

New Format for Newsletter

The Fiordland Marine Guardians are an advisory committee who work with government agencies and their Ministers on the management of the Fiordland marine area. They hope you will enjoy the new format of this newsletter and find the articles both informative and enjoyable.



Pictured onboard "The Southern Winds" in Doubtful Sound earlier this year are The Fiordland Marine Guardians - from left rear Alan Mark, Malcolm Lawson (Chairman), John Steffens, Alan Key, Ken Grange, and Stewart Bull. Seated in front Anne McDermott and Mark Peychers.

The Guardians welcome members of the public to their meetings, and are pleased to hear any concerns or comments on the Fiordland marine area. Further information is available on their website: www.fmg.org.nz or you can contact them via email: info@fmg.org.nz

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20th February 2008 at 10am, in Te Puni Kokiri's Meeting Room, The Menzies Building, Invercargill. We look forward to seeing you there.

Alison O'Sullivan, Administrator, Fiordland Marine Guardians

A Note from the Chair

The recent Fiordland Marine Area Users Survey – which is further explained elsewhere in this newsletter - included a section on people's perceptions of the Guardians. The results showed that we still have some work to do to inform people of who we are, our purpose and what we are doing. This newsletter is one way of achieving this.

We realise that we need to keep in touch and be aware of opinions and what is going on, but it is also a two-way street. Our meetings are open to the public and we welcome people coming along. Over the last year some of the people and groups who have attended and addressed our meetings include: scientists discussing marine pests; representatives from Meridian Energy; syndicate boat owners; commercial fishers; dolphin researchers; and recreational fishers. As well as this we ran the only public forum to discuss the recent Doubtful Sound Bottlenose Dolphin Threat Management Plan. So if you have an opinion regarding anything to do with the Fiordland Marine Area then we need to hear from you.

One of the biggest issues for the Guardians over the last eighteen months has been the threat of marine pests, and particularly the invasive seaweed *Undaria*, establishing in Fiordland. We have had a very positive response from the agencies and boat owners and there is a growing realisation of the need to be aware of how easily marine pests can be spread. Having said that, we now have the discovery of the potentially devastating *Abalone Ganglioneuritis Virus* (AVG) in Australia. This again goes to show how important it is for the Guardians to keep you informed and for each person to play their part.

John Steffens has decided to stand down from the Guardians after an involvement spanning more than 12 years. He was one of the originals that formed the *Guardians of Fiordland Fisheries and Marine Environment* when he not only realised that there were issues in Fiordland, but also had the vision of a better way of managing the area. I would go as far as to say that if it had not been for John I doubt if we would be where we are today. We are hopeful that a replacement for John will be appointed before Christmas.

The legacy of this vision is that the model that was created of having a group of local people working alongside the government departments to achieve marine management is now being used as a blueprint throughout New Zealand as well as being studied internationally.

Malcolm Lawson
Chairman Fiordland Marine Guardians.

Joint Agency compliance approach to training and patrols

Newly appointed Environment Southland Coastal Compliance Officer, Andy Nesbit, joined staff from the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) in mid-November for a 3-day Fiordland Marine Area joint agency patrol of the Doubtful/Thompson and Bradshaw Sounds fiord complex. Together with inspecting vessel and user activity, agency staff participated in an interagency compliance training course exercise.



The joint compliance initiative was organised by Steve Logie from MFish using the DOC vessel *Southern Winds*, together with the MFish patrol vessel *Ahuriri* for vessel inspections and lifting pots. The main aim of the training course was to broaden Agency staff knowledge of respective enforcement responsibilities within the Fiordland Marine Area, and to encourage a collaborative approach to proactive patrols and investigating non compliance.

The compliance course was a good example of the close cooperation that now exists within the agencies supporting the Guardians.

For further information contact Stephen Logie, MFish or Alan Christie DOC.

Officers from Environment Southland, Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation taking part in the joint agency compliance exercise. *Photo courtesy of Kath Blakemore DOC*

Fiordland Marine Area Users Survey

During the early part of 2007, a study was carried out that looked at the activities and perceptions of people who use the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area. The contractor carried out the study using two approaches:

1. A questionnaire survey – postal and at boat ramps
2. Interviews with some regular users of the area.

The final report is now completed and will soon be available from the Fiordland Marine Guardians website, www.fmg.org.nz.

