



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



The end of a fishy marathon

We find them guilty too.

That was the verdict from the seafood industry after the sentencing of Hawke's Bay Seafoods, its related companies, directors and manager.

Antonino (Nino), Giancarlo (Joe) and Marcus D'Esposito had pleaded guilty at the end of 2017 to 85 charges in relation to 27 tonnes of unreported bluenose exported to Australia between the end of 2012 and mid-2014.

They were convicted last year, when four fishing vessels were ordered forfeit to the Crown.

The saga finally played out in Wellington District Court on Monday when Hawke's Bay Seafoods and related companies were fined \$1,086,673 under a complicated formula adopted by Judge Bill Hastings.

He also ordered the companies to pay \$418,500 in redemption fees for return of the four vessels.

When deemed values were added for the unreported bluenose, the total payable came to about \$1.7 million, the largest fine imposed in a domestic fisheries case.

Substantial undisclosed legal fees would likely have pushed the total cost well over \$2 million.

This gave the company and its principals the dubious distinction of beating a previous record fine of \$989,000 they incurred in 1997 for making false statements in quota reports and possessing fish illegally when operating out of Petone in Wellington.

They then moved to Napier and set up Hawke's Bay Seafoods.

In a rare light moment in a case that took five years of investigation and litigation, fish of the chocolate kind were handed out to the lawyers involved before the sentencing, courtesy of the judge.

That was his way of saying thank you for their advocacy.

"This feels to me like the end of the marathon," Judge Hastings said.

Finally, the boil had been lanced.

Seafood NZ condemned the behaviour, supported the MPI prosecution and welcomed the outcome.

"There was no place in the industry for those who flout the system," a sworn affidavit to the court signed by chief executive Tim Pankhurst said.

"We have a very clear code of conduct that says illegal behaviour will not be tolerated.

"This is theft – both from the people of New Zealand and the quota holders.

"Further, the bluenose fishery this theft has been committed in has been in decline and the unrecorded catch left a big gap in attempts to accurately assess the biomass of the fishery.

"As an industry, we are collectively committed to transparency and doing the right thing.

"The actions by Hawke's Bay Seafoods undermine our efforts to be responsible guardians of the resource."

Ministry for Primary Industries fishing compliance manager Steve Ham said the case involved sustained offending over a number of years.

"The illegal activity was premeditated and showed a blatant disregard for the quota management system," he said.

The company and its directors remained unrepentant to the last.

"It's regrettable we did not have the resources to continue with our defence," a company spokesman said.

"However, we can now put the last four years behind us and move forward."

Ngati Kahungunu, whose quota of mixed species of around 1000 tonnes is fished into Hawke's Bay Seafoods, have stated their intention to purchase the company, to be renamed Takitimu Seafoods.

That will ensure continued access to fresh seafood, secure the jobs of 250 staff and overcome the bad smell that has hung around the Bay for too long.

Oh buoy - the 6500km journey for wave data

Last February, a group of Kiwi oceanographers dropped five buoys into the Southern Ocean – home to some of the world's strongest ocean currents. One year on and the

Spotter Wave Buoys, fondly named Turi, Ruatea, Ngahue, Kiwa and Hoturoa, have drifted more than 6500km.

The project is a collaboration between MetOcean Solutions, the Defence Technology Agency and ocean data company Spooondrift, as part of the wider Southern Ocean programme - an initiative that's helping to understand waves.

Waves play an important role in the climate system, cycling heat, carbon and nutrients. Persistent storms and the lack of landmass in the Southern Ocean results in large fetches and strong winds – ideal conditions for generating large waves.

With the Southern Ocean occupying more than a quarter of the world's oceans, the waves generated there have far-reaching effects and contribute to the wave climate in major ocean basins.

“The New Zealand West Coast, for example, is periodically battered by large swell systems in Southern Ocean storms,” said MetOcean Solutions' science development manager Dr Tom Durrant.

Now in the volatile waters of Drake Passage, these Spotters have collected 365 days of surface wave and current data. It's the first time this type of wave buoy has been deployed in the Southern Ocean.

Developed by Spooondrift as a citizen sensor, the buoys are simple to deploy, easy to handle and weigh just five kilograms, meaning they can be lowered by hand into the water. There's even a battery protection feature which enters hibernation during extreme temperatures and extended periods of darkness.

“The Spotter buoy is designed to be easy to use, low-cost and solar-powered,” said Spooondrift chief executive Tim Janssen.

Data is sent via satellite communication to offer real-time wave statistics and data tracking.

“From the Spotter Dashboard, the user can access data and change settings remotely on the device.”

