



Submission

MPI: Proposed Amendments to the Fisheries Act 1996
11 April 2025 (Final)

About the Institute

The Institute was founded in 2004 as a non-partisan think tank working towards a sustainable future for Aotearoa New Zealand. Project 2058 is the Institute's flagship project focusing on Aotearoa New Zealand's long-term future. Because of our observation that foresight drives strategy, strategy requires reporting, and reporting shapes foresight, the Institute developed three interlinking policy projects: *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ*. Each of these tools must align if we want Aotearoa New Zealand to develop durable, robust and forward-looking public policies. The policy projects frame and feed into our research projects, which address a range of significant issues facing Aotearoa New Zealand. The 11 research projects are: *CivicsNZ*, *ClimateChangeNZ*, *EcologicalCorridorsNZ*, *GlobalConflictNZ*, *OneOceanNZ*, *PandemicNZ*, *PublicScienceNZ*, *ScenariosNZ*, *TacklingPovertyNZ*, *TalentNZ* and *WaterFuturesNZ*.

About the cover

An image of recreational fishing in New Zealand. The photo was taken by Lauren Hynd (an Institute staff member) on 28 December 2024 at Arapaoa Island, Marlborough Sounds.

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1.0 Introduction

The McGuinness Institute (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to offer feedback on the *Proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act 1996* (the Act). This submission responds to the *Proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act: Consultation Document* (the Consultation Document).

We would like to thank the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) for inviting public feedback on this important issue. We wish to speak in support of this submission and would welcome any opportunity to engage with MPI to assist with consultation in this important area.

1.1 About *OneOceanNZ*

The Institute has a significant interest in ocean management in Aotearoa New Zealand and we have been undertaking research on long-term ocean management as part of our project *OneOceanNZ*. You can view a list of the Institute's prior publications on this topic in Appendix 1. *OneOceanNZ* is an ongoing research project that aims to contribute to a wider discussion on how we might best manage our oceans, and exercise stewardship in order to maintain a healthy and productive ocean. We continue to look at public policy solutions around ocean governance, as it is an important long-term issue for New Zealand.

1.2 Executive summary

MPI states that the Consultation Document 'seeks feedback on a package of proposals to make the fisheries system more responsive, certain, and efficient, to enhance value to fishers and better ensure sustainability'.¹ The Institute agrees it is time to improve the sustainability and efficiency of New Zealand's ocean management; however, there is not sufficient evidence that the proposals in this Consultation Document will help achieve benefits for New Zealand.

The proposals in this Consultation Document will have significant, possibly irreversible, implications for our oceans and the species that live within them. As such, there is a concerning lack of analysis, scientific evidence, research or examples of international best practice are concerning. When introducing the suggested changes, the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, Hon Shane Jones, said the proposals going out for consultation were the most significant reforms since the quota management system was introduced in 1986.² In this context, it is extremely disappointing that these proposed changes do not provide any policy to protect the ocean in the long term, or any reform regarding how best to mitigate the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss in our oceans.

There is a real lack of information on species health and ocean management in New Zealand, as well as a serious lack of information on marine science in general. Most stocks are not assessed, which means there is not enough key information to make informed decisions. This needs to be fixed so we can ensure the fishing industry, and our ocean species, can survive for the long term.

It is inadequate that this Consultation Document does not include any proposals to improve transparency and monitoring of the fisheries industry, which would help maintain its social licence and reputation. Instead, some proposals, such as weakening rules around on-board cameras and giving increased discretion to the Minister, go backwards. The proposals have the potential to undermine public trust in the industry and allow for further environmental degradation. The ocean is a public resource and as such, the companies who privately profit from it owe a duty of care to the community.

This Consultation Document misses the opportunity to help develop New Zealand into a world leader in sustainable fisheries management. We need to design our ocean management policy for the long term, one that takes into consideration local communities and the environment as well as the fishing industry. If we do this right, future generations can enjoy the sea as we have been able to.

