



# THE UPDATE

## Captain's Blog



### **Fishers risk becoming an endangered species**

Fishermen are wondering if they, too, risk becoming an endangered species.

On top of the drastic set net and trawl bans proposed under the Maui and Hector's dolphins threat management plan, two other current proposals have potentially huge impacts on the commercial sector.

One concerns tarakihi, the other pāua.

Tarakihi (*Nemadactylus macropterus*) is a mainstay of the inshore fishery and one of the most popular table fish.

Ninety percent of the catch is sold to the local market.

The species is available for harvest year round and is caught along the entire east coast of both New Zealand's main islands.

Fishermen report there are still plenty of tarakihi to be caught in some areas, but the science suggests otherwise.

The east coast fishery has been managed as four separate stocks since 1986 but is now assumed to be one stock.

The first full stock assessment in 2017-18 found the level of biomass was below 20 percent of the original unfished total.

It has been near this limit since 1975 and below 20 percent since the early 2000s.

Clearly, action was needed.

Industry proposed a 25 percent reduction in the commercial catch limit, which was supported by Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash and introduced on October 1 last year.

Nash challenged the industry to prepare an effective, robust management strategy for the tarakihi fishery and a detailed rebuild plan has been provided by Fisheries Inshore NZ, Te Ohu Kaimoana and Southern Inshore Fisheries.

The latest science indicates the fishery will rebuild and recover at the current catch limits set in 2018. To ensure the rebuild progresses even faster, a number of management measures have been proposed by industry that include changes to fishing gear, move-on rules to avoid juvenile fish and voluntary closed areas where appropriate.

However, Fisheries New Zealand has proposed further drastic cuts of up to 50 percent of the remaining catch.

The industry view is that would unnecessarily impact on industry jobs and wellbeing of our communities, besides reducing healthy fish options for the 80 percent of Kiwis who eat fish at least once a month.

Further south, a network of 12 marine protected areas has been proposed by Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage and Nash for the chilly waters off the Otago coast.

Six of the proposed south-east sites are marine reserves in which all pāua harvesting would be prohibited.

Two of the would-be reserves – at Harakeke Point to White Island, and Akatore – support significant local recreational fisheries.

A small but important amount of commercial pāua catch would be affected as well.

The combined catch displacement can only increase the risk of localised pāua depletion in a fishery that is only slowly rebuilding towards its management target.

There is also the risk of a cascading series of future spatial exclusions as customary fishers look to mitigate the impact of displaced catch from marine reserves by establishing more mataitai reserves to protect their own fishing areas.

More than 2800 submissions were made on the original MPA network proposal in December 2016.

A significant number of recreational fishing submitters favoured fisheries management solutions rather than no-take reserves.

Many believe the current recreational limit of 10 pāua per person per day is too high.

Ten pāua is a lot of meat.

If the consultation is simply a box ticking exercise and the MPAs proceed as proposed, something has to give.

All sectors need to work together, as they have done in Fiordland and with Te Korowai on the Kaikoura coast to develop sustainable fisheries management, according to Pāua Industry Council chair Stormalong Stanley. The Auditor-General supported such a community approach in a report to Parliament this week.

“If FNZ ignores displaced catch and does nothing, then the pāua fishery and all those who value it will become victims,” Stanley says.

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## A fishy solution for plastic

Fish skins are proving to be the way forward, with applications in wound treatment, skincare, fish ‘leather’ and now, plastics.

A fully biodegradable and compostable bioplastic called Marinatex could soon be the latest plastic alternative in the market.

Created from fish skins, fish scales and red algae, the material is cheap to produce and stronger than a plastic bag. It takes just one month for the product to degrade, can be disposed of through food waste and doesn’t leak toxins into the environment.

UK woman Lucy Hughes wanted to create a locally sourced and sea-based solution to traditional plastics, one that used organic waste material from the fishing industry.

“With Marinatex, we are transforming a waste stream into the main component of a new product. By doing so, we have created a consistent, transparent and plastic-like material with a more planet-friendly and product appropriate life-cycle for packaging,” Hughes said.

Waste from just one Atlantic cod yields approximately 1400 Marinatex bags and the potential for a variety of packaging, from tissue box seals to sandwich bags and cling-wrap.

