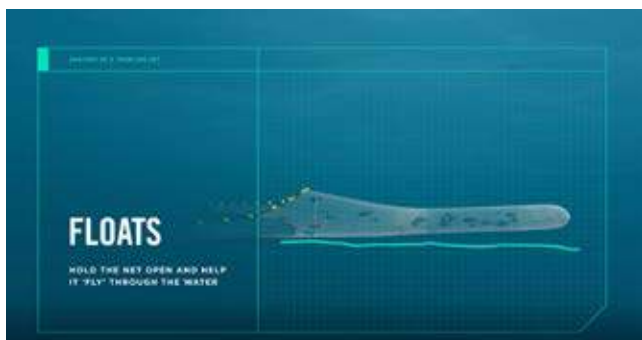
Above and above right: “Beneath the Waves: New Zealand’s Inshore Trawl Fisheries” uses spatial data from the Ministry for Primary Industries as the basis for a 3D-rendered heatmap of New Zealand’s inshore trawl footprint.

What was your mindset behind creating this suite of resources?

I have long been frustrated with the continuous scaremongering that is so incorrectly and emotively dismissive of bottom trawling in New Zealand. I wanted to create something that served to educate the public by accurately and factually providing evidence and a visual representation about what we actually do.

Otherwise, it seemed like we were just dealing with a continued situation where we say we’re doing minimal harm but providing no evidence or information to support that view. A significant number of bottom trawlers are bearing the most resistance within the public arena. The constant rhetoric is that there’s a “widespread destruction of the seafloor” and damage to our fisheries and none of it is true. I felt that we needed to do more to prove to the public in a really meaningful way that it’s simply not the case.

For me, this is the start. These are now industry resources and everyone is welcome to share them – the wider the spread, the better.



Map design diagrams were used to produce this 3D representation of a trawling net in action, identifying its components and ongoing innovations.

How do you see the Federation's role when it comes to advocating for the industry?

The Federation represents inshore owner-operators, the majority of whom are trawlers and so they need a voice. They need somebody that is going to stand up and present their position. They are out there working in these fisheries and don't have the time or capacity to engage with constant misinformation. They need us to represent them strongly and to preserve their place in this industry.

Tell me about the video production process.

Everyone involved was outstanding in coming up with a professional, scientific visual representation – that's Tim Hunt of DiddleySquatt in Māpua who made the trawl footprint video and Plato based in Christchurch, which worked on the net innovation series with Mat Beck and his team at Orly.

Each video went through multiple versions and feedback processes to make sure they were brought to life as realistically as possible. The interesting thing from my perspective was working with people who didn't know anything about our industry or trawling for that matter, so we had to provide them with all sorts of information down to the plans from net makers as to what a net looks like. By their own admission they had little understanding about what trawling was about. That said, they had heard negative things about it and had probably developed their own negativity around it.

But as they worked through this project they were blown away with how different the reality is. That was totally refreshing and drove me to believe that more of these visualisations will change the public's mind too.

Which trawl net innovation are you most excited about?

The simplest things. The increase in mesh size and shape is one of the things that has got most fishermen talking. They have been conditioned to the fact that the small mesh diamond shape is the way to catch fish, yet they have now learned over a period of time that it's not the end of the world if they increase the mesh size through the bellies and through the use of T90 and increased mesh size in cod-ends. Moving from diamond to square mesh. It's the simplest, most incremental changes being made that make all the difference.

Ultimately, what do you want the public to get out of these videos?

I want them to actually see the truth and reflect on the fact that while they are tucked up in their beds at night, there are fishermen out there in all the elements. The dark, cold, wet, windy and wavy elements, and they do that so we can have our favourite fish and chips available every Friday night.

But most importantly I want them to understand what bottom trawling is in the New Zealand context – that 70% of our domestic catch happens through trawling sustainable fish stocks. There are some wonderful stories to be told, and the New Zealand public should be able to stand on a soapbox hand on heart and say, "We've got a great bunch of people in this country catching fish for us! Long may it continue."

Thanks to Talley's Limited for supporting the production of these videos. Learn more, watch the videos and share them with someone you know at nzfishfed.co.nz/inshore-trawl-fisheries

Reviving a fishery one butterfish at a time

What do two Wellingtonian builders do when they love spearfishing so much it's all they want to do? Pretty simple really – they find a way to make a living from it. Jen Vallance sat down for a chat with Cole Robinson and Tom Strawbridge from Strait Speared, a commercial spearfishing operation that delivers butterfish “from Cook Strait to Wellington plates.”

Their story begins with recreational dives. When they weren't busy building, these long-time mates spent countless hours diving along the Wellington coast. It was on these excursions that they started to notice an abundance of butterfish and see an opportunity to revive the once-productive fishery.

The Wellington butterfish fishery had shut down in 2020 when set netting was banned along the entire west coast of the North Island, including the Wellington coast, as part of new protections for Māui dolphins. Butterfish can't be targeted by other commercial methods due to its vegetarian diet and reef-dwelling habits.

With set net closures in place, butterfish had become an untapped resource, and Cole and Tom saw a chance to fish it in a sustainable way – and so Strait Speared was born.

They had seen a similar business model in the South Island, where Tim Barnett of Ocean Speared was able to turn his passion for spearfishing into a family-owned and operated venture.

“To do this, Tim had applied for a special permit, and it got us thinking – maybe we can do the same here in Wellington targeting butterfish,” says Cole. “So, in 2022 that's exactly what we did. We filed for special permit through Fisheries New Zealand to trial the use of spearfishing as a commercial method.”

While they waited to hear about their commercial permit, they got busy.

“We started trialling things,” says Tom. “We'd take our little 4.4-metre aluminium boat out to figure out the where the best spots were and the most effective and efficient way to harvest butterfish – what spearguns worked best.”

They also had a secret weapon, Coles dad Grant who is also a fisher on the Wellington Coast. “He was a big help getting things off the ground,” says Cole. “His years of knowledge of the coast crayfishing and set netting for butterfish gave us a great deal of insight into where and when to target the fish based on the weather and tide.”

As well as testing out spots Cole and Tom also started getting the ‘Strait Speared’ name out there “We also went and introduced ourselves to chefs at various restaurants – usually still in our building kit after a days work,” says Cole. And we started gathering content so we'd be ready on the social media front before properly launching the business.”

It didn't take long for the good news to come through – the permit was granted and Strait Speared quickly became a reality.

Like most businesses, it wasn't an overnight success. The pair had to work hard to build relationships with local restaurants and it took time to finesse product flow.

“In the first year we probably pushed ourselves a bit too hard and we were often crook, seasick or coughing. It took a while to adjust to things, but we've learned a lot since then,” says Cole.

“We'd take our little 4.4-metre aluminium boat out to figure out the where the best spots were and the most effective and efficient way to harvest butterfish – what spearguns worked best.”