2.0 High-level context

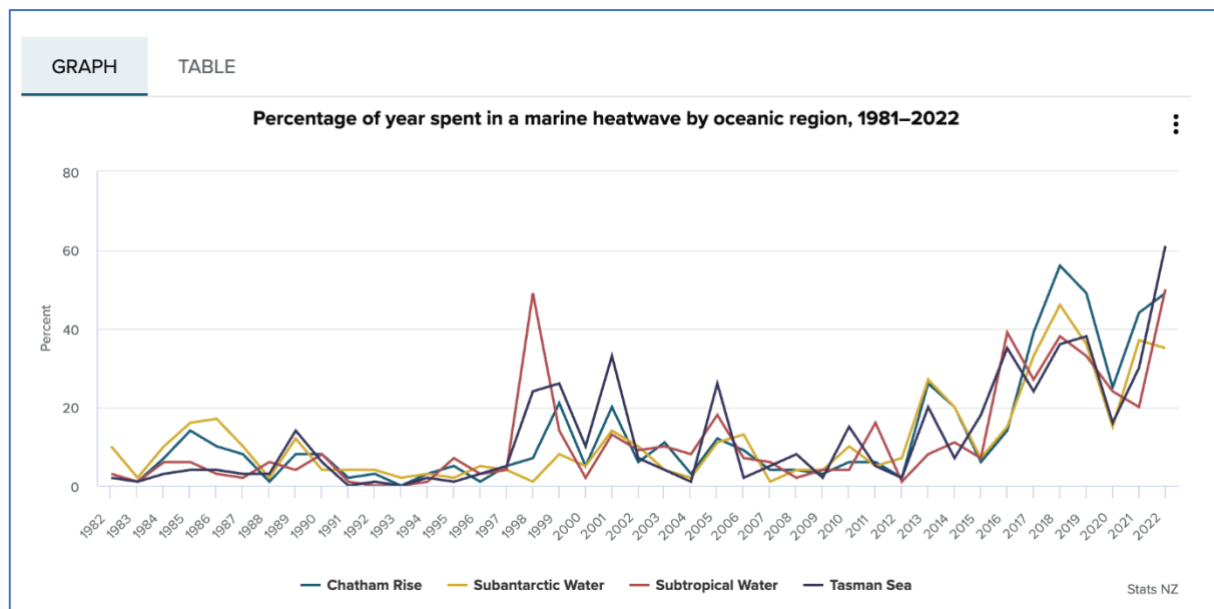
In a world with a changing climate, political uncertainty and global trade wars, this Consultation Document brings into question whether the government is adequately considering future challenges. The issues faced by our marine environment are complex and interconnected, and decisions must often be made with a lack of information. We need to improve our environmental monitoring and reporting in the marine space so that we can make better decisions.

The proposals in this Consultation Document should take into consideration the wider context of what is happening in New Zealand's ocean management:

- Our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is the area of sea and seabed that extends from 12 to 200 nautical miles offshore. New Zealand has the fifth largest EEZ (approximately 430 million hectares) in the world, about 15 times the size of our land mass.³ This is likely to mean New Zealanders have the largest marine area per capita of any developed country on the planet.⁴
- Less than 1% of New Zealand's ocean territory is in Marine Protected Areas, despite the Government committing to meet the global target of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030.⁵
- According to Statistics New Zealand, many marine bird and identified taonga species are threatened with extinction or at risk of becoming threatened, including:
 - over 90% of indigenous seabirds,
 - over 80% of shorebirds, and
 - over 22% of indigenous marine mammals.⁶
- Oceanic sea-surface temperatures are increasing. Between 1982 and 2023, each coastal region had its warmest years for sea-surface temperature recorded in either 2022 or 2023.
- Marine heatwaves are on the increase (see Figure 1 below). In 2022:
 - the Tasman Sea spent 61.1% of the year in marine heatwaves, the longest duration out of the four oceanic regions
 - the Western North Island spent 88.5% of the year in marine heatwaves, the longest duration out of the nine coastal regions.

Figure 1: Percentage of year spent in a marine heatwave by oceanic region, 1981–2022

Source: StatsNZ (2024).⁷



Another example is that New Zealand King Salmon (NZKS) has acknowledged the impact of climate change on salmon mortality at its farms in the Marlborough Sounds and has recently accepted government funds to help locate new farms just outside the Marlborough Sounds entrance.⁸ If

climate change is impacting salmon farming so significantly, it will equally be impacting ocean fisheries. Colloquially, NZKS is the canary in the mine.

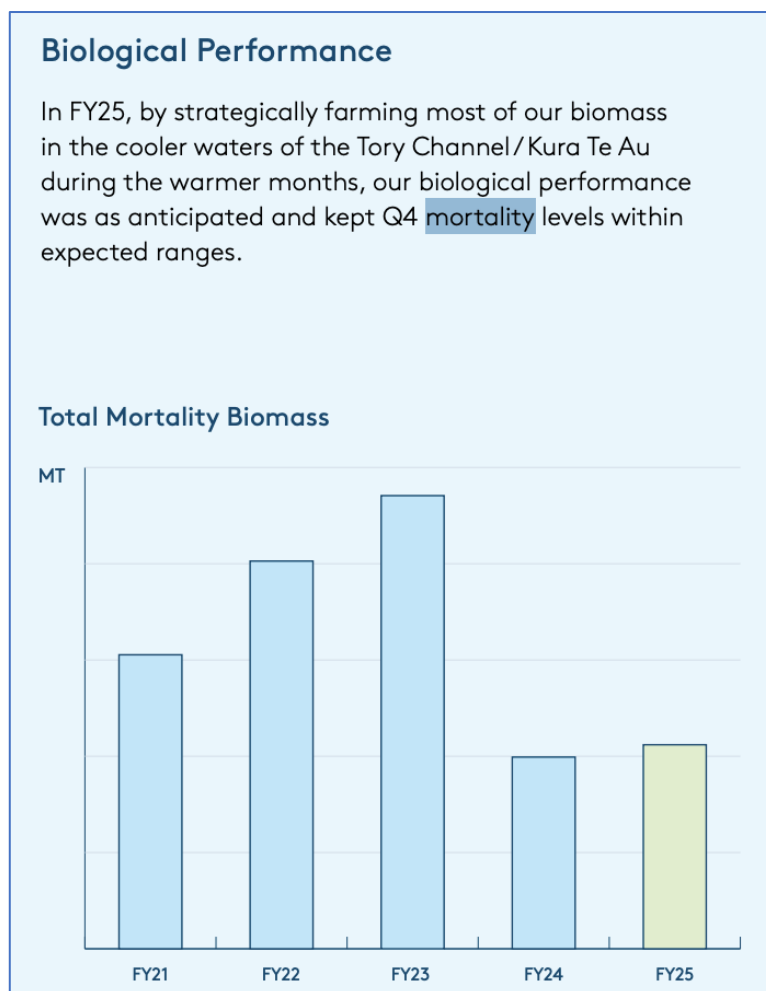
NZKS’s annual report states that fish mortality is a ‘material risk’:

Fish mortality has a significant impact on the profitability and financial stability of NZKS as only the fish that survive to the point of harvest are able to be sold. Every year, a number of fish will die prior to harvest due to a range of factors.

