

February 2007

Kia ora,

### ***Happy New Year from the Fiordland Marine Guardians***

We thought a newsletter would be a good way of keeping you informed about what's going on in the Fiordland Marine Area. It's also important for us to keep in touch with those that visit Fiordland so we can feed information back to the management agencies involved in the area, which is part of our statutory role. We plan to send out this newsletter, which is from the Guardians and the management agencies working in Fiordland, quarterly.

#### **New Marine Reserves Booklet**

Please find enclosed a copy of Edition 2 of the Fiordland Marine Reserves booklet. This booklet is largely the same as the original that you should already have a copy of, but includes some changes and new information, namely:

- Replacement of the old marine reserve maps with maps showing boundary coordinates in users' preferred format (degrees, minutes and decimal minutes);
- Further information on Fiordland's bottlenose dolphin populations, with a focus on the declining Doubtful Sound population;
- Additional marine biosecurity information;

Information and maps on the terrestrial pest status of Fiordland's islands and quarantine measures needed when visiting the islands.

Please now use this new edition of the booklet instead of Edition 1 printed in 2005. For additional copies, please contact the Department of Conservation, Lakefront Drive, Te Anau, (03) 249 7921. Information and maps are also available online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

#### **New Website**

The Fiordland Marine Guardians have a new website: [www.fmg.org.nz](http://www.fmg.org.nz). This website provides information on who the Guardians are, how to help protect Fiordland from marine pests, the new fishing regulations, the marine reserves, customary use of Fiordland by iwi, recent Fiordland research results, links to local weather and road conditions and much more. You can also request information about the Fiordland Marine Area via the website.


#### **Annual Report**

If you would like a hardcopy of the Guardians' first Annual Report, please contact their secretary Alison O'Sullivan (03) 2115115, or email [info@fmg.org.nz](mailto:info@fmg.org.nz). The report can also be accessed on the Guardians' website.

#### **Two New Guardians Appointed**

Anne McDermott and Mark Peychers have been appointed new Fiordland Marine Guardians.

Anne McDermott has 20 years of diving, fishing and boating experience in Fiordland. Mark Peychers has 28 years' commercial fishing experience and now works as a relief skipper on two Fiordland boats.



## **FMA Users Survey 2006/07**

A survey project of users of the Fiordland Marine Area developed by management agencies and the Fiordland Marine Guardians is almost underway. The survey is being undertaken by Kay Booth and Associates of Christchurch, and will target the wide range of user groups of the FMA. A questionnaire will be administered in the high-use entry points of Milford and Doubtful Sounds and also by post, and key stakeholders of the FMA will also be asked to participate in more in-depth interviews. Results from this survey will provide useful information on people's knowledge, values and perceptions of issues such as the new management regime, the Fiordland Marine Guardians, biosecurity risks, marine reserves, and fishing activity in the FMA. The information will also be useful to compare with subsequent surveys in the future.

Please support this survey if you are asked, as your responses are extremely valuable. Results from this research will be available late in 2007.

## **Blue Cod Research Project**

As part of the Fiordland Marine Conservation Strategy a blue cod fishing closure was put in place in Milford and Doubtful Sounds, initially for a two year period. (The Ministry of Fisheries will soon be consulting on a proposal to extend this closure for a further two years).


Since the closure was implemented in July 2005, the Ministry of Fisheries has been working with the Fiordland Marine Guardians to monitor blue cod stocks in these two Sounds. The purpose of this research project is to investigate what is happening to the blue cod stocks now that recreational fishing pressure has been removed. The research project uses experimental fishing to record blue cod catch and fishing effort during the closure period and to tag blue cod caught to study movement both into and within the fiords. The study is also monitoring blue cod stocks within the marine reserves to monitor the effect that a marine reserve closure has on the abundance of the blue cod stocks in comparison to areas that are open to fishing.

For more information on this research project check out the Fiordland Marine Guardians' website [www.fmq.org.nz](http://www.fmq.org.nz) under "What's New". Results from the fishing trips undertaken in the first year can also be found here. The fishing trips for Year 2 are currently underway and the results will be posted on the website at the end of the summer.

## **Compliance with Fiordland Marine Area Fishing Regulations**

In November, the reality television series *Coastwatch* featured coverage of the Invercargill MFish Compliance staff as they carried out a waterborne patrol of the Doubtful Sound area during Easter 2006. The episode depicted how Fishery Officers firstly dealt with a couple of recreational fishers who, despite an explicit request not to do so, broadcast over their VHF radio to their associates and anyone else listening that "*You'd better watch your fishing, MAFs here*". With the element of surprise now seriously undermined, the Fishery Officers, after a few stern words with the culprits, continued on their patrol.

The reason for the men's concern about their fishing mates soon became apparent as Fishery Officers caught up with the other members of their group near Deas Cove. At first glance the five men onboard the two associated vessels appeared to be complying with fisheries rules. However, the Fishery Officers went ashore to their Deas Cove camp where a different picture was revealed. The sharp eyed Fishery Officers spotted a semi concealed sack in the nearby bush and the 17 (mainly undersize) rock lobster contained therein necessitated a 'please explain' from those involved.



The eventual outcome saw penalties of \$1760 imposed against one offender for possessing excess and undersize rock lobster. The conviction also resulted in the forfeiture of the 5 metre recreational vessel used in the offending. Four other members of the group received infringement fines ranging from \$250 to \$500 for other breaches detected during the incident.