Left page: Cole Robinson (left) and Tom Strawbridge (right) on a recreational dive – where their passion for spearfishing began. Above: An underwater view of the wild Wellington coast. The Strait Speared crew on the lookout for their next catch.

COVER FEATURE

“There were also periods with no income while we built the foundation of the business, and I went unpaid for a month while completing my skipper’s ticket. Tom has his skipper’s ticket now too.”

The whole premise of Strait Speared is that it’s a fish-to-order system. The pair head out once a week, usually on a Wednesday, with a definitive number of fish they need to harvest.

“I guess, on average we deliver 130 kilos of fish, so we’re not talking super high numbers,” says Cole. “And we’ve always said to the restaurants, ‘You don’t have to order 50 kilograms to make an order. We’re happy to do one or two fish.’ We’re going around town once a week anyways, so we don’t mind dropping in a fish or two.”

Fortunately, this approach appealed to some of Wellington’s finest restaurants, including Graze Wine Bar, Park Kitchen, Rosella and Liberty.

“The hard work is really starting to pay off and we’re pretty proud of what we’ve achieved so far,” says Cole. “These restaurants don’t just appreciate the quality of the product – they love the fact that it is locally caught using a method with virtually no environmental impact.”

“We have strong values towards ethical and sustainable catch, and spearfishing is considered the most sustainable way to gather fresh fish from the sea. We have zero bycatch because each fish is individually selected before it is shot. Each fish is spiced and gutted aboard our vessel, then put on ice ensuring the fish are kept in pristine condition.”

Cole and Tom have also switched to reusable packaging, further lowering the footprint of their production.

Many Wellingtonians would find it hard to believe that the weather rarely stops Cole and Tom from fishing.

“The Wellington coastline is a pretty special place to work. Yes, it can be rough and raw, but we know it well,” says Tom. “Where we decide to fish is largely driven by the weather conditions. Luckily the shape of Wellington’s coastline means there is (almost) always a spot to safely dive.”

And, of course, it’s also ideal because of its proximity to the city, giving us quick access to some of New Zealand’s top chefs.

One of those chefs is Max Gordy from Graze Wine Bar, a small but mighty restaurant located in Kelburn, Wellington. Graze is all about low waste and sourcing local ingredients, and they have been big supporters of Strait Speared from the start.

“It’s a fantastic fish,” says Max of the butterfish. “It’s one of the only fish that I can get delivered right to my door by the fishermen themselves. I like knowing exactly when it was caught, where it was caught and who caught it.”

“I also like knowing there’s no bycatch involved with it as well because they’re carefully selecting the fish they’re shooting. They’re not out there shooting all the fish.”

“The Wellington coastline is a pretty special place to work. Yes, it can be rough and raw, but we know it well”



A successful dive. Strait Speared only take what is needed to fulfil their weekly orders.



Cole and Tom make a delivery to Graze Wine Bar in Kelburn, Wellington.



Butterfish are vegetarian reef dwellers. They're also known as greenbone as their bones have a greenish tinge.



A dish from Graze Wine Bar: roasted dry aged butterfish with a red wine and roasted butterfish jus, with carrots and greens.

Currently, according to their chalkboard menu, Max is serving the butterfish – also known as greenbone (because it has green bones) – in two different ways. One is a butterfish crudo with chilli and celery; the other is roasted butterfish with cauliflower and greens. Both are popular with Graze customers.

“I’ve tried working out how many butterfish I would have handled – I’m guessing 3 to 4 tonnes. I definitely know my way around butterfish.”

With loyal and supportive chefs like Max onboard, things were looking good for Strait Speared until earlier this year when Cole and Tom were surprised to hear that their access to the Wellington coast was threatened.

As of April 11, the regulation that previously prohibited spearfishing as a commercial method was removed, in part due to trials under special permit like Cole and Tom proved. However, the regulation will still apply in certain areas – including the vast majority of the Wellington coast. This would make Strait Speared unworkable and, most importantly from their perspective, unsustainable for the fishery.



Graze Wine Bar Chef Max Gordy, an early supporter of Strait Speared, enjoys having fish delivered by the fishermen and knowing exactly when and where it was caught.

“Access to the whole coast is vital for our business, both from a safety and operational point of view but also to avoid localised depletion of fish. We fish across a number of spots to avoid this,” says Cole. “When it was consulted on in 2022 there was no mention of spatial closures, so we were pretty shocked to learn we may no longer have access.”

“We understand the closures are to give the reccies space to fish,” says Tom. “But we have a great relationship with Wellington divers. We’re not a massive operation – we’re not there to take all the butterfish. We also try and fish where others aren’t, we spread ourselves out.”

Thankfully, the team at Fisheries New Zealand acted quickly to ensure Strait Speared could keep fishing under their special permit, which has now been extended until October 2026. However, the consultation to change the regulation intended to provide a long-term solution for commercial spearfishing as special permits are generally used for limited periods.

COVER FEATURE

"We're grateful to get a decent extension, but it's a long-term solution we're working on with MPI (Ministry for Primary Industries) now," says Cole. "We hope to see a review of the regulations as soon as possible."

While both Cole and Tom continue to build on the side, they are keen to keep growing their business and had plans for a purpose-built spearfishing boat and to help expand the supply of their product. However, the spatial closures have put those aspirations on hold as they would not be able to supply their current market with the areas left open.

Chef Max agrees. "It would be a real shame if we can't fish this fish. In a way it would be destroying the New Zealand food story that we have. This fish is only available in New Zealand – you can't find it in Australia, you can't find it anywhere else in the world."



On 29 May, Cole won the 2025 Sunderland Marine Young Fisher of the Year Award. Read about his win on page 23.

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Presenting an air of optimism

The 67th conference and annual general meeting of the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen (Federation) kicked off on 29 May. A full house of around 200 fishers and industry stalwarts from around the country weathered fog and travel delays to gather at the Rydges Latimer in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Photos by Paul Petch.



Richard Kibblewhite inspires support (and more than a few laughs!) during the charity auction to support the Shipwreck Welfare Trust.

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries **Hon Shane Jones** opened with a fiery declaration of support for the seafood industry and a clarion call for everyone in the industry to demonstrate courage and boldness in the face of political and social challenges.

“I am a champion for industry, I am a champion for jobs, I am a champion for growth and investment,” he said.

“I will ensure that those fisheries reforms are driven by doubling exports, securing an economic future for those of you who have decided to continually invest in the industry and attract people to the industry so that it keeps, well and truly, above the waterline and occupies a place of pride in the narrative of our economic development.”



Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Hon Shane Jones speaks to a packed crowd.

His speech prompted fisheries consultant Andy Smith to query the Minister about what could be done to ensure more frontline fishers were included in key discussions driving this economic development, so their voices were considered when making decisions that impacted their livelihoods.

This theme of changes and challenges in legislation remained a key topic throughout the day.