The cause of fish mortality is multi-factorial with the dominant correlation currently being with prolonged elevated water temperature which increases stress and reduces the salmon’s resistance to bacterial and other pathogens. Other factors include opportunistic microorganism/ diseases, feed-related issues, failed smoltification, predators, and other stressors, individually or in combination. Whilst the interconnectivity of these factors is difficult to predict with any certainty, rising water temperatures are increasingly becoming a major concern given the impact of climate change.⁹

Figure 2: NZKS fish mortality rates

Source: NZKS annual report (2025).¹⁰



The issue of animal welfare has also recently been raised by SAFE, which has asked MPI to inquire into the high level of mortality.¹¹

Our marine species are highly interconnected and cannot be dealt with in isolation. As well as seabirds dying of starvation, reports in February 2024 showed nearly 1000 fur seals died along the Kaikōura

coastline, with scientists pointing to warmer sea temperatures and depleted fish stocks as the cause.¹² These seals are near the top of the food chain and have a varied diet, so it is of significant concern if they cannot sustain themselves from fish in our oceans. Department of Conservation marine science adviser Dr Jody Weir agreed, stating that a ‘recent report showed that New Zealand fur seals eat 46 species of fish, 18 cephalopod species and so the fact they are still starving, that they couldn't find enough food with that very diverse diet, is very troublesome’.¹³

In this wider context of ecosystem collapse and climate change, it is clear our ocean management needs to be reassessed. However, we have serious concerns that these proposals go against long-term sustainability. The Consultation Document does not consider the long-term health of the ocean and the species living within it, or the impacts of climate change. Of particular concern are the proposed new multi-year catch limits and new discard rules, as well as the lowering of on-board camera surveillance, when it is established that this successfully improves reporting.

2.1 International commitments

New Zealand is party to a number of international commitments for the environment and climate change. It is important we stand by these agreements to maintain our international relationships, our industry’s reputation and the ‘clean, green’ image of our seafood exports. Regular monitoring and adaptive management are essential to ensure the fisheries industry is operating within appropriate environmental limits.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 is about ‘Life below water’ and is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2015. The goal is to ‘[c]onserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development’. These UN goals (and their wider intent), along with the Paris Agreement, are increasingly being included in New Zealand’s trade agreements. For example, Article 3 of the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, signed on 9 July 2023, states that a party has an obligation to refrain from any action or omission that materially defeats the object and purpose of the Paris Agreement.

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) ended in Montreal, Canada, on 19 December 2022 with a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to 2030. The agreement includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30% of the planet and 30% of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030.

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) also features 23 targets to achieve by 2030, including effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world’s lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services. The GBF prioritises ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation, recognising indigenous and traditional territories and practices. Currently 17% and 10% of the world’s terrestrial and marine areas respectively are under protection.¹⁴ As mentioned above, less than 1% of New Zealand’s ocean territory is in Marine Protected Areas, despite the Government committing to meet the global target of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030.¹⁵

3.0 Specific feedback on parts 1–3 of the Consultation Document

3.1 Part 1: Improving how we manage our fisheries

- 1. New provision for the Minister to set multi-year catch decisions for a stock in advance via a single decision (phased and temporary adjustments of up to five years).**
- 2. Enable the Minister to approve management procedures for suitable QMS stocks that set out how and when catch limits will be adjusted over a given period (up to 5 years).**

Proposals one and two are likely to lead to a lack of reliable and evidence-based information in the public arena, giving the Minister decision-making power whilst allowing serious risks to the adaptive management of fisheries in New Zealand. As explained in 2.0 High-level context above, it is time for a precautionary approach as the climate is significantly impacting species health. New Zealand's unique marine ecosystems are suffering from rising temperatures and ocean acidification, as well as changes to species migration patterns.

Public engagement is an important aspect of democracy and a critical part of the fishing industry's licence to operate in the public space. It is relevant for every industry; however, it is particularly heightened in the fishing industry due to the interconnected nature of the ocean's ecosystems, meaning impacts cannot be controlled within a certain area.

Having regular, ideally annual, assessments and revising the catch level appropriately is essential to respond to changes quickly and efficiently. This need for real-time stock measurement and for fast adaptive management is heightened in the current circumstances of a changing climate and ecosystem collapse.

Regular monitoring is essential to ensure those in the fisheries industry are operating within their consented environmental limits. Only reassessing these limits every five years means we may miss critical changes to stock levels, and only find out stocks are depleted beyond repair when it is too late. Even without allowing for the exacerbating impacts of climate change, this seems inappropriate, but when you consider climate change, such an approach goes against best practice and New Zealand's international commitments (refer to 2.1 International commitments above).