A brief summary of the results from this report follows:

- Almost all the groups represented in the survey rated Fiordland Marine Area's 'beautiful scenery and views' as the highest value of the area. The most popular reasons for visiting the area were to experience nature, to view the wildlife and scenery and to experience the special character of the area.
- Commercial and recreational fishermen were more likely to respond that they perceived there had been an improvement in the quality of the area, whilst tourist workers and other users tended to be more pessimistic regarding any changes in the quality of the Fiordland Marine Area.
- Marine pests and pollution were seen as the greatest threat by all the groups involved in the survey. Concerns were often expressed about over fishing, pollution and adverse environmental change, with the perceived depletion of fish stocks seen as major factors in how people viewed the area. The increasing number of tourists was also thought as a threat to the unique values of the area by some interviewees.
- When asked about marine reserves the participants in the survey tended to underestimate the number of reserves and overestimate the area afforded this protection. The current level of marine reserve protection was perceived by participants to be adequate. There appeared to be confusion over the rules regarding marine reserves, however results indicate that they have a positive influence on the enjoyment and use of the area.
- A majority of those participating in the survey had heard about the management of the Fiordland marine area from brochures, although they didn't feel well informed about it. Over half of the people had heard of the Fiordland Marine Guardians and their role in the management of the area prior to taking part in the survey, with commercial fishermen having a greater awareness of the management strategy afforded by the Guardians.



A familiar sight during the survey with an interviewer at the boat ramp in Milford Sound. Photo courtesy of Alison O'Sullivan

The full report will be available on the website in the near future., www.fmg.org.nz
For further information contact Richard Kinsey, Department of Conservation, Te Anau.



Biological Monitoring in the Fiordland Marine Area

The final report from Otago University on the Fiordland Marine Area biodiversity monitoring work undertaken in early this year is almost complete. The results will be considered along with those of a similar project carried out in 2006, and will form a baseline of information which can be used in the future to compare and assess any biological changes that may occur. This project is a part of the implementation of the Fiordland Marine Area management regime.

Kina survey being undertaken by a member of the dive team..
Photo courtesy of Lou Hunt

The 2007 monitoring report details the results of the various surveys carried out, and the following is a quick summary of some of the initial findings from the project.

Blue cod: The overall numbers of blue cod were greatest on the outer coast, however the largest sizes of blue cod, and the largest proportion of legal sized animals were recorded in the marine reserves in the inner fiord. So far there is no general effect of marine reserve status on the abundance of blue cod, although some of the reserves did have a distinctly greater population when compared with other areas outside reserve sites.

Rock lobster: The amount and size of rock lobsters was significantly higher in the marine reserves which were established in 1993 in comparison to the reserves that were established more recently (2005), as well as the commercial fishing exclusion zones and the outer coastal zones. The greater number and size of the rock lobsters observed in the reserves is consistent with patterns seen in other reserves around New Zealand.

Sea urchins and kelp: Comparison of information collected in 2003-04 to that of this current research indicates that there has been a decline in the abundance of sea urchins and an increase in kelp in the inner fiords while on the outer coast there has been a large increase in the numbers of sea urchins as well as a moderate increase in the amount of kelp. This is an indication of the differences between the sites.

Reef fish: Information from research carried out in 1985, together with the current study, was used to analyze long term trends in the reef fish community. It would appear that there have been significant changes in terms of distribution, abundance and species composition over this time. This was particularly evident when comparisons were done between non-exploited species to that of exploited species of reef fish.

Sea birds and marine mammals: In the coastal area recordings were taken of sea birds and marine mammals on different occasions. A total of 23 different species of sea birds were observed along with 4 species of marine mammals. There was also a sighting of a blue shark recorded in the area.

For more information on this project contact the Department of Conservation, Te Anau.
Richard Kinsey, DOC, Te Anau

MAFBNZ urging boaties to keep hulls and marine equipment clean



The new owner of this yacht in Wellington got a big surprise when he pulled it out of the water recently! What looks clean from above could be dirty below. *Photo courtesy of MAFBNZ*

An integral part of the Guardians' work is protecting the unique Fiordland marine environment from potentially harmful invasive marine pest species together with MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ), the government agency responsible for marine biosecurity.

Unfortunately many marine pests (for example the sea squirt *Styela clava*) are able to easily spread around New Zealand on the fouled bottom of boats and on dirty marine equipment. To counter this, MAFBNZ kicked off a programme this year involving Fiordland marine users and a range of activities; a publicity campaign, hull and equipment inspections, and a 'clean up' of part of the port in Bluff.