Olivia Neubauer, Senior Associate at Stallard Law, outlined the shape of the Federation moving forward under the implications of the *Incorporated Societies Act 2022*. Existing societies, which include the Federation and many port associations, must re-register by April 2026 and update documentation and processes accordingly. Any incorporated society that doesn’t comply with the Act’s regulations will be formally dissolved and have its assets distributed.

For an industry where localised organisations remain the beating heart of coastal fishing communities, navigating these required changes will be essential for the remainder of the year to meet the April 2026 deadline.

Hayley Campbell, Senior Solicitor at Oceanlaw, then provided an immigration update on potential pitfalls with recruiting and retaining international crew, including required time and wage recording and potential visa complications when submitting paper applications, transferring visas to new passports or when transferring crew between vessels.

NEWS

Technology and how decision-makers can take full advantage of the visual data fishers have been providing regulators for years was another primary theme.

From Fisheries New Zealand, **Mark Geytenbeek** showcased several recent projects, including interactive dashboards and customised reporting tools to respond to daily catch data. He also announced the potential to host another series of regional innovation workshops in late 2025–early 2026, if there is demand from the industry – so watch this space!

Chief Scientist – Fisheries at NIWA, **Richard O'Driscoll**, provided a snapshot of the visual survey data coming from SwathCam from tows taken throughout the Hauraki Gulf. The new piece of kit, equipped with five cameras on a rig, takes high-resolution photos underwater and has confirmed that mud and sandy substrate dominate the seafloor and that many fish stocks, including snapper, are present in encouraging numbers.

Seafood New Zealand GM Inshore **Tiff Bock** echoed the importance of knowledge-sharing with her update on the Area 2 pilot trawl surveys, providing that crucial baseline to build on over the next several years, establishing abundance levels across several species.

Overall, it was a day of engagement and solutions-focused presentations, transitioning seamlessly into the evening's festivities.



One of the items up for auction to support the Shipwreck Welfare Trust being modelled.

An evening of surprises

The much-anticipated fish n' chip dinner and auction to support the Shipwreck Welfare Trust provided much merriment, raising about \$35,000 for the organisation. During the celebratory evening, several surprise awards were presented.

First, Southland fisher **Pat Nyhon** was announced as the 2025 winner of the Electronic Navigation Shield.

A member of the Federation Executive since 2017, Nyhon trawls on the *Cressy* out of Bluff. His career began in 1987 as a crew member on inshore trawl,



Pat Nyhon speaking to the crowd after being presented with the 2025 Electronic Navigation Shield.



Conference attendees dig into battered rig and crumbed gurnard fish n' chips.

crayfish and oyster boats, progressing to skipper of a cod, cray and tuna vessel. Eventually Nyhon purchased two trawlers of his own – *Antares* and *Cressy*.

Federation President Doug Saunders-Loder said choosing Nyhon was a “no brainer.”

“He’s actively involved in FirstMate and doing everything with a mind to keeping that alive. Pat is an outstanding contributor towards that and to the Federation.”

Nyhon admitted receiving the prestigious kauri wood trophy, which is given to someone who has gone above and beyond ‘without fear or favour’ to support and promote the Federation and its members, was a surprise.

"I think this is the first conference I've seen – and I've been here for about seven or eight years in the Executive – where there seems to be a lot of confidence. People seem a lot more confident, they seem happier and I think it means we might be on a better path."

Federation President Doug Saunders-Loder then presented **Phil Clow** with a Life Membership to the Federation. Clow, who represents the Whitianga and Coromandel Peninsula Commercial Fishermen's Association, echoed Nyhon's positive sentiment about the industry's trajectory.

"This is one of the biggest turnouts I've seen since I've been coming to the conferences. I deeply appreciate [being given the Life Membership]. That's a gobsmacker, I didn't see it coming."

Find more photos from the 67th Federation conference at nzfishfed.co.nz/conference



Mingling during the Sunderland Marine happy hour.

Five questions with Cole Robinson

Strait Speared founder **Cole Robinson** was named the 2025 Sunderland Marine Young Fisher of the Year for his entrepreneurship, innovative fishing solutions and commitment to providing quality fish to the greater Wellington area (read more about Cole's journey on page 16).

Presenting Robinson with the award required a multi-organisation secret plot, as he was lured down to Christchurch under the guise of speaking at a Young Fish event in Lyttelton.

Did you suspect anything was up?

No, it didn't even cross my mind. I saw the conference as a good opportunity to meet everyone who is involved in the industry and with spearfishing regulation changes. My business partner Tom and I split costs and went down to do some networking.

Was the Federation conference what you expected?

Yes, it was great to talk to Fisheries New Zealand people about what we have going on with spearfishing regulation changes, put faces to names and have a bit of a conversation. And I hadn't met like Tim Barnett, for example, and he's quite a well-respected spear fisherman and pretty cool guy – someone I definitely look up to.

How does winning the award feel?

Long-term, I want to have a career in the commercial fishing industry. My dad has always been a well-respected fisherman and I'd like to be the same. It's quite cool to show the old man that I'm on the right track.



Cole Robinson (left), winner of the Sunderland Marine Young Fisher of the Year Award, with his Strait Speared business partner, Thomas Strawbridge.

How will the \$5,000 from Sunderland Marine help progress your career?

Ideally it will go towards building a purpose-built boat for what we do. Currently we just use a boat I purchased before we began our business that we rigged it up with spearguns on the side. It's a tidy boat, but for the last 2½ years we've always talked about what we could do if we built a boat from scratch using the same hull, with everything designed to be efficient for fishing the Wellington coast.

Where are you keeping the trophy for the year?

We have a bit of a lockup over in Rongotai where we keep all our fishing gear and have a pool table and bar set up. I've put it nice and high on the wall when no one can reach it, but they can observe.

***Ocean Bounty* season seven: ‘The industry keeps getting better and better’**

This August, *Ocean Bounty* returns to our screens for its seventh season, once again offering a rare inside look at the people, practices and passion behind Aotearoa New Zealand’s often misunderstood but hugely important seafood sector. Jen Vallance caught up with *Ocean Bounty* host and show creator Graeme Sinclair.



Many of you know Graeme Sinclair. His name is synonymous with fishing in New Zealand, having hosted *Gone Fishin’* for several decades. So I did wonder how a reccie icon ends up hosting a show all about the commercial sector.

“*Ocean Bounty* was born from a conversation I had, with industry stalwart Andrew Talley,” says Graeme. “Andrew called me up and said, ‘Look mate, I’d like to talk to you about doing more of a focus on the commercial industry’. And I thought, this is a bloody good idea as there’s a rich repository of characters and stories in the commercial sector – and a hell of a lot of misunderstanding. That was 10 years ago now.”

A perhaps little-known fact is that Graeme also has close family ties to the commercial fishing sector, so he’s seen how the industry has evolved over time.

“My father was a fisherman out of Lyttelton,” says Graeme. “I don’t know how many boats there were working out of the port in those days. But Dad was one of them.