Scientists have used the last year as an opportunity to test the durability and responsiveness of the technology in an open-ocean, energetic environment. If they continue to be effective, the Spotter could revolutionise the way remote oceans are monitored.

The buoys' data is [freely available](#) to the scientific community through MetOcean Solutions' website.



The Spotter's drift track and significant wave height measured over the last year.

Photo, MetOcean Solutions.

SeaweeK 2019

More than 200 events are lined up for this year's fast-approaching SeaweeK. The event kicks off tomorrow and runs until 10 March under the theme of Tiakina o Tātou Mōana – Care for our Seas. National coordinator Mels Barton said she is delighted at the response so far.

“We are getting more groups organising events every year, and many more repeating events year after year. It's great to have so many opportunities around the country for families to learn about the amazing marine environment we have in New Zealand and how to protect it.”

Cawthron Institute and Sustainable Seas Science Challenge scientist Heni Unwin will be touring the country throughout the week, providing lectures and sharing her latest project – a marine plastic tracker.

Event highlights from around the country will include the Great Big Mollusc Hunt in Northland, glass bottom boat tours in Auckland, an albatross documentary film night in

Hawke's Bay, an educational dolphin cruise in Akaroa and a coastal ecology open day at Victoria University in Wellington – plus more.

Six competitions are open to entries this year, with prizes ranging from a sustainable seafood barbeque, to wetsuit gear and a kayak. The 2019 Senior Seaweek Ocean Champion is also up for grabs, with votes closing by the end of today. The winner will be announced at the Bill Ballantine Memorial Lecture on Thursday 7 March at the University of Auckland.

For more information on Seaweek 2019 events near you, visit seaweek.org.nz



News

An environmental disaster is unfolding in the Solomon Islands on the island of Rennell, with tonnes of oil spilling into an internationally-significant marine reserve. In Kangava Bay, the azure waters have been blackened by oil and the reef covered in sludge. According to residents, the air is thick with the stench of heavy chemicals and the spill is poisoning their food sources and livelihoods. Each day for the past three weeks, locals have looked out to a giant ship, the *MV Solomon Trader*, as it sits wedged on a reef, a gash on its side leaking as much as 60 tonnes of oil into a marine sanctuary. The spill is still not contained, and experts have scrambled from as far away as Australia and the United States to try and stem the flow in what authorities now say could be the Solomon Islands' worst environmental disaster. Containment supplies are being flown from Australia to help the Solomon Islands government cope with the scale of the leak. Efforts to refloat the ship have been hampered by poor weather and Rennell's remoteness. In a statement, Unesco said it was concerned about the spill and was "working with the national authorities to ascertain the status of the situation and the best mitigation measures to be taken".

Western Bay of Plenty fishery officers had a busy summer with a number of people caught with excessive or undersized shellfish and crayfish, *NZ Herald* reports. Jodie Cole, MPI chief compliance officer for Tauranga, said fulltime and honorary fishery officers were out in force over the summer conducting commercial and recreational fishing inspections. "Given the large numbers of recreational inspections, overall we are happy with the level of compliance encountered. However, there are always some people who either fail to educate themselves about the rules or hold the belief the rules do not apply to them." Amongst the cases was a man found with 12 undersized pāua. The 52-year-old has been charged and summoned to appear in the Tauranga District Court on March 4. Cole said other incidents included people taking excess tuatua from Pāpāmoa Beach. Some received warning notices, and one offender was issued a \$500 infringement for taking more than twice the daily limit. Warning notices were issued to five other people caught in possession of either undersized crayfish or snapper. "It was also a serious offence to

provide false or misleading person details to a fishery officer. Upon conviction offenders could face a fine of \$250,000 and also have any property used in the commission of the offence forfeited to the Crown.”

A fresh salmon shipment from major New Zealand seafood exporter Sanford, has successfully made it across the Chinese border after clearance problems earlier in the month, *NZ Herald* reports. "We sent a shipment of fresh salmon to China last week. It cleared customs over the weekend, which is very pleasing," said Sanford chief customer officer Andre Gargiulo. Sanford revealed it had been having issues getting fresh salmon exports cleared through Chinese ports, which was thought to be linked to a perceived deterioration in government-to-government relationships. As New Zealand's biggest food export customer, there were fears for New Zealand's export economy. At the time, Sanford did not attribute the administrative issues to getting shipments into China cleared but said that no reason had been given by China for the problems which had affected several shipments of fresh salmon. Seafood New Zealand chief executive Tim Pankhurst said he was not aware of any current issues in the sector regarding trade with China.

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