Bluff, as the main feeder-port for boats going to Fiordland, is a key focus area for the programme. The 'clean up' involved the wrapping of plastic (the same stuff used for hay baleage) around wharf piles near boats that visit Fiordland. The plastic wrap smothers whatever is growing on the piles and prevents marine life growing back for awhile. This also makes it less likely that boats moored nearby can pick up marine pest hitch-hikers. During the wrapping, bits of junk, like lobster pots, planks, and even a filing cabinet were hauled out of the water, as many marine pests like to grow on discarded man-made objects.

The programme will be busy over summer and autumn with monthly inspections for marine pests on vessel hulls and marine equipment (such as mooring ropes and lobster pots) happening in Bluff and possibly other Southland ports. If any pests are found, MAFBNZ will be contacting the owners to find out if they visit Fiordland and to let them know that their boat or equipment needs a clean.

Sophie Allen is working on implementing the programme and says it's amazing how much boaties really want to protect the precious Fiordland marine environment. "Almost all Fiordland marine users want to learn about the right behaviours to prevent spreading marine pests".

As a boatie there are two simple activities you can do to protect New Zealand waters:

- 1. Keep your boat bottom clean – regularly clean your hull and keep your antifouling paint in good condition.**
- 2. Be alert for sea life that looks different when boating, fishing, diving, and at the beach. If you spot something out of the ordinary – take a note of its location, collect a sample or photograph if possible, and immediately call the suspected exotic pests and diseases hotline on 0800 80 99 66.**

If you would like information on marine pests to look out for, or how to safely clean a boat hull or marine equipment, visit the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website (www.biosecurity.govt.nz) and click on the button marked Marine Pests and Boat Cleaning. Also watch out for a new information guide "**Clean boats – living seas, a boatie's guide to biosecurity**", which will be available within the next couple of weeks. It should arrive in your mailbox, or find it at your boating club, local marina, DOC offices, and regional council. The flipbook guide will be free, user-friendly, and laminated - perfect for keeping on the boat!

For further information contact Sophie Allen, MAFBNZ, Wellington



Regularly cleaning off the slime layer on your boat will stop heavy fouling from building up. Watch out for tips in this smart looking new guide coming out just before Christmas.

Recreational Fishing Survey Remember to return those logbooks!

Many of you will be aware that NIWA are carrying out a survey of recreational fishing in the Fiordland Marine Area. This has taken the form of aerial counts of recreational fishing vessels, interviews at boat ramps, and logbooks from charter boats and fishing syndicate/recreational boats. The information gathered from the survey is vital, as it gives valuable data on the state of the fishery, and could influence future decisions regarding recreational fishing catches in the area.

The logbook survey ran for a year and NIWA are now in the process of contacting participants for the return of trip records in order that the information they provide can be analyzed. The data returned by operators so far is of a generally high standard.

The early results from the logbooks are promising, but continued cooperation and return of log book trip returns is necessary if we are to gain a better understanding of how recreational fishers utilize, and benefit from the Fiordland experience.

Boat ramp surveys will be continued over the summer. This resumed in October and will continue to April 2008. NIWA has employed local workers from Te Anau who are manning the Milford Ramp, and the Deep Cove boat ramp is being manned by the Deep Cove Hostel Trust.

We really appreciate your cooperation with the surveys and a big thank you to those who have participated to date.

For further information contact Tania Cameron MFish, Dunedin, or Niki Davey, NIWA, Nelson.

The Doubtful Sound Dolphins

In July, the Doubtful Sound Bottlenose Dolphin Discussion Paper was put out for public consultation. Feedback was received from 60 individuals and groups. This feedback, along with the most recent research about this population, was reviewed by a panel of three independent marine science experts, Dr. Helene Marsh, Dr. Tim Markowitz and Dr. Karsten Schneider. A management tools committee then reviewed the Scientific reports and the feedback and provided recommended protection measures.



Photo courtesy of Carrie Williams (DOC)

More than 30 submitters to the discussion paper attended a meeting in Te Anau on November 13 to discuss recommendations to increase protection of this population.

Recent research presented at the meeting by Otago University showed a decline in the abundance of bottlenose dolphins in Doubtful Sound of 34-39% over the past 12 years, (based on 95% confidence interval). Additionally, calf survival (the probability of an animal surviving from one year to the next) has taken a sharp decline over the past 14 years. The research indicates a change in calf survival rates between two time periods, 1994-2001 and 2002-2007. The decrease in calf survival rates between these two periods is significant, with approximately 86% survival recorded for

the earlier period and approximately 39% for the later period.

At the meeting, the tools panel presented their recommended protection measures with consideration given to views put forward by the marine scientists and the feedback from the discussion paper. The tools panel included Stewart Bull and Mark Pechers (Fiordland Marine Guardians), Ken Swinney (Environment Southland), Beth Masser (DOC) and Carrie Williams (DOC).