“In those days they went out and caught as much as they could which, in turn, impacted the market – making it bloody difficult to make a living. And then, in 1986, the Quota Management System came in and changed the way in which things were done. It created what we all wanted to see and that was sustainable stock.”

The creation of *Ocean Bounty* was well-timed for Graeme personally.

“My health was deteriorating following my multiple sclerosis diagnosis, so I was looking for a different way to continue my work in TV,” Graeme says. “And, over

the years, it’s become something deeply personal as it’s given me something to focus on. It’s kept me looking forward.”

Season seven arrives at a critical time for the sector as it grapples with a rise in misinformation about commercial fishing and how it’s done in New Zealand. The recent documentary *Ocean with David Attenborough* has further stirred public concern – particularly around bottom trawling. But Graeme isn’t fazed. If anything, he says, it reinforces the importance of *Ocean Bounty*’s mission: to show Kiwis what really happens out on New Zealand’s oceans.

“We need to be aware of our impact, but we need to be aware of misinformation,” Graeme says.

“Our fishery bears no resemblance to what was depicted in *Ocean*. We trawl around 3% of the ocean space available to us – and many of those spots have been used for generations. If it was so destructive, we wouldn’t be able to go back and catch sustainable quotas year after year.”

Graeme sees *Ocean Bounty* as a necessary counterbalance to the noise. “There’s so much misinformation out there and social media has only made it worse. That idea of massive factory trawlers tearing New Zealand’s ocean and fisheries to pieces is rubbish.

“We’re not perfect,” Graeme says, “but the Quota Management System New Zealand has in place is world-leading. When it comes to sustainability, innovation and improving our environmental impact, New Zealand’s fishing industry is something to be proud of – you see this on *Ocean Bounty*.



Graeme filming in Lyttelton.

"At the end of the day around 80% of the population is dependent on this industry for their seafood – this wonderful, sustainable, renewable resource that doesn't use pesticides, doesn't use fertilisers and has no artificial colourings.

"Techniques have changed, the ability to target species has altered dramatically, and we're getting much better at minimising bycatch. The industry keeps getting better and better at fishing with less environmental impact."

When asked about a standout episode from the past 10 years, Graeme talks about the episode where his son (then in his early 20s) joined the crew of Sealord's factory trawler *Tokatu* for a six-week stint at sea. The experience turned out to be a real life lesson.

"He came back with a new level of humility and a deep respect for the work ethic of the crew," Graeme says. "And just recently, he qualified as a marine engineer, so I'm very proud of him."

And a standout episode from this upcoming season from the episodes he's filmed so far? Graeme says it's hard to pick just one, but interviewing the Lyttelton-based Threadwell family was pretty special.

"I caught up with Tony Threadwell and his son and his father Ron – who is in his 90s. Funnily enough, Ron worked as a deckhand for my father in the 1950s.

"It's so interesting to see this intergenerational stuff starting to happen. Real family stories – and dare I say it, the legacy is that families have been fishing for generations. And it's the most recent generation that really impresses me. They're smart, capable people with a clear focus on sustainability going forward and on providing the smallest environmental impact that can be achieved. Not only that, but they're also constantly looking to innovate, constantly looking for ways to improve. I just love it. There's this great energy happening – and it's seriously to be applauded."

Season seven of *Ocean Bounty* will premiere Saturday 23 August at 5:30pm on Three, with all episodes also available to stream on demand on ThreeNow.

Coming up in season seven of *Ocean Bounty*



Episode 1: Golden Bay Mussel Farming – Tākaka

Ocean Bounty returns to the stunning waters of Tākaka, where mussel man John Young shares his passion and knowledge of these little protein power packs. In this episode, we explore the unique connection between mussel farming and recreational snapper fishing in Golden Bay – where you can enjoy the best of both worlds.



Episode 2: Inshore Trawl – Nelson

Inshore trawling is evolving, with new technology and smarter gear reducing by-catch and minimising environmental impact. *Ocean Bounty* talks trawling with seafood industry leader Doug Saunders-Loder and seasoned fisherman Tony Roach. The trip to Nelson wraps up with a visit to Motueka Nets, where innovations are making trawling more selective and sustainable.



Episode 3: Pegasus Fishing – Lyttelton

In Lyttelton, Tony Threadwell, Managing Director of Pegasus Fishing, carries on a proud family tradition. *Ocean Bounty* sits down with Tony, his son and his father Ron – who, now in his 90s, has witnessed many positive changes in the local fishery. The trio represents three generations dedicated to supplying fresh, renewable protein to local and national markets.

Seafood for Thought

Seafood New Zealand is once again proud to deliver a dynamic, thought-provoking programme for Aotearoa's seafood sector – designed to truly offer some *seafood for thought*.

This year's speaker line-up includes scientists, media personalities, the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, international delegates, Government officials, skippers, environmental advocates, economists and more.



Here are six (of many) reasons why you need to be at the 2025 Seafood NZ Conference:

1. To learn from Harold Hillman

Harold Hillman is well-known to many of New Zealand's business leaders as a respected thought leader and the Managing Director of Sigmoid Curve Consulting Group, specialising in leadership development, executive coaching and change management. With a Harvard education, a PhD in clinical psychology, and a global career spanning the US, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region, Harold is known for helping leaders and organisations achieve lasting transformation.

His session, *The Significance of Engagement*, is a must-attend for anyone looking to build stronger teams, improve workplace culture and retain great people. In an industry facing constant change and increasing public scrutiny, Harold will explore how good leadership and meaningful connection drive loyalty and performance, as well as how we can build the resilience needed to navigate future challenges.

2. To get a global perspective

Gain valuable insights into global trends amid an increasingly uncertain and unstable world. We have confirmed Deputy Chief of Mission, New Zealand Embassy, Washington, Daniel Mellsop to provide the latest from the US, and we have ANZ's Chief Economist, Sharon Zollner, to provide an economic overview positioning New Zealand within the broader global landscape.

3. To stay on top of the tech and science

Stay up-to-date with the latest advancements in technology and science within our industry. From skippers sharing their hands-on involvement in scientific research and the latest on bottom trawling research, to Vegard Hjelvik, Sales Manager for Fishery and Aquaculture at Norway-based Skipsteknisk, there's plenty to discover and be inspired by.

"To be honest, the conferences have been getting better year on year."

- 2024 Conference Delegate



Harold Hillman



Seafood New Zealand GM Communications Fiona MacMillan leads a panel discussion at the 2024 Seafood Conference.

“The agenda was a great mix of topics and delivery styles – it was thought-provoking.”

- 2024 Conference Delegate

NEWS

4. To be part of the seafood story

It's important to share the Kiwi seafood story – because we do things differently here in New Zealand. With consumers asking more questions than ever, we need to do a better job communicating the good work we're doing to put low-carbon, sustainable protein on plates in Aotearoa and across the world.

