



THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog



The unexpected consequences of doing the right thing

While captures of seabirds have decreased with improved offal and waste control practises aboard the deepwater fleet they appear to have increased seabird captures in trawl nets.

The seafood industry is a significant supporter and participant in Southern Seabirds Solutions, a New Zealand trust charged with protecting the seabirds in New Zealand waters and beyond. New Zealand is considered the seabird capital of the world – 95 seabirds species breed here and a third of those species are native to New Zealand.

That is partly because New Zealand spreads from the sub-tropical Kermadecs in the North to the sub-Antarctic islands in the South and its extensive coastline makes it a safe place to forage and breed. However, that makes New Zealand one of the most challenging places in the world to avoid birds while catching fish.

Mitigating seabird captures is now embedded in both the inshore and deepwater fleet culture, with fleet and vessel-specific seabird mitigation plans, tori lines to scare the birds away from the nets and lines, weighted hooks that sink the bait faster, and setting at night.

New methods are being trialled. Hook shielding devices such as Hookpod enclose the hook and a pressure switch opens the capsule once it reaches a certain depth. An underwater bait setter trial is now underway. This pneumatically propels baited hooks underwater in a capsule and releases them below the diving depth of seabirds.

Understanding seabirds' behaviour is key to effective mitigation and increased control of fish waste over the past decade has seen a huge reduction in birds being killed by colliding with trawl warps.

In 2005, only 30 percent of the fleet had onboard fishmeal facilities and the others discarded waste overboard. In 2019, some 65 percent of vessels have fishmeal facilities and 30 percent carry a mincer for waste which is then discarded in a controlled and infrequent manner.

However, doing the right thing around fish waste has had consequences.

Previously, most seabirds would sit on the water beyond the net and wait for offal and waste to float back to them. Now deprived of this food they are taking greater risks, by standing on the net and diving through the mesh to find food. This has seen a corresponding rise in birds being caught in the trawl net itself.

This year, Southern Seabirds launched a call for ideas to find a solution to net captures and the first stage report is out. While the ideas presented are yet to be assessed and graded for overall practicality, they covered areas such as reducing cues to follow vessels, deterrents to keep birds away from the net and reducing harm if they did get near the net.

Reducing cues such as winch noise and masking meal plant smells, and deterrents such as lasers, net water sprayers and long-range acoustic devices were suggested. Ideas for keeping seabirds away from the net included a new net design that reduced 'stickers' the small fish entangled in the mesh, or an on-deck mechanised suction system to remove stickers from the mesh.

Stage two will see the ideas assessed and any with potential moved to testing phase.

Ultimately, the industry would like solutions embedded into vessel design and some progress is being made. The Moana vessel Santy Maria has a below-water waste discharge system and Australia's Austral Fishing has underwater line setters on its long liners.

However, despite great strides in intent and innovation, too many seabirds are still being caught but, those who would suggest the fishing industry is not committed to continuing to reduce these, are not paying attention.

From gorse to gourmet - seaweed project gets underway

Known as "gorse of the sea", the invasive seaweed *Undaria* chokes out native species and clogs mussel farms.

But a small-town Coromandel business, Wakame Fresh, is putting New Zealand's seaweed to use – transforming it into a premium edible export product.

Business owners, Lucas Evans and Lance Townsend, are the first to receive \$75,000 from the Government's Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund (SFF Futures) to investigate the commercial viability of harvesting, processing and exporting edible seaweed to Japan – where quality wakame is in short supply.

The company has been harvesting *Undaria* for domestic consumption since 2012 and began exporting their products to Australia last year.

Evans said the project is about turning 'gorse into gourmet' and advancing opportunities for the aquaculture industry.

"This is a project that's also important for New Zealand more broadly, as we explore the feasibility of a new aquaculture sector," Evans said.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor was invited to observe wakame processing first hand last week, seeing seaweed cut from the lines around mussel farms and then blanched and cooled on the mussel barge.

