



July 2015

The Guardians 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 welcome this chance to keep you informed and up to date with happenings in the Fiordland Marine Area.

A milestone for the Fiordland Marine Guardians

This year marks 10 years since the enactment of the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Management Act 2005, and the creation of the Fiordland Marine Guardians.

To mark this momentous occasion a celebration dinner was held at the Ascot Park Hotel in Invercargill for invited guests including the current Minister for the Environment, the Hon Dr Nick Smith; previous Labour Ministers, the Hon Marian Hobbs and the Hon Pete Hodgson, who played an integral part in the passing of this legislation; local MP's Todd Barclay and Sarah Dowie; all the Guardians that have been appointed during the 10 years; along with government agency staff from Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Primary Industries, Department of Conservation and Environment Southland, who have played a big part in ensuring that this management model has been the success that was initially envisioned.

The Minister made presentations to Laurel Teirney, Alan Key, Sir Alan Mark, along with outgoing Chairman, Malcolm Lawson, thanking them for their commitment and contribution to the Guardians over many years.

Alison O'Sullivan, FMG Secretary



The celebration cake which was made locally for the event (Just Add Sugar)

Photograph courtesy of Rebecca McLeod

Cutting the Cake – Hon Pete Hodgson, Hon Marion Hobbs and the Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister for the Environment, together cut the Anniversary cake, surrounded by Guardians and longstanding agency staff.

Photograph courtesy of Jenny Oliver, MPI, Wellington



FMG Appointments Process

The process for the appointment of the three available Guardians positions is well underway.

The appointment terms of Malcolm Lawson, Dr Ken Grange and Anne McDermott have either expired, or are due to expire in the next few months.

Representatives from each of the Government Agencies with responsibilities in the Fiordland Marine Area, along with a Guardians' representative, have reviewed the nominations according to specific criteria. Although only a few nominations were received, the panel was very pleased with the calibre and qualifications of all the candidates.

The staff at the Ministry for the Environment is now busy preparing a briefing paper for the Minister (the Hon Dr Nick Smith). The Minister's recommendation must then be presented to Cabinet before the appointments are confirmed.

Rosalynn Anderson-Lederer, MfE, Wellington

The hunt is on for final deer on Fiordland's Secretary Island

An operation to remove the last remaining red deer on Secretary Island in Fiordland's Doubtful Sound will take place this August.

Secretary Island is situated on the Fiordland coast at the entrance to Doubtful Sound. It is the third highest island in New Zealand, rising sharply to a height of 1196 metres and supports a diverse range of plant communities and habitats. The only animal pest species present on Secretary Island are deer and stoats. The absence of possums, rats and mice has meant that Secretary Island has provided refuge for an abundant and diverse range of invertebrates, such as the knobbed weevil, cave weta and tunnel web spider.

The Department of Conservation's (DOC) Secretary Island hunting team, led by Senior Ranger Norm Macdonald, will spend fourteen days undertaking a systematic sweep of the island, using a variety of on-the-ground and aerial hunting techniques. Increased helicopter activity in the area may be experienced during this time.

Since 2007 Secretary Island (8140ha) has been the focus of a deer eradication programme, which has seen almost 700 deer removed from the island. In April of this year, the hunting team despatched the last known hind from Secretary Island – who was later found to be pregnant.

The removal of the hind from Secretary Island was a significant milestone for the eradication programme as it eliminated the potential for fawns to be born on the island.

DNA sampling has shown that the Secretary Island deer population has remained genetically isolated since the 1960s. By comparing DNA from scat and hair collected during the eradication to the DNA from the deer as they were despatched, as well as images of deer caught on trail cameras, it is believed that just one male adult deer now remains on the island. No unknown deer have been encountered.



The Department of Conservation's Secretary Island hunting team.
From left to right: Puni Tiakiwai, John Clark, Pat Dawson, Robert Tiakiwai, Jordan Munn, Norm Macdonald, Ben Crouchley, Chino Apiata, Dan Harrison (pilot)
Photograph courtesy of DOC, Te Anau

“The technique we are using on Secretary Island to remove these last deer has been constantly evolving. We are now at a point where we have a very high chance of despatching this last wary deer”, Norm Macdonald said.

A deer-free Secretary Island will be a haven for native plant species that are vulnerable to deer browse, including native ferns, broadleaf, mahoe and kamahi. The operation forms part of the wider Secretary Island Restoration programme, the long term aim of which is the reintroduction of threatened species to these islands.

Norm MacDonald, DOC Senior Ranger.



*A whale photographed in Acheron Passage
Photograph courtesy of Chloe Corne, DOC, Te
Anau*

Reporting Mammal sightings

Have you seen marine mammals in Fiordland recently? DOC would love to hear about any whales or dolphins seen in Fiordland. Species seen in the past include bottlenose, common, Hector's and Dusky dolphins, Orca, humpback whales, southern right whales, pilot whales, beaked whales, and sperm whales. Even elephant seals have been seen before!

While we are keen to know of any species you may encounter, the most important one during winter is the southern right whale/tohora. Preferably, we would like to know of your sightings as soon as possible, so that we can take identification photos and track their movements.

Useful information includes the species (or a physical description if species is unknown), location, date, the number in the group and general behaviour. Photographs are always fantastic as they allow us to identify the species or even the individual at a later date. Photos of the head, body, dorsal fin and tail flukes are great – remember not to get too close or disturb the animal to get photos though!