That's why we're pleased to have experienced Kiwi media personality and journalist Mary Lambie with us, to help guide us through the media landscape. We'll also hear from a panel of seafood industry professionals who are already working hard to get their message out. And to top it all off, David Downs from NZ Story will talk about how we can highlight and celebrate what makes our nation's identity unique.



2024 Seafood Conference delegates enjoy a demonstration by artist Tim Li.



The conference always concludes with the annual Seafood Showcase.

6. To network

There are plenty of valuable networking opportunities across the two days. From informal conversations between sessions and the supplier showcase to the dedicated happy hour and the Seafood Showcase function, you will have numerous chances to connect with industry leaders, innovators, and peers.

5. To understand just how good seafood is for you

The health benefits of eating seafood are well known, but it's even better than we thought. This year, the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) funded a comprehensive scientific review into seafood nutrition and developed a global toolkit to help share these benefits more widely.

The review was led by Dr Wendy Hunt of Murdoch University and Professor Alexandra McManus of Curtin University, who will be at conference to discuss their findings on the powerful health benefits of seafood – including heart health, mental wellbeing, maternal health and cancer prevention.



The conference provides plenty of networking opportunities.

“Great to network and catch up with members of the industry that I don't see that often plus learn about current issues facing the industry.”

- 2024 Conference Delegate



Register for the 2025 Seafood conference in Whakatū Nelson on 6 and 7 August at seafood.org.nz/news-and-events/conference

Catchin' up with Mike Terry Senior

For Mike Terry, fishing isn't just a job – it's a way of life, passed down through generations. Mike has spent more than 60 years on the water. From the early days of fishing without the convenience of GPS to today's high-tech trawl gear, he's seen it all.

While Mike is stepping back a bit more these days to spend time with his wife and grandkids, he still plays an active role in the family business, helping his son, Mike Terry Junior, on *Atlantic Dawn*.



Mike Terry Senior standing in front of *Atlantic Dawn*.

How did you first get into commercial fishing?

I'm a third-generation fisherman. Fishing is a way of life for our family. I started when I was still going to school and have been a full-time fisher for 57 years now. I know this because I was listening to the radio a couple of weeks back and it was the 57th anniversary of the *Wahine* disaster and that was the year I went fishing full time.

Nowadays, my son (Mike Terry Junior) drives the boat most of the time, so we're up to the fourth generation. It really is a family thing; we're not out there to catch every fish in the ocean. We just like to feed the New Zealand public and make a living at something we enjoy doing.

What do you love about fishing?

I just love the freedom of it, the wildness, the great things you get to see when out on the ocean. A lot of people get quite upset that we're destroying the ecosystem and killing mammals and that. But we do all sorts of things to avoid this. It's a rare accident that something happens. We love the ocean and all the animals and mammals and fish and everything that lives in it.

What's the best piece of fishing or business advice you've received?

I've just sort of found out my own advice really because my father drowned when I was a young guy. We had two boats and his sunk in a major storm in the Wairarapa. So yeah, I sort of stumbled along and found my own way.

My son's learning a lot off me because I'm still around and can tell him, "This is what you need to do and what you don't need to do."

Is there a common fishing misconception you'd love to help set the record straight on?

Yeah, there's a lot of misconceptions about us digging up the ocean floor. We're not doing that. Especially on this new boat that we've got here, with trawl sensors, trawl boards, cod end sensors. We can set our trawl boards up so that they don't plough into the ocean like in the old-school days.

These days we can just run them skimming the bottom and we can do all sorts of great things with electronics these days. So again, it's a big misconception that we're out there destroying the ecosystem.

CATCHIN' UP WITH...

What's your most memorable day on the water so far?

I've had quite a few memorable days, but a real standout was when I first started fishing for orange roughy – I was one of the first to do it. On one of those early days, there were massive whales all around us while we were working a bag of fish. I think they were just eating some of the ones that got out. They were actually just eyeballing us. It was crazy.

What's the coolest piece of fishing gear you can't live without?

All our electronics. I couldn't live without them. When I first started, we never had plotters, no GPS. So, when we started fishing orange roughy, we just went on radar like 30 miles off. It was a guessing game. Now, when our electronics fail, you think, "Oh hell, I'm lost." We can't really do our job without them now.

If you weren't in the seafood business, what would you be doing?

That's a hard one. I was brought up down in D'Urville Island, French Pass, and have always loved the outdoors, the bush and all that sort of stuff. So, guess I'd probably be doing something that was maybe to do with farming or forestry.

Tell us about life outside of work.

I've got what I call a play boat. My wife and I and the grandkids, we spend a lot of time in the Marlborough Sounds or French Pass where I was brought up. The grandkids absolutely love it. Great fishing and my kids love it, too.

We spend as much time as we can down there. I've actually just bought a big one, 65-footer, so we're off cruising around the whole of New Zealand we hope. Before I can't do it anymore, I'm running out of years.



Mike in his early days of fishing.



What is your favourite music when you're out on the water?

I'm an old-school country and Western man. The boys on the deck always have to have music on, and it's usually the youngest that picks. So, not me.

I still work on deck as well, but if the music's too loud I'll make up some excuse and go inside to do something.

What is your favourite seafood?

Well, they're all good but I would say my favourite fish would have to be tarakihi. It's a good all-rounder. Snapper is nice too. There's a lot of fallacy about snapper – that if it's not looked after properly it gets all soft and that – but now we slurry everything as soon as it comes aboard it's just as firm as tarakihi.

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

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The people and purpose behind New Zealand's albacore tuna fishery

An albacore tuna is individually hooked on a line.

Every summer, as the Tasman Sea warms and the albacore tuna begin their migration down the west coast of Aotearoa New Zealand, a fleet of small independently owned vessels set out from coastal towns all around New Zealand to meet them. These fishers, many of whom have been working these waters for decades, aren't just harvesting fish. They're safeguarding a way of life, a community, and a future built on science and sustainable values.

This is a fishery where community matters. From Westport and Greymouth to Nelson, fishing supports local economies and families. Michael Driscoll, an environmental monitoring technician at NIWA, works closely with the fleet to gather scientific data. "We monitor the juvenile albacore fishery, which runs from December to May," he says.

Their work is part of a wider research network with Pacific Island nations; the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), which promotes sustainable development in the region; and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia's national science agency, to understand stock abundance and migration.

That data, gathered over more than two decades, underpins the management of the fishery. "We've been collecting samples since 1998," says Michael. "And now we're also taking tiny tissue samples for genetic analysis. That helps us identify kin relationships and track where fish are moving across the Pacific."

The science is collaborative and internationally connected, just like the fishery itself. Albacore tuna is managed at a regional level through the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and the New Zealand troll fishery plays a small but important role contributing just 1-2% of the total Pacific albacore harvest.



Data on New Zealand's albacore tuna fishery has been collected since the late-1990s.