- 3. Better management of fish stocks where we have low information (without a reliable abundance estimate) via a new catch limit setting provision.**

It is recommended that independent research is undertaken to establish stock levels, which will allow for better information on which to base decisions. A cautionary approach for setting catch numbers is recommended in a low information context.

- 4. Enabling the Minister to account for social, cultural, and economic factors when deciding on the appropriate rebuild period for a stock.**

This proposal is of high concern, as there is a risk that economic factors will outweigh other considerations (including scientific and environmental ones). This is especially likely as short-term economic factors can easily be quantified, and long-term factors are difficult to quantify and thus very hard to compare.

It also provides the Minister with a high level of discretion to make decisions, without independent checks and balances. This is a risk to the democratic process as it removes public (and scientific expert) consultation from the decision-making process. Instead, it allows the Minister to make decisions without the checks and balances that exist in transparent and accountable systems of governance.

5. Enabling the Minister to recognise non-regulatory (voluntary) sustainability measures in decision-making (such as ACE shelving, catch spreading, area or seasonal closures).

This proposal is also of concern, as it is reliant on industry being socially responsible, and voluntary sustainability measures are also unenforceable. By their nature, private businesses are legally obligated to benefit shareholders and improve profits, rather than working for the long-term public good, for the environment, or for the local community. In this way, private businesses have a self-interest short-term approach, which means legal measures are essential, as voluntary measures will never hold the same weight as legal ones.

6. Changes to annual catch entitlement (ACE) carry-forward arrangements from 10% to 15% and one-off carry-forward in exceptional circumstances, along with specific changes for rock-lobster.

It is unclear how a blanket 5% increase in ACE from 10% to 15% would have any benefit for New Zealand. Instead, it will allow for increases in catch in certain years where species may already be stressed. Evidence is required to show why this change is needed and how it will be beneficial for ocean management.

It is important to consider the changes to rock lobster in the wider context, as rock lobster is New Zealand's single most valuable seafood export, worth more than \$300 million annually.¹⁶ In terms of rock-lobster proposals, the Institute supports the Environmental Defence Society (EDS) submission, which states that the 'proposal to enable ACE carry forward for rock lobster stocks is particularly concerning. There is strong evidence that rock lobster populations in northeastern New Zealand (i.e. CRA 1 and CRA 2) are severely depleted ... It is inappropriate to enable ACE to be carried forward in this context as it could provide for additional harvest in areas where rock lobster populations have already collapsed.'¹⁷

In 2024, there were concerns about industry favouritism at the expense of local communities as Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Hon Shane Jones' East Cape rock-lobster catch changes halved the daily crayfish limit for recreational fishers from six to three, and lowered the annual allowable catch for the industry by 20% (from 195 tonnes to 156 tonnes). For context, this change meant locals – who only take the equivalent of 8% of the total harvest – were forced to take a decrease of 50%, with the industry only taking one of 20%.¹⁸

The impacts of any changes on rock-lobster catch levels should take into consideration local communities, families and fishers (who should be able to enjoy kai moana) – as well as the impacts on large commercial fisheries. This is a heightened concern as private companies currently benefit from New Zealand's oceans, and earn money from selling seafood internationally at the expense of local communities. This creates issues of industry favouritism and concerns for local food security (see a more detailed analysis of this concern under Section 4.1 Unclear how New Zealand benefits below).

3.2 Part 2: On-board cameras – greater protection for footage; and ensuring workability

Proposal: greater protection for footage

Option 1 – Greater recognition for current approach to requests for footage using the OIA.

Option 2 – Exemption of footage from the OIA.

Camera footage should be able to be accessed under the OIA. The ocean is a public space, fishing boats are using a public resource, fishing companies are selling seafood for profit, and it is in the public interest to know see how this industry operates. There is no evidence to support Option 2.

2. Proposals: ensuring workability

We are consulting on two additional proposals to help ensure the on-board camera programme is workable and cost effective.

Amend regulations relating to the scope of coverage and operation of cameras by removing requirements for some vessels – bottom longline 32m or larger (currently 3 vessels); all vessels less than 8m (currently 3 vessels); and set net vessels using the mothership and tender model (currently 7 vessels).

Options to clarify camera use requirements:

Option 1 – require on-board cameras to operate port-to-port; and

Option 2 – require on-board cameras to operate when fishing and during transit to and from fishing locations.

It is important that transparency and accountability are maintained so our fishing industry can keep its social licence, and so the New Zealand industry can sell products with a reputation for quality and sustainability. The use of cameras on vessels improves public confidence in New Zealand's fishing industry. The proposed modifications raise significant concerns for transparency, monitoring and enforcement in the industry, especially the proposed limitations on public access to footage under the OIA (and the potential for exemptions).

Cameras are a low cost, timely and evidence-based solution.