Connor said the project is a prime example of the innovation SFF Futures was created for.

"This project is really exciting. It's pioneering, it's innovative and it has the potential to create new market opportunities," Connor said. "We could be looking at the start of a lucrative edible seaweed export market into Japan and other Asian countries."

Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash said a number of investors and researchers are already interested in the project's trial and results.

"If successful, it will encourage New Zealand's aquaculture sector to collaborate and invest further in this area," he said.

The funding will be used to conduct a feasibility study, including planning and finalising an approach to trial export of wakame samples for market research. Wakame Fresh will also be sharing the information gained from the trial with the wider New Zealand seaweed industry.



Wakame Fresh director Lucas Evans.

New chief executive for Sealord

Sealord have announced that general manager of fishing Doug Paulin will be the company's next chief executive.

Paulin will replace outgoing CEO Steve Yung, who will be stepping down from the Nelson-based company at the end of 2020 financial year.

Sealord said the appointment of its new CEO was "an extremely important decision and the Board is determined to continue the strong operational and financial results delivered by Sealord in recent years".

"It is also important the company continues business as usual, meeting commitments to customers, shareholders and employees," the company said. Paulin was appointed as Sealord's first internal candidate, which the board said reflected their focus on executive leadership development.

Sealord Board chairman Whaimutu Dewes extended his thanks to Yung for his efforts in leading Sealord over the past five years. The arrival of the \$70 million factory trawler Tokatu, as well as the Nga Tapuwae o Māui deepwater deal between Sealord and 37 iwi groups in March, have been notable events that have occurred during that time.

"Steve has done a superb job evolving Sealord into the organisation it is today with a strong performance culture, clear strategic focus in deep sea fishing and aquaculture, and consistent financial results. Steve remains focused on the continued success of Sealord and will work closely with Doug to ensure a successful transition whilst continuing business as usual," Dewes said.



Doug Paulin has been appointed as the new chief executive of Sealord, effective October 2020.

News

The Taranaki Regional Council has called for more iwi consultation before the Maui and Hector's dolphin threat management plan is adopted, *Stuff* reported. Its TMP submission was endorsed at a council policy and planning committee meeting on Tuesday. The council called for urgent research in order to understand the complex threats posed by toxoplasmosis and highlighted that iwi-held fishing quotas may be impacted by the plan, therefore any restriction on fishing must be weighed against socio-economic effects on the local fishing industry. An increase in commercial fishing restrictions could also restrict cultural fishing for tangi. To date there has been little consultation with iwi on this subject, the council said. Councillors agreed to add a recommendation to the submission requesting more consultation with iwi before the plan was passed. The council was "generally" supportive of extending the marine sanctuary, which would cover the whole of the Taranaki coastline, however "would be concerned if unreasonably prohibitive options were adopted for some of the lesser human-induced impacts".

A low number of parasites and a good breeding season are positive signs for Foveaux Strait oysters, *NZ Herald* reported. Bluff Oyster Management Company operations manager Graeme Wright said the observation of good numbers of baby oysters was promising for future seasons, particularly as oyster density was "relatively low". "We're seeing positive recruitment [breeding]. Historically, that doesn't happen every year... they're a complicated little beast," Wright said. A surge of the parasite *Bonamia ostreae* in 2002-2003 led to a 90 percent mortality rate, he said. An MPI spokesman said *Bonamia* had not been detected in the wild oyster population to date. The company total catch quota was adjusted mid-season, initially being set at a conservative 7.5 million oysters, and later increased to 10 million. The total industry quota was 15 million.

Chris Karamea Insley has been appointed as the new chief executive of Te Arawa Fisheries, *NZ Herald* reported. Insley said he is looking forward to joining the company and working with the board to help map a way forward through the ever-increasing challenges and complexities in the sector. "I have a passion for Maori development including growing assets and people in a truly sustainable manner. I look forward to weaving science, technology and innovation into every aspect of the organisation in order to deliver on goals of nurturing excellence and optimizing operational effectiveness."

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