Mike Middleditch, who's been fishing albacore since 1983, calls it the best fishery there is. "We're out there in blue water, seeing dolphins, whales, birdlife, it's great. It gets in your blood," he says. With a lifetime on the water and a deep respect for the sea, Mike is part of a tight-knit group of fishers who've seen the fishery evolve over 40 years, and who are proud of how it's managed today.

Trolling for albacore is a clean and selective method of fishing. "Fishers tow ten or a dozen lures behind the boat and the fish bite individually," explains Doug Saunders-Loder, President of the Tuna Management Association.



Fisher Mike Middleditch says New Zealand's albacore tuna fishery is "the best fishery there is."

"There's virtually no bycatch. It's a very low-impact fishery," Mike agrees. "We might see the odd juvenile southern bluefin, but we don't even land them, we just de-hook and let them go."

As well as being low-impact, it's a physically demanding way to fish, particularly when the "mad dog bites" come on and the lines are alive with tuna. "It's exhilarating," says Mike. "It's hands-on, high energy, and really satisfying."

Doug's role is to help bridge the gap between the international and national regulatory frameworks and the people who make their living on the water. "I've been working in the sector for close to 40 years, like many of the current fishers of the day" he says. "I am absolutely committed to the catching sector and my role is to make sure the fishers' voices are heard, that they can support their families and communities, and that we meet the standards expected of us."

One of those standards is the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) Fisheries Standard. In 2015, the albacore tuna troll fishery achieved MSC certification for the first time, proof that it meets globally recognised benchmarks for sustainability, effective management and acceptable environmental impacts.

"It was largely a market-driven decision," says Doug. "But it also came from the fishers themselves. They were willing to back it financially. We would struggle to economically sell internationally without it now. MSC certification gives buyers and consumers, confidence that we're doing the right thing and whilst we are at the bottom of the world, many miles from the market, it's hoped that having that [certification] reflects well in the price."

The commitment to sustainability is shared across the fishery. "We want to keep the fish coming back every season," says Mike. "This fishery supports whole towns. From the boats to the wharves to the factories, it's all connected. It's more than just a job."



Marine Stewardship Council certification ensures New Zealand's fisheries meet strict sustainability standards.

He knows it's harder for young people to enter the industry these days, with compliance costs and fewer buyers. But Mike believes strongly in what the fishery stands for. "We're not out here to destroy things," he says. "We're here to feed people and enjoy our work."

As an island nation with deep cultural connections to the ocean, New Zealanders understand the responsibility that comes with looking after our marine environment. Doug puts it plainly: "Sustainability isn't just about meeting commercial standards. It's cultural, too. We are an island nation surrounded by ocean. We grow up knowing that our future depends on looking after it, from both an economic and environmental standpoint."

With MSC certification in place, a legacy of science and stewardship behind them, and a new generation of fishers and scientists working together, New Zealand's albacore troll fishery is showing how community, commitment, and care for the ocean can deliver a sustainable future, for people and planet.

Sustainable fishing means more

An overview of the performance of MSC certified fisheries in New Zealand:

- 4 MSC certified fisheries
- Catching 7 species
- Accounting for 45% of wild capture landings
- Recording 46 improvements
- Supported by 297 stakeholder comments

Read the report and more New Zealand fishery stories at [msc.org/nz](https://www.msc.org/nz)

Remembering the start of live mussel exports with Gary Monk

Sometimes it can be fascinating to look back on how far we've come as an industry. Today, our seafood exports bring in \$2.2 billion to the New Zealand economy. That trade, and the relationships that go with it, has developed over many years. Gary Monk of export/import business Intersea Limited, sat down with us to remember the very start of the live mussel export business in the 1980s.



Live mussel exports to the US borrowed technology developed for supermarket displays to ensure seafood expo stock stayed in good condition to impress potential distributors.

It started when we used to go to trade shows in Long Beach California and we would take Greenshell™ Mussels as one of the products we displayed. Obviously, we wanted to take them live but we had trouble keeping them that way. So, we developed a new method of saltwater reticulating for our display tanks. We approached LD Nathan, which was opening their flagship store at 277 Broadway, and so the first of our "aquariums" became part of the Jaques Seafood Bar in Woolworths 277.

But once we had them there, the next challenge was the average consumer in the US didn't know how to cook our mussels. I went to Expo '88 in Brisbane where I saw an animatron as part of the Fujitsu Display - that gave me another idea. That's how we came to create the "Magic Mussel" to talk to consumers about how to look after and cook New Zealand mussels. For example, knowing that they should throw away the ones that didn't open when they were cooked.



Live mussels for sale in Woolworths in the 1980s.



Gary Monk of Intersea Limited with the "Magic Mussel" animatron.



A trade expo display featuring the iconic Seafood New Zealand fish poster in the background.

This work provided scale to the chilled seafood trade to the US. Having mussels available gave our American buyers the consistency we needed. They wanted the certainty of having product available every day, which was tricky with fin fish, but with mussels as a kind of base or core product we could provide certainty of supply, which meant that distributors took us seriously.

The next challenge for us was the cost of airfreight. That became less of a problem when Continental came into the New Zealand market, which provided us with options.

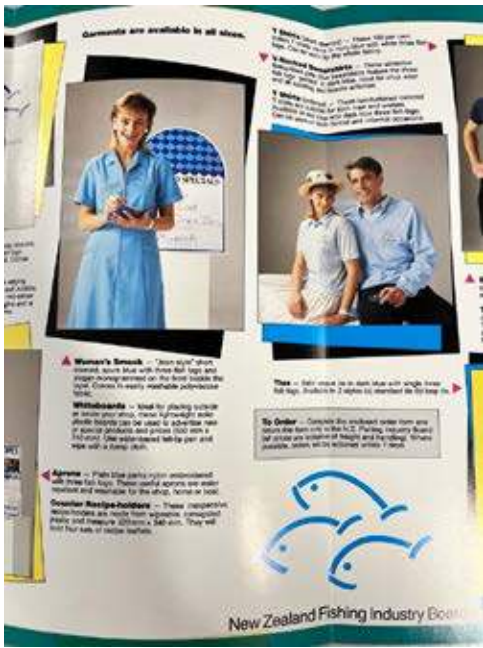
We have some great memories of that time and the work that was done. Plenty of people will remember the *Fish for a Compliment* campaign fronted by Allison Roe. We were able to take elements of that campaign overseas to various trade shows. We had a great story to tell.



The arrival of Continental airlines in New Zealand in the '80s helped reduce the cost of airfreight to the US.



The *Fish for a Compliment* promotional brochure.





Students examining otoliths up close at a recent careers expo.

Teens discover the secret to ageing fish

How do scientists figure out how old a fish is? It's a question not many teenagers think about until they get the chance to peer down a microscope and discover the answer in a fish's ear bone.