The data is clear that on-board cameras work. It is clear from data in New Zealand that on-board monitoring significantly increases compliance and accuracy in reporting bycatch, discards, and other illegal practices. For instance, the first tranche of data from the cameras on boats programme (released April 2024) showed under-reporting of discards and protected species bycatch by commercial fishers. The cameras also showed a significant increase in reporting compared to previously, including:

- 6.8 times increase in dolphins captured
- 3.5 times increase in albatross interactions
- 34% increase in number of fish species reported in catch
- 2.1 times increase in number of fish species reported in discards, and
- 46% increase in volume of fish discards.¹⁹

On-board cameras are an effective way to measure and report bycatch from commercial fisheries, which can be a significant issue. There is a lack of data in the commercial fishing and marine space, and cameras on boats lead to better data, which helps better monitor the health of fisheries. Bycatch from commercial fishing particularly impacts New Zealand's most protected species because these species generally have long life spans, mature at a late age, and have low fertility.²⁰

The exclusions are inappropriate as there is no supporting evidence to suggest the on-board camera requirements would be unworkable on the mentioned types of vessels. As commercial fishers are operating in a public space and using a public resource for private profit, it makes sense that the film footage on these boats is available via the Official Information Act. In this way the use of on-board cameras is different to using cameras on private farms – an analogy that the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, Hon Shane Jones, suggested.²¹

The desire to remove cameras and not allow the public to view footage raises concerns about transparency. Dr Kayla Kingdon-Bebb, WWF-New Zealand chief executive, expressed this well: 'Greater transparency and accuracy in the reporting of protected species bycatch and non-target discards is incredibly important to ensure the sustainability of our marine resources now and into the future.'²² Rather than working to reduce surveillance, we should be promoting the industry as one that is transparent and in line with international best practice.

3.3 Part 3: New landing and discard rules

1. **The Government has decided to allow the return of QMS species where vessels are monitored by an observer or on-board camera system. Monitoring provides greater certainty of fisher-reported data. The purpose of this proposal is to make the best use of verified information and lower operational costs for industry by giving them more options about what to do with catch they may not want.**
2. **Proposed implementation:**
 - (i) **Introduce a new exception provision to the Fisheries Act (existing provisions will also remain) allowing the Minister to permit the return of QMS species if monitored.**
 - (ii) **Introduce a monitored return exception for all QMS species under the new proposed provision.**
 - (iii) **Require all monitored returns to be balanced with ACE or incur deemed values.**
 - (iv) **Remove some existing landing exceptions to minimise verification and reporting complexities and adjust catch settings.**

This proposal will not benefit fisheries management or ocean health, as it offers no incentive for fishers to minimise bycatch. Instead, it will potentially distort stock assessment and research, reducing transparency in the industry and discouraging sustainable practices. It is unclear what the benefits are of allowing commercial fishers to toss more fish overboard. Allowing certain quota species to be discarded carries a risk of encouraging an increase in dumping and in high-grading (i.e. the unsustainable practice of selectively discarding less valuable fish in favour of more valuable species).

4.0 General concerns

Over the past few years, the world (including New Zealand) has seen significant social, economic and political uncertainty. We need to improve our fisheries monitoring so we have better scientific data, and we need to observe international best practice by seeing what our trading partners are doing in this space. We need to analyse what the impacts of any policy changes would be in the long as well as the short term, and we need to consider how changes will impact the whole environment and community, not just the commercial industry.

4.1 Fishers do not pay the real cost of the product they deliver to consumers overseas

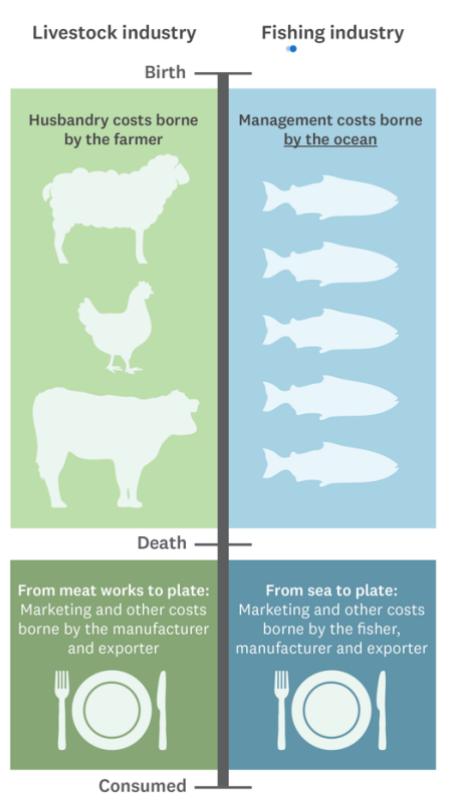
Our ocean space is a shared public asset.

In comparison with farmers of livestock, who grow their livestock using a private asset (i.e. they buy/lease land, pay mortgage costs, and manage the cycle of their product from conception to the meat works under strict controls), fishers take their fish from a public asset (i.e. the ocean). Figure 3 is intended to illustrate the concept that the ocean is not like our land; the ocean is a public asset while most land, including farms, is a private asset. In legal terms, land is generally considered a private asset, while the sea is more akin to a public good or a global commons. Land can be privately owned, sold, and used by individuals, while the sea, particularly the high seas, is generally open to everyone and is not subject to private ownership.

The fish are public property until they are caught. The costs to fishers start once they catch the fish, not while the fish are growing. For farmers, the costs start far earlier in the animal life-cycle. Fishers are only required to manage the product against guidelines and rules from when it is caught for harvesting fish. This means they pay no costs for ocean management.