Fortunately, to date this type of incident is rather the exception to the norm with fishers generally being receptive to the new Fiordland management regime and demonstrating a willingness to comply with the rules as they now stand. Overall it seems it hasn't taken too long for people to become familiar with all the rules and it's really heartening to see Fiordland users showing genuine concern for the area by reporting any activity they think could be illegal or suspicious. This was clearly evident when numerous reports were received 'dobbing in' a 'suspicious looking' Fiordland Marine Guardian Alan Key as he carried out an (authorised) recreational fishing survey in a marine reserve. That's what we all like to hear - we can all share in the responsibility of ensuring everyone plays by the rules so future generations can enjoy the unique fishing and diving opportunities that Fiordland offers.

### **Recreational Fishing Survey**

As part of the ongoing monitoring work to support the Fiordland marine management strategy, NIWA has been contracted to undertake a recreational fishing survey throughout the Fiordland area over the next two years. The purpose of this survey is to assess the impact the Fiordland marine management regime has on recreational fishing in the Fiordland Marine Area. The survey will look at how catch levels have changed since the management regime was implemented but it will also record recreational fishers' views and experiences of the new management regime.


This survey will involve all aspects of recreational fishing, including the charter vessel operators and syndicate boat operators, who are participating in a log book survey as part of this project. Researchers from NIWA are also hoping to interview many recreational fishers in the area over the summer months as part of a boat ramp survey. The Fiordland Marine Guardians encourage all fishers to participate in these surveys if approached by a NIWA researcher. This information will provide important fisheries data but it will also provide important social information as recreational fishers are given an opportunity to talk about what the management changes have meant for them.


Finally, NIWA, with the assistance of Alan Key from the Fiordland Marine Guardians is also carrying out some over flights of the Fiordland Marine Area to observe the number of recreational vessels and the specific fiords they are operating in.

More information on this survey will soon be posted on the Fiordland Marine Guardians' website, [www.fmq.org.nz](http://www.fmq.org.nz).

### **FMA Biodiversity Monitoring**

As many of you will know the first year of baseline monitoring of the biological communities and oceanographic characteristics of the Fiordland Marine Area was undertaken in February 2006. This survey, together with a second trip planned this month, will provide important baseline information that will be compared to a follow-up survey to be carried out in around 2009 and 2010 to assess changes associated with the implementation of the new management regime in the FMA.





The survey undertaken last year included visiting over 50 sites within the FMA to carry out a variety of activities: monitoring of the variety of reef fish communities and rock wall communities, monitoring of kina and seaweed abundance, establishment of baseline data for rock lobster and blue cod abundance, surveillance for invasive marine species, and the collection of oceanographic data.

### **Te Hapua (Sutherland Sound) Marine Reserve Trip**

Te Hapua Marine Reserve was visited separately from the overall biodiversity monitoring trip as getting into this fiord is difficult by boat. Instead, a small team of divers accessed the fiord by helicopter and used a small inflatable dinghy to conduct a number of dives within the reserve over three days. As very little is known about this area, the surveys of the plant and animal life provide very important information. The divers found that the fiord was home to high numbers of dogfish, flounder, rock crabs and juvenile starfish.

### **Marine Biosecurity**

The Fiordland Marine Guardians and Biosecurity New Zealand are asking vessel operators travelling to, and operating within Fiordland to take extra care not to accidentally introduce unwanted marine pests into the Fiordland marine area.

Marine pests are unfortunately becoming increasingly common in our port environments. In particular, areas within Bluff and Stewart Island have increasing infestations of the Asian seaweed *Undaria*. If *Undaria* or other exotic marine pests were to become established in Fiordland, they are likely to cause irreversible harm to the marine environment, affecting the very assets so valued in Fiordland – pristine waters, unique biodiversity, diving wonderland and fishing resource.


Biosecurity New Zealand, with support from the Fiordland Marine Guardians, is currently developing a marine biosecurity programme to help protect Fiordland.

The programme will focus on working with vessel operators to keep their vessel's hull and equipment clean of marine pests, thereby reducing the risk that pests will be introduced into Fiordland. Protecting Fiordland will only be possible if all groups and individuals actively play their part in the programme. Biosecurity New Zealand will be talking to members of the Southland community to ensure the programme is both practical and effective.

If you own a vessel and are about to travel into the Fiords or relocate marine equipment such as buoys, ropes or fishing gear, please:

- clean your vessel's hull before entering Fiordland;
- dispose of anything removed from the hull on land (prevent it getting back into the water); ensure you regularly clean your hull and treat, where appropriate, with anti-fouling paint as per the product's directions;
- check, clean and dry any mooring lines and buoys, fishing or dive gear, kayaks and any other equipment before using it in Fiordland waters.

If you are visiting the area, particularly for diving, you can also help by reporting anything unusual you might see in the area's waters.



If you spot something, please:

- note its location
- collect a sample if possible
- immediately phone Biosecurity NZ's free phone: 0800 80 99 66.

For information about identifying and dealing with marine pests and boat cleaning please go to [www.biosecurity.govt.nz](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz) and click on the button marked "Boat cleaning and marine pests".

If you would like further information on the biosecurity programme please contact John Willmer, phone: 04-894 0238, email: [john.willmer@maf.govt.nz](mailto:john.willmer@maf.govt.nz).

### **Next Meeting**

The next Guardians-agencies full meeting will be held on 14 February at the Te Anau Hotel & Villas, 64 Lakefront Drive Te Anau from 10.15am-4pm. This meeting is open to the public so please feel free to attend. All full Guardians-agencies meetings are open to the public so if you ever have something you want to raise feel free to contact Guardians' chairperson Malcolm Lawson or another of the Guardians.

### **Contact Us**

Please contact us with any concerns or issues you have regarding the Fiordland Marine Area.

It's vital that we have your input as we work alongside the management agencies to look after Fiordland's unique marine environment and fisheries.

Kind regards,

Malcolm Lawson



Chairperson  
Fiordland Marine Guardians

on behalf of the Guardians and the management agencies (Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Fisheries, Department of Conservation, Biosecurity New Zealand and Environment Southland).