That moment of discovery was at the heart of a hands-on activity Seafood New Zealand created to take to careers expos this year. Designed for high school students to spark their curiosity about jobs and careers in the seafood industry, the activity has already proven a huge hit at two major events: the Careers Expo in Christchurch and Porirua. Across both events over 8,000 students came through the doors, and hundreds stopped to chat with us and take a closer look at something tiny, but intriguing – the otolith.

Otoliths are small structures in the heads of fish that help with balance and hearing. But they also hold the key to a fish's age. Like the rings in a tree, otoliths grow in layers – one for each year of a fish's life. By slicing and examining these bones under a microscope, scientists can count the rings to determine age, which in turn helps inform our Quota Management System to ensure sustainable fishing.

NIWA helped Seafood New Zealand create this activity by sourcing otoliths from hoki, ling, red cod and silver warehou, and prepared them in resin blocks to use as demonstration samples. Students were invited to have a go at ageing the fish themselves using a microscope. Some figured it out quickly while others needed a little help, but the look on their faces when the “Aha!” moment hit was priceless.

“This is in the fish's head? That's so cool!”

“I didn't know science like this was part of fishing.”

“So each ring is a year? Like a tree?”

These were just a few of the comments we overheard – and they're exactly why Seafood New Zealand created the activity. The goal was twofold: to make students aware of the science behind fisheries management, and to open their eyes to career paths they may never have considered. Bringing the science to life through a hands-on activity really resonated with the students.

The activity sparked some great conversations about career pathways and the wide range of roles within the seafood industry. Many students were surprised to learn just how many different opportunities exist—both on land and at sea. We talked jobs on fishing boats like deckhands, skippers and marine engineers as well as land-based careers in marine science, data analysis, policy, food safety and more. Some students were especially interested in the blend of science and sustainability, while others wanted to know how to get started – what to study, what skills are needed and what kinds of opportunities exist. It was a great way to show just how diverse and rewarding this industry is.

We're thrilled with the feedback so far and look forward to taking the activity to more events.

Colin Smith | 1 November 1971 – 16 April 2025



In every industry there is a need for a “working heart” of business. Colin was just that. He did not shine on the stage at conferences or raise awareness of himself in the fishing arena. A true comrade who was in the background making the diving industry tick. It must be recognised that members like Colin, the quiet toilers, are as equally important as the public faces who receive the attention and are able to uphold the mana of a sector, because guys like Colin were doing the hard yards.

Colin began kina and pāua diving around 1998 for the then-fledgling company SUNZ. The reward was the everyday adventure of the ocean and travel throughout NZ. Three Kings to Stewart Island in a season was not uncommon.

Colin’s skill as a diving harvester in kina and pāua was a benchmark to newcomers, always eager to improve and be a model for new divers. To match Colin was a goal! He still holds the team record for the number of kina in one dive, at 108 confirmed, on one breath.

He was an inspirational snapper snooper. He could find and bag snapper on a coast where others would only see a flash of pink as a snapper shot away.

He worked with a team, not a boss and employee set-up by any means, always mixing. Social life with the crew sport spearfishing or hunting and socialising.

As skipper eventually, he ran a very professional crew, always considering safety in the daily challenges.

Eventually, around 2018, Colin became an independent diver with his own quota working mainly with the Tora (Wairarapa) team, engaging his family with outdoor focus, in Tora and with the Boyne family.

Colin’s son, Quinn, has now proven he can fill Dad’s shoes, and has a place in the SUNZ team where Colin started. This made Colin proud – his family found the love of the ocean he had made available as a parent, living by the sea and immersed in it.

As life is never fair, Colin succumbed to a little-known condition called amyloidosis (an overproduction of amyloids in the body causing kidney failure and follow-on complications) which eventually dominated his body, but not his soul.

Even in the difficult times of dialysis, Colin continued to dive and even helicoptered his dialysis equipment into Fiordland for a Wapiti ballot, with family and lifelong mates.

A visit to his home will be inspirational and leave visitors in awe of a man that loved the outdoors. The moose head, several 12+ pointer red stag heads, a 40kg kingfish mould and trophy pāua shells adorn the living room, truly a sign of a man who crammed a heap of living into 53 years.

His true legacy is his family – now adjusting to life’s new chapter. Condolences to Rachel (wife), Holly, Quinn, Avalon and Bethanee. Will miss you bro.

— Herb

RECIPE

Sri Lankan

Stargazer Curry

Serves: 4 | Prep time: 20 mins | Cook time: 15 mins





Tamar and Zak busy in the kitchen.



A stargazer/monkfish.

Who doesn't love a good curry? They are comforting in the winter months as well as being a simple one-pot meal. This Sri Lankan-style curry is super simple, fragrant and light – the perfect balance to showcase, but not overpower, the fish. We have used stargazer (monkfish) here. It's robust, so keeps its form in curries and soups, and has a succulent flesh and light flavour. This recipe has gained accolades such as, "this might be the best curry I have ever had" from Jen, our Seafood New Zealand comms star.

Ingredients:

- 500 grams stargazer/monkfish fillets (you could also use ling or shark)
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 brown onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 green chili, deseeded and thinly sliced
- 1 lemongrass (white only), finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- Spice mix:
 - ½ cinnamon quill
 - 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
 - ½ teaspoon mustard seeds
 - ½ teaspoon fenugreek seeds
 - ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
 - ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
 - 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- Handful of curry leaves
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 tablespoon tamarind paste
- 300 millilitres coconut milk
- Handful of fresh coriander leaves
- Jasmine rice and flatbread, to serve

Instructions:

Cut the fish into hunky, bite-sized pieces, put in a bowl with turmeric and lime juice and pop in the fridge for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, prep the rest of the spices and vegetables.

Heat a large pan or wok to medium hot and add a glug of plain oil (eg, canola). Throw in the onion, chilli, lemongrass and garlic. Let this soften but be careful it doesn't burn. You might want your extractor fan on to deal with the chili vapours!

Add the spice mix and curry leaves and fry for a couple more minutes before adding the tomato and tamarind paste. Once the tamarind and tomato have incorporated into the rest of the mix, add the coconut milk and bring to a lively simmer.

Now for the star(gazer) of the show – gently plop the marinated fish into the curry and let it simmer for about 5 minutes.

Throw in a decent amount of coarsely chopped coriander leaves and serve with rice and your favourite flatbread. Enjoy!



Scan the QR code to watch Tamar and Zak cook this dish or visit the Seafood New Zealand Facebook page

Consultation for October sustainability round is open now

By Emma Taylor, Director Fisheries Management

It's that time again – consultation is open now for the sustainability round for the fishing year starting 1 October 2025.

It's crucial to this process that Fisheries New Zealand receives submissions from industry, as well as others who have an interest in potential changes to catch limits and other management settings for fisheries around the country.

We are looking for feedback on proposed catch limit changes to nearly 30 fish stocks this year and deemed value rate adjustments for eight stocks. Many of these stocks are of significant interest and value to commercial fishers and the industry, so you and your organisations will want to make sure your views are taken into account when the Minister makes his decisions.