Remember to stay at least 50m away from whales, and 200m from a baleen whale mother with a calf – this is for their safety, and yours. Avoid moving into their path of travel or splitting the group, and keep your speed below 10 knots within 300m of any marine mammal.

If you see anything that could be of interest, please contact Richard Kinsey (rkinsey@doc.govt.nz) or Chloe Corne (clcorne@doc.govt.nz) at the DOC Office in Te Anau (phone 03 249 0200).

The Fiordland Coastal Cleanup

The Coastal Cleanup group (Mark Peychers, Robert White, Pete Young, Dale Green and Joyce Kolk) have successfully organised 3 Coastal Cleanups

The first was the southern end of Fiordland Port Craig to Chalky where 6.9 tonnes of rubbish were removed from 280 kms of coastline. The second cleanup was the Western coast of Stewart Island where 80 km was covered, and 19.9 tonnes of rubbish made it to land fill.

Most recently the area from Dagg sound down to Chalky Inlet, which covered approx. 300 km of shoreline was completed in the first week in June. Just under 10 tonnes of rubbish was removed.

Volunteers stayed on the DoC vessel “Southern Winds” and RJ’s (Real Journeys) vessel “Milford Wanderer”. High Country Helicopters provided the air support and lifting, which is so vital in such a remote area.



The Rakiura shipping vessel Foveaux Freighter took 8 tonnes of rubbish into Bluff.

Tracker Black then organised for a group of volunteers to go through the rubbish sorting out re-useable items, some of the buoys, ropes and nets have gone to the Oyster Festivals new premises to help decorate the walls. Only 2.5 tonnes from the 8 tonnes ended up in land fill.

The cleanup has a huge amount of support from the fishing industry, and others too many to list! There is also a long list of volunteers that have paid to join the cleanup. The cleanup group is very grateful for all this assistance.

For the future: I'd like to hope that in the next couple of years we could return to clean up the Stewart Island Coast. It is a large collection point for rubbish out of the ocean; even things from Australia make it to our coastline.

Article and photos provided by Joyce Kolk, Wairaurahiri Jet



A very big thank you to Joyce and her team for all the hard work, which is much appreciated. A difficult job well done!

Fiordland Marine Pathway Plan Update

We have been getting some rather scary updates from the top of the South Island where a recent survey of Nelson and Picton ports has reported the presence of no fewer than seven introduced species. These pests are only one boat ride away from Fiordland!

This reiterates how urgently a pathway plan is required for the Fiordland Marine Area, as pathway plans are widely considered to be the most effective way of preventing marine pests from spreading.

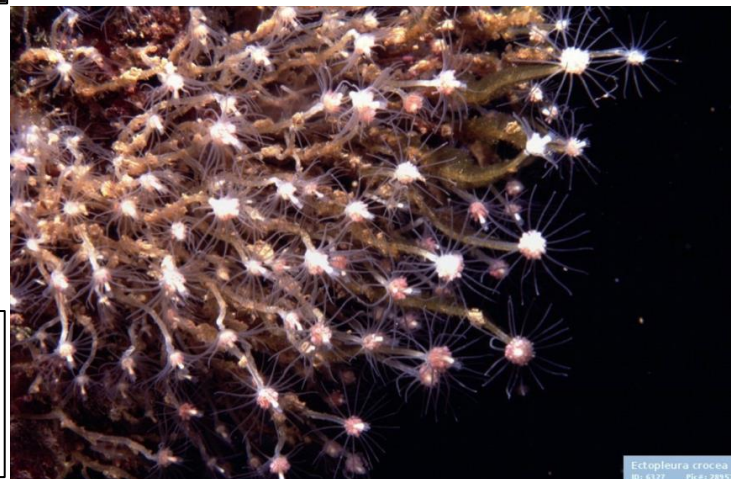
We have been busy meeting with representatives of Fiordland operators and users in order to discuss the proposed plan and receive feedback. Thank you to all those who have given their time so far - we have been really pleased with the level of interest. We have been asked some excellent questions and received some very useful insights. The Steering Group is currently considering feedback and incorporating it into the draft proposal. More detail will be provided on this process and next steps in an update in the near future.

To get up to speed with the process, visit <http://www.fmg.org.nz/content/keeping-pests-out>

Rebecca McLeod, Guardians representative on The Pest Pathways management Plan Steering Group



Styela clava is now established in Nelson. This picture from Canada shows how this sea squirt can cover buoys and smother mussel lines (photo from www.ascidians.com)



Ectopleura crocea has recently been found in the Waikawa Marina near Picton. (photo from: www.meerwasserlexikon.de)

The Recreational Blue Cod Fishery Review

The internal waters of Doubtful and Milford Sounds are currently closed to recreational blue cod fishing. The Fiordland Marine Guardians are concerned that fishing effort displaced from Doubtful Sound is having an adverse impact on the blue cod fishery in Thompson and Bradshaw Sounds. Additionally, the Guardians consider that a low bag limit is likely to be sustainable in Doubtful Sound, and therefore that the current closure may be restricting utilisation unnecessarily. They have proposed that the recreational blue cod fishery in Doubtful Sound be reopened, and a low bag limