

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Energy



OIA76

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Dear Wendy

Thank you for your email of 4 April 2024 requesting information relating to the Oceans Secretariat, marine protection and finfish farming. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

On 4 April 2024 you were contacted by my office advising that questions four to eight of your request have been transferred to the office of Hon Tama Potaka in his capacity as the Minister of Conservation. Please see the remaining questions answered in turn below.

You requested the following:

Oceans Secretariat

Question 1: Can you clarify if the Oceans Secretariat is still operating? We understand it was established in June 2021.

A public update on the disestablishment of the Oceans Secretariat was provided by me on the 17 April 2024. Please see the link below for more information:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/unnecessary-bureaucracy-cut-oceans-sector>

Question 2: If yes, can you provide their operating report (no doubt an annual report of some kind) and any information on its agenda and work programme?

As mentioned above, the Oceans Secretariat is no longer operating. Therefore, this part of your request is refused pursuant to section 18(e) – *that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.*

Question 3: Does a Oceans Secretariat website exist? If yes, please provide. If not, can you advise how we might contact the Secretariat to learn more about their work?

There is no website for the Oceans Secretariat. If you would like to know more about the past work of the Oceans Secretariat, please contact the Department of Conservation.

Salmon farming

Background: We have completed a submission to MPI on 'the Proposal' to extend farm consents by 25 years. See submission here. The addition of another 25 years to existing marine farm consents is concerning given many farms already have outdated environmental controls. However our major concern is the finfish farms. Are you aware that there are only 7 finfish farms that expire in the next 12 months and all of these can be extended without public consultation under current law? Councils are the only party that can change these conditions – and they are likely to simply want to standardise the environmental conditions based on the latest scientific evidence (which in our view makes sense). Please note the other five finfish farms have very long expiry dates – the earliest being 2036 (see Table 1 from our submission below).

Question 9: Can you confirm that you are aware that this is the legal situation for these 7 finfish farms that are about to expire?

I am aware that salmon farm consents are in the minority among marine farms that need to be reconsented in the next 12 months.

In terms of notification requirements, I am aware that applications for reconsents under the National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture (NES-MA) are precluded from public notification but may be given limited notification if the process for seeking views of tangata whenua is not followed by applicants. Applications for re-consenting outside the NES-MA follow the relevant regional plan policies and rules regarding notification.

Question 10: Given the legal situation, is there any consideration being given to excluding finfish farms from the MPI Proposal?

No, I am not considering excluding finfish farms from the proposed extension of duration.

Question 11: Given that there is no public consultation obstacle to these finfish farms being extended, can you explain why these finfish farms require the proposed 25-year extension?

The Government has committed to deliver longer durations for marine farms in recognition of the significant potential of the aquaculture sector to New Zealand's economy. This will give industry certainty and confidence to innovate and grow their businesses.

Question 12: Has any work been done in terms of setting national or local coastal occupancy charges (i.e., requiring finfish farmers, such as NZKS, to pay Councils for the use of water space, to help recover costs)?

As Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, I have not requested any work be done on coastal occupancy charges at a national level. Regional coastal occupation charges are something that councils may decide whether to set under section 64A of the Resource Management Act 1991. Most councils do not have occupation charges in place. I am aware that Marlborough District Council has proposed a coastal occupation charge through the proposed Marlborough Environment Plan, which would apply to all marine farms, including finfish farms.

You are advised of your right to raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman.
You can contact the Ombudsman at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely



Minister for Oceans and Fisheries