Figure 3: Who bears the cost of growing livestock versus fish

Source: McGuinness Institute



There is an argument that fishers should be charged an ocean tax to help government fund a strategy to protect and maintain the ocean for current and future generations. This could take the form of a hypothecation tax (also called ring-fencing or earmarking), where the revenue from a specific tax is dedicated for a particular expenditure purpose. Penalties charged on vessels/companies found poaching in New Zealand waters could also be ring-fenced for ocean management. This is not a new idea and there have been calls for a World Tax Authority to help bring some common frameworks into existence.²³

Currently, the fisheries industry can use this public asset for its own private gain and without any payment to the public. Furthermore, a significant portion of seafood that is caught here is sold internationally.

As seen in Table 1 and Figure 4 below, seafood is forecast to be New Zealand’s fifth biggest export in the food and fibre sector, in the years 2020–26, with the majority exported to China and the United States.²⁴ It is estimated 80–90% of our seafood is exported. However, recent data to show what percentage of seafood caught here is sold overseas is not published.²⁵ According to a 2021 RNZ article, the industry body Seafood NZ said there has been no need to collect the information.²⁶ It is recommended the seafood industry’s export data is measured, which will allow for better analysis of how the sector benefits New Zealand.

Table 1: Food and fibre sector export revenue 2020–26

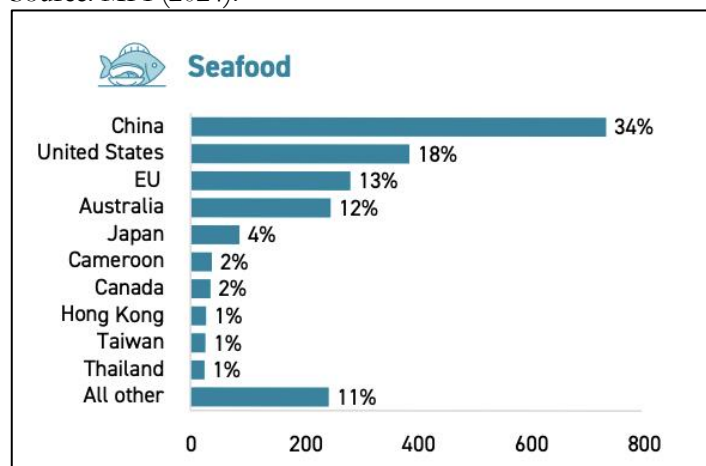
Year to 30 June, NZ\$ million

Source: Ministry for Primary Industries (2024).²⁷

Sector	Actual					Forecast	
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Dairy	20,102	19,055	21,998	26,008	23,231	25,500	25,560
Meat and wool	10,617	10,373	12,310	12,114	11,336	11,390	11,870
Forestry	5,452	6,499	6,578	6,353	5,748	5,980	6,100
Horticulture	6,541	6,579	6,825	7,088	7,116	8,000	8,470
Seafood	1,857	1,789	1,919	2,097	2,141	2,210	2,370
Arable	289	261	252	272	345	360	370
Processed food and other products*	2,988	3,087	3,228	3,493	3,416	3,460	3,570
Total export revenue	47,846	47,642	53,110	57,425	53,333	56,890	58,310
Year-on-year % change	3%	0%	11%	8%	-7%	7%	2%

Figure 4: Destinations of New Zealand’s seafood exports

Source: MPI (2024).²⁸



4.2 Lack of research and information

New Zealand needs more investment in fisheries monitoring and research. Few stocks are regularly assessed and stock assessments rely on industry data instead of independent bodies. Fisheries levels should be analysed annually so that a precautionary management approach can be applied. This Consultation Document does not include research demonstrating how any of the proposals will help ensure sustainability in the future.

4.3 A social licence has brand value

The fishing industry in New Zealand requires a social licence to operate, especially as it is using a public resource for free. A social licence to operate in a public space is important not just for local support, but also as brand collateral for New Zealand's seafood products. Our seafood industry can position itself as a premium product if it complies with best-practice social and sustainability standards. The proposals in this Consultation Document will not improve the fishing industry's reputation and not work towards New Zealand's international commitments. We want to make New Zealand fishing more efficient and sustainable by producing better-quality products with a lower environmental impact.

4.4 Lack of consideration for Māori rights and kaitiakitanga

The Institute acknowledges Māori have a critical role as tangata whenua in Aotearoa and that we do not purport to represent or account for those perspectives in this work. The perspectives of Māori communities must be considered in oceans management, particularly regarding how to preserve traditional practices, including gathering kai moana.

The Consultation Document includes proposals that will reduce transparency and remove public consultation in fisheries management, which limits the ability for the public, including Māori, to have a say in how the ocean is managed. It is noted further consultation is required to understand Māori cultural connections to the ocean and fisheries management practices, and how this proposal will impact them. It is recommended any new ocean policies and strategies are formulated in close collaboration and coordination with Māori stakeholders.

4.5 Lack of consideration for climate change and the biodiversity crisis

New Zealand's environment is under significant pressure and there is an urgent need to adapt to climate change, reduce carbon emissions and prevent further biodiversity loss. Any new fisheries policy needs to ensure sustainability by protecting the needs and supporting the wellbeing of present and future generations.