Hughes hopes Marinatex will be on the market by the end of 2020 given testing and scaling-up go to plan.



Marinatex creator Lucy Hughes has produced a bioplastic made from fish skins, scales and red algae.

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## Microplastic drops into Lyttelton

A new microplastics study is underway in Christchurch's Lyttelton Harbour – the first of its kind in New Zealand.

Olga Pantos and her team from the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR), have embarked on a three-month testing phase, examining the impact of plastic on the marine environment.

It's an area of research still in its infancy said Pantos.

“Very little is known about the state of microplastic pollution in New Zealand and nothing of its associated risks. With our unique flora, fauna and ecosystems it is essential that we understand what is happening here, and not make an assessment of risk based on studies in other countries.”

Samples of polyethylene and nylon - types of plastic commonly used for food packaging, clothing and fishing gear - were attached to a custom-made structure allowing them to be held within surface waters.

Changes to the microbes, invertebrates and algae that colonise and grow on the plastics, forming a ‘plastisphere’, are being monitored over-time using Next-Generation sequencing.

The findings will be used to better understand how different plastics transport invasive species and potential pathogens in the marine system and more.

Testing will later extend to Auckland and Nelson, where the study will be repeated over a 12-month period using 5 different types of old and new plastic.

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## Scholarships for emerging industry leaders

Nuffield Farming Scholarships for 2020 are now open for nominations.

Up to five scholarships are awarded each year to individuals in the primary sector who have the potential to become leaders and influencers in:

- sector/industry management and innovation
- governance roles at the community, regional or national level
- industry advisory or project groups

Nominations close August 18.

The Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme seeks agri-food applicants who are passionate about their personal development and contributing to their community and industry.

[Applications](#) for the 2020 Kellogg Programme open on August 1 and close October 12.

Applicant and nominee details can be sent to [nuffield@ruralleaders.co.nz](mailto:nuffield@ruralleaders.co.nz) or visit the [Nuffield](#) and [Kellogg](#) Programme websites for more information.

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## News

NIWA scientist Jim Roberts has defended the report stating that cats pose more of a threat to Hector's and Maui dolphins than commercial fishing, *Radio NZ* reported. The proposed dolphin Threat Management Plan estimated that, on average, 334 Hector's dolphins and 2 Maui dolphins die from toxoplasmosis every year, due to cat faeces entering the ocean. Roberts said a quarter of all dolphin deaths he studied were attributed to the disease – a finding that warrants further study. "It's not something that we typically hear about very much, but there are some things we know about the toxo-parasite, which is that it's incredibly hardy and can last for about a year in sea water," Roberts said. University of Otago professor Liz Slooten said the 300 dolphin death figure was "wildly exaggerated" and based on a sample of just 28 dolphins. "There's no suggestion anywhere else in the world that this is a problem anywhere like the magnitude that's being suggested," she said.

New Zealand Food Safety have warned for consumers to be careful with raw mussels after an outbreak of food poisoning, *Radio NZ* reported. Most of the individuals affected consumed commercially grown mussels harvested in Coromandel. The mussels were purchased raw, in their shells. NZ Food Safety advised to ensure that mussels are cooked at temperatures above 65C, to wash hands after handling shellfish and to avoid cross-contamination between raw and cooked shellfish. Additional testing of the mussels and the waters they are grown in is now underway.

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New Zealand Seafood Industry  
Conference and Technical Day

**Conference 2019**

Registrations for the 2019 New Zealand Seafood Industry Conference and Technical Day are open and the [programme](#) is now available.

Seafood New Zealand has negotiated accommodation rates at the conference venue and neighbouring hotels. Bookings can be made through the [information](#) section on the conference webpage along with [links](#) to Air New Zealand for group flight bookings.

Please note, there are now a limited number of tickets remaining for the [ANZ cocktail function](#), so be quick to secure your place.

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## Seafood Stars Awards

The 2019 Seafood Stars Awards are open for nominations. The awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our industry people and their achievements. This year's award categories include:

- Future Development and Innovation Award
- Young Achiever Award
- Longstanding Service Award

For more information on each category [visit our website](#), or [download the form](#) to nominate someone today.

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