The next step is to seek input from the Conservation Board, Iwi and the Guardians. A final report will be released before Christmas with implementation commencing in early 2008.

For further information contact Carrie Williams, DOC, Te Anau

Regular Users Need to Obey Established Amateur Fishing Rules

In the last Fiordland Marine Guardians Newsletter, the Ministry of Fisheries (MFish) signalled that the two year “honeymoon” period was over, since the introduction of specific rules for the Fiordland Marine Area in June 2005. A recent joint agency compliance patrol in the Doubtful Sound area has highlighted the need to reinforce the rules, after several regular vessel operators and users were detected breaching amateur rock lobster regulations.

The specific FMA rules requiring attention are:

- Maximum 3-rock lobster pots per fisher/vessel, whether pots are for catching, holding, or storing:
- Maximum daily limit of 6 rock lobster per person, including a maximum of 3 taken from the internal waters:
- A limited defence allowing accumulation up to 15-rock lobster taken over 3 or more days. Possession of accumulated rock lobsters is conditional on each fisher's catch being separately held in a labelled container or bag that –
 - contain only rock lobster taken on a single day; and are
 - clearly labelled to record the individual fisher's name, date taken, number of rock lobster, and number taken from the internal waters.

If you cannot, or will not comply with the **mandatory requirement to separately bag and tag rock lobster catch**, then don't exceed your 6 per person limit!

While divers can share their catch, there is **no dispensation for divers to exceed their daily limit** of 6 lobsters to aggregate catch for others.

Another common breach is inadequately **marked rock lobster pot floats**. This national regulation has been law since the 1960s, requires:

- All amateur rock lobster pots must have a buoy or float attached that are clearly and permanently marked with the **fisher's surname and initials**.

Recreational fishers may also choose to additionally include the vessel name along with the fisher's name. In most instances the 3-pots can be marked with the Skipper's name. For alternating charter and syndicate boat Skippers, consider use of a secondary float with the fisher's name that can be clipped on and off the float line.

It is clear, from breaches involving charter vessels that rock lobster potting and a feed of rock lobster is part of the paid “visitor experience”. It is therefore incumbent on regular operators, hosting paying visitors, to comply.

All fishers are responsible for ensuring their catch is of legal size and state and that they are complying with all relevant rules. These are summarised in the *FMA recreational fishing rules* pamphlet and the *Recreational Fisher's Handbook*, available from MFish.

Fishers who fail to comply with the rules, risk confiscation of excess rock lobster, (if not separately held in labelled containers), have any unmarked gear, or pots without escape gaps seized (with catch released) and risk a \$250 infringement notice – increasing to \$500 if the amount possessed exceeds twice the limit.

With disappointing levels of non-compliance, MFish has no alternative but to be consistent with invoking sanctions until compliance improves. **The choice is simple – follow the rules or pay the price!**
For further information contact Stephen Logie, MFish, Invercargill

New Minister for the Environment



On 31 October the Prime Minister announced Trevor Mallard as the new Minister for the Environment.

The Minister for the Environment exercises statutory functions under the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Management Act 2005. These include appointing members to the Guardians, providing direction to the Guardians, and initiating reviews to determine the effectiveness of the management of the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area.

A meeting between the Minister and the Guardians is being arranged for the New Year.

For further information contact Nicky Blackman, MFE. Wellington

ATTENTION: Charter Boat Operators

Abalone stocks in coastal areas of Victoria, Australia are being wiped out by the Abalone Ganglioneuritis Virus (AVG). The abalone (paua) fishery within the Fiordland Marine Area is of major importance to customary, recreational and commercial fishers and is one of the largest paua fish stocks in New Zealand. There is every reason to believe that paua will be susceptible and The Guardians are concerned about the potential effects from this virus if it was to become established within New Zealand waters.

We understand that water sports equipment that has been used in an infected area could carry the virus and risk transmitting it to other areas. Over the summer months clients from Australia will be entering New Zealand and embarking on dive trips around the coast, including on charter vessels operating in the Fiordland Marine Area. We believe that these people and their equipment may be a potential biosecurity risk if their gear has not been properly treated and dried

We ask you to check if any of your clients have been in the Victoria area and any dive gear has been thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and is completely dry.

Malcolm Lawson, Chair, Fiordland Marine Guardians.

The Guardians and Agency Staff would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday season and thank you for your continued support of the Guardians vision “that the quality of Fiordland’s marine environment and fisheries, including the wider fishery experience, be maintained or improved for future generations to use and enjoy”.