The changing climate has evidenced that certainty in the long term is implausible. The uncertainty around the fishing industry is deeply intertwined with the uncertainty of a changing environment, where waters are warming and causing unprecedented fish mortalities, and changes to species migration patterns and habitats.

Making decisions in the name of economic prosperity today, with a substantial risk of creating an economic burden later on, is irresponsible to future generations. Further, it undermines New Zealand's investment and commitment to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. The proposals in this Consultation Document will have a negative economic and social impact on current and future generations.

4.6 Inconsistent with international standards

New Zealand's pro-industry stance in fisheries policy is inconsistent with the regulations of our traditional allies, having a negative impact on important international relationships. In 2024, New Zealand caused friction with international allies when it successfully blocked consensus on a measure to restrict bottom trawling in the South Pacific at the annual meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation.²⁹ We need to work together with our allies and partners to promote an effective international plan for climate change and biodiversity loss. (See also New Zealand's international obligations above in 2.1 International Commitments.)

4.7 Export favouritism and food security concerns

There are a number of concerns that seafood companies have been receiving special treatment at the expense of local communities. For instance, as discussed in our response to proposal 6 in part one (3.1) above, in 2024, Minister for Oceans and Fisheries Hon Shane Jones announced East Cape crayfish limits were to be halved for locals but would only be reduced by a fifth for the seafood industry, prompting local iwi and hapū to express concern over special industry treatment, export market favouritism and food security concerns.³⁰ Looking at April 2025 news – with extreme tariff wars happening all over the world – protecting local access to protein is essential.

4.8 Lack of community engagement and support

The oceans belong to all New Zealanders, not just the fishing industry. Public consultation on ocean management should be enhanced rather than diminished, which the proposals in the Consultation Document do by decreasing public engagement. Community engagement helps to develop trust and communication between communities and institutions of government, helping lead to more sustainable, equitable public decisions.

This proposal reduces the frequency and impact of public consultation. It also concentrates decision-making power – with most held by the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries, Hon Shane Jones. This is a serious risk for the seafood industry's reputation and also breaches the principles of democracy.

4.9 No analysis of risks, costs and benefits

It is essential to have a comprehensive and independent assessment of the risks, costs and benefits of the proposals in this Consultation Document. It is a major concern that the proposals in this Consultation Document do not have evidence to support why or how they benefit New Zealand, particularly when they are controlling use of a shared public resource (the ocean).

4.10 Limiting New Zealanders' access to food basket

There is no debate on how important a healthy ocean is to New Zealanders. We are a country that loves swimming, fishing and boating. These proposals continue to limit public access to our resources with a bias towards commercial fishers and exporters. This issue has been exacerbated by an increased cost of living, with families reliant on fishing locally for their protein requirements. LegaSea Hawkes Bay's Wayne Bicknell has made the comment that putting export earnings over the community is 'particularly offensive during a cost-of-living crisis when increasing numbers of Kiwi families are struggling to put food on the table. Increasingly we are seeing families relying on our coastal fisheries to reduce their grocery shopping bill.'³¹

In response to East Cape crayfish limits halving for locals and only reducing by a fifth for the fishing industry, Paul Ratapu, a spokesperson for local iwi authority Rongomaiwahine, said he was concerned about the community's ability to feed their families: 'We've had a tough run down here. Covid then a cyclone, now the rising cost of food. Kai moana is a primary source of nutrition for lots of our whānau. As a community we are still trying to get back on our feet ... This decision makes it clear the minister and MPI are prioritising the export market. It's about time the Government put New Zealanders first.'³²

India offers an example of how to approach such a situation, limiting exports of non-basmati white rice so that financially challenged citizens are able to obtain rice.³³ The concept of ensuring a country's citizens are fed first before exporting product to overseas consumers is a good example of treating a country's citizens as a priority.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposals in this Consultation Document prioritise the fishing industry and its private shareholders at the expense of wider stakeholders, including local communities. There is a significant amount of policy work, consultation, scientific research, economic analysis, and community and environmental analysis required before this Consultation Document achieves any of the promised benefits for New Zealand.

New Zealand is different to other countries: we are proud of our geographic isolation, strong connection with the ocean, uniquely special environment, and Treaty obligations – and we have high quality exports that profit from our clean, premium sustainable brand. The Consultation Document does not consider the complexities of managing fisheries in a way that empowers a country with our unique values and characteristics.

Figure 3 illustrates the need to put in place a strong oceans strategy, one that is able to pay for and regulate the oceans for current and future generations. Such a strategy could be funded by implementing a ocean tax on the fish industry to help manage and optimise our shared public asset.

Importantly, this Consultation Document misses the opportunity to develop a solid, sustainable ocean management policy for New Zealand, instead creating potential risks without the necessary checks and balances.

The Institute recommends:

1. Better reporting on the health of our ocean, such as sea-level rise, sea-surface temperatures, marine heatwaves and acidification
2. Better reporting on the species that populate and use our ocean (e.g. seabirds)
3. Better reporting on those that remove fish and other material from our oceans – the outputs
4. Better reporting on those that add pollutants and other material to our oceans – the inputs.