These proposed changes are based on the best available information on what's happening in fisheries. This includes the latest science information from recent stock assessments and commercial catch reporting verified by onboard cameras and observers.



Emma Taylor

Our aim with fisheries management is always to enable sustainable utilisation of New Zealand's fisheries, which provide food, jobs, and are a key part of our national identity and regional communities.

Included in the consultation are proposed increases to snapper on the West Coast and Top of the South Island (SNA 7), blue mackerel on the northeast and west coast of the North Island (EMA 7), and southern gemfish in offshore fisheries (SKI 3 & 7). These reviews are based on information like commercial catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) data and catch at age studies, which can indicate increased utilisation is sustainable for certain fisheries.

Analysis of commercial fishery data for both PAU 2 and 5A has identified a declining trend in these pāua fisheries, which we are looking to address with TACC reductions in both fisheries. We'll also be looking at putting a TAC in place for PAU 5A, as well as recreational, customary and other mortality allowances.

What we have included here is only a small overview of the proposed changes being consulted on. I encourage you to go the consultations page on the MPI website, read the consultation document, and make a submission on the proposals.

Following the consultation, Fisheries New Zealand will carefully consider the feedback and provide advice to the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries. The Minister will announce his decisions on changes for the October sustainability round in advance of the new fishing year starting on 1 October.

Thank you in advance to everyone who takes the time to submit on this crucial part of our fisheries management system. Your submissions, as well as the data you provide via catch reporting, are essential in the making sure our fisheries are providing for New Zealand, today and in the future.

"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.



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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

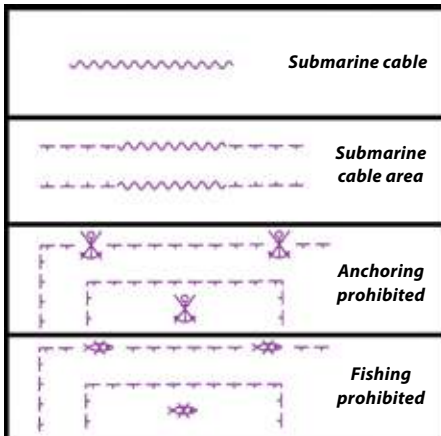


Figure 1.

These are some of the penalties

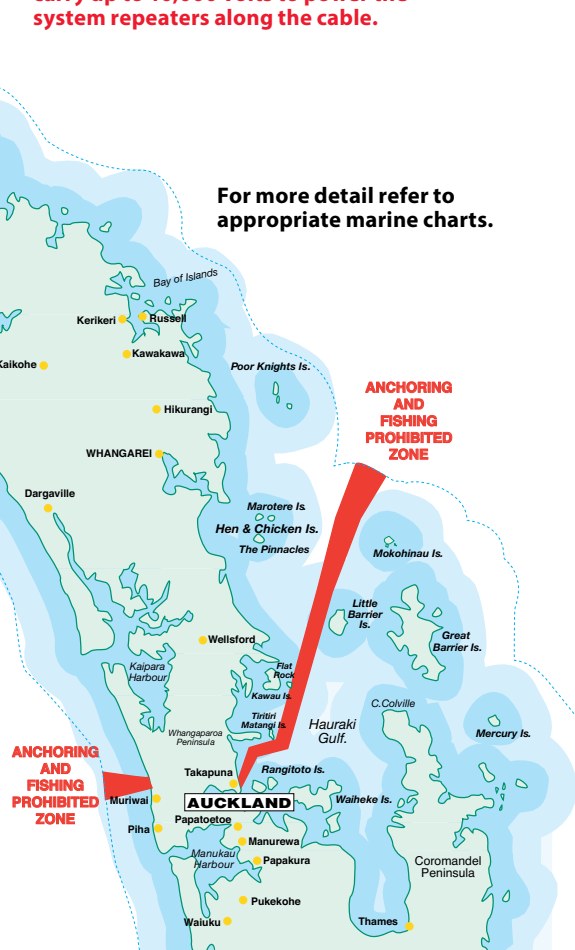
- A maximum fine of \$20,000 for a non-commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$100,000 for a commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$250,000 for damaging a submarine cable.

Additional 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.



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KIN1
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POR1, POR3
RCO3
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RSK1, RSK3
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1999 LOA 21.34 x B 6.1m
Doosan 600hp new 2022
Aux Cummins new 2022
80kVA alternator
Gearbox ZF rebuilt 2022
Fuel 10,000L Water 2,000L
Brine tanks 15t tuna. Bait
freezer. Good electronics
Vessel refurbished 2018
Survey 200 miles.

\$850,000



5531 FAST CATAMARAN
CRAY LINE NET
LOA 7.85m x B2.6m x D 0.5m
Built Wanganui Boats 1989
Max 40 knots Service 18 knots
2 x Honda 225hp. 440 hours
Luff hauler VHF, Radar,
G.P.S/Plotter, Sounder,
Inshore Survey not renewed
owner retired. Beach trailer
& tractor available

POA



5463 CRAY, LINE, NET, PAX
L 13m x B 4.04m x D1.8m
Legend Boat Builders 2006
Yanmar 6C x BM GT 324kW
ZF V drive 2:1. 4 blade prop
2 station steering. 18 knots
Fuel 1300L. Wet well 40
bins = 1.2 tns. + 80 fwd on
deck. 2 berths. Dickinson
stove. Net drum. Trailer
Survey Inshore fish & pax

REDUCED \$295,000



#5472 OFFERS - TROLLER,
NETTER & BOTTOM LINER
LOA 21.2 x B 6.7m x D 2.6m
Iveco main 285hp. 40kVA gen
Hold 27 tonnes. Fuel 8,000Ltrs
Galley. Toilet/shower. H/W.
Tuna poles. Gill net drum, nets
Rope roller 28 kms rope. Nets,
bottom line gear including
extra stored ashore.
Offshore survey to Feb 2027

MAKE AN OFFER

5515 FAST BARNETT FISHING & PASSENGER

Built 2006 Profab.
LOA 12.5m x B3.55m x D1.2m
Caterpillar C9 510hp. ZF 1.5:1 V drive
Max speed 22 knots. Working 15 knots @
1750rpm = 50 lph.
Pot hauler. Anchor winch & anchors to survey
4 berths. Toilet/shower. H/W
Well equipped galley saloon. Good electronics
Inshore survey 10 pax 2 crew
Expiry 26/07/2026

\$350,000



All prices indicated are plus GST unless otherwise stated.

100 VESSELS AT

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Advanced Deckhand Fishing (ADH-F)
Skipper Restricted Limits (SRL)
Skipper Coastal Offshore (SCO)



ENGINEERING

Skipper Restricted Limits Engineering
Marine Engineer Class 6
Marine Engineer Class 5



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