Our country should aim to be a responsible steward of our oceans; however, the proposals contained in this consultation, if implemented, actively move New Zealand in the wrong direction.

Appendix 1 – List of McGuinness Institute *OneOceanNZ* publications

Note: Table is in order of date published, with the most recent first. More information, and the full publications, can be found on the Institute website under publications.

Table A1.1: List of McGuinness Institute *OneOceanNZ* publications

Source: McGuinness Institute (2025).³⁴

Publication date	Title	Publication category
June 2024	<i>Submission 2024/04 – Resource Management (Extended Duration of Coastal Permits for Marine Farms) Amendment Bill</i>	Submissions
March 2024	<i>Submission 2024/02 – Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)</i>	Submissions
March 2024	<i>Submission 2024/01 – MPI: Notes in response to the Proposal by Government to extend the duration of existing consents for marine farming</i>	Submissions
December 2023	<i>Discussion Paper 2023/04 – Exploring the role of aquaculture in our marine space</i>	Discussion Papers
September 2023	<i>Press Release – NZKS Blue Endeavour consent now includes a climate change review condition</i>	Press Releases
June 2023	<i>Infographic – Exploring the role of aquaculture in our marine space (including Infographics 1–7)</i>	Infographics
March 2023	<i>Discussion Paper 2022/02 – New Zealand King Salmon Case Study: A financial reporting perspective</i>	Discussion Papers
May 2022	<i>Working Paper 2022/10 – New Zealand King Salmon key documents 2012–2022</i>	Working Papers
November 2021	<i>Working Paper 2021/15 – Looking for a taxonomy for Aotearoa New Zealand’s oceans</i>	Working Papers
November 2021	<i>Working Paper 2021/14 – The Role of Ocean Water Temperature in Climate Change Policy – A New Zealand King Salmon Case Study</i>	Working Papers
October 2021	<i>Slideshow – New Zealand King Salmon Application U190438</i>	Slideshows
February 2021	<i>Submission 2021/01 – Marlborough District Council – Variation 1: Marine Farming and Variation 1A: Finfish Farming</i>	Submissions
December 2019	<i>Infographic – Exploring Scope 1, 2 and 3 for New Zealand King Salmon – An external perspective</i>	Infographics
November 2019	<i>Slideshow – Waitata: NZKS Application</i>	Slideshows
November 2019	<i>Submission 2019/06 – Resource Management Amendment Bill</i>	Submissions
July 2019	<i>Submission 2019/04 – Resource Consent Application U190357</i>	Submissions
May 2017	<i>Working Paper 2017/02 – Letter to the Minister on New Zealand King Salmon</i>	Working Papers
May 2017	<i>Submission 2017/03 – Clean Water: 90% of rivers and lakes swimmable by 2040</i>	Submissions
May 2017	<i>Slideshow – Proposed Marlborough Salmon Farm Relocation</i>	Slideshows

April 2017	<i>Submission 2017/02 – Disclosing non-GAAP financial information</i>	Submissions
March 2017	<i>Submission 2017/01 – Potential relocation of salmon farms in the Marlborough Sounds</i>	Submissions
July 2016	<i>Working Paper 2016/02 – New Zealand King Salmon: A financial perspective</i>	Working Papers
April 2016	<i>Submission 2016/03 – Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary Bill</i>	Submissions
April 2016	<i>Submission 2016/02 – Consultation on next steps for freshwater</i>	Submissions
March 2016	<i>Slideshow – One Ocean - SEA Semester in Aotearoa New Zealand</i>	Slideshows
March 2016	<i>Submission 2016/01 – New Marine Protected Areas Act</i>	Submissions
November 2015	<i>Press Release – Think Piece 22: Proposal for the Creation of an Oceans Institution</i>	Press Releases
November 2015	<i>Think Piece 22 – Proposal for the Creation of an Oceans Institution</i>	Think Pieces
May 2015	<i>Press Release – Why a ‘Pacific and Southern Ocean Institute’ might be a good idea for New Zealand</i>	Press Releases
May 2015	<i>Slideshow – Report 10: One Ocean: Principles for the stewardship of a healthy and productive ocean Auckland Launch and discussion</i>	Slideshows
March 2015	<i>Press Release – One ocean report launch</i>	Press Releases
March 2015	<i>Project 2058 Report – Report 10 – One Ocean: Principles for the stewardship of a healthy and productive ocean</i>	Project 2058 Report
March 2015	<i>Slideshow – Launch of Report 10: One Ocean: Principles for the stewardship of a healthy and productive ocean</i>	Slideshows
March 2015	<i>Working Paper 2015/03 – Legal Instruments of New Zealand's Ocean Management</i>	Working Papers
January 2015	<i>Working Paper 2015/01 – Ocean Management in New Zealand: Findings from a structured discussion</i>	Working Papers
May 2014	<i>Slideshow – Ocean Management Discussion</i>	Slideshows
July 1905	<i>Working Paper 2013/01 – Notes on the New Zealand King Salmon Decision</i>	Working Papers
March 2013	<i>Think Piece 16 – New Zealand King Salmon: Was it a good decision for New Zealand?</i>	Think Pieces
March 2011	<i>Working Paper 2011/06 – Evaluating the Fisheries and Aquaculture Dataset</i>	Working Papers

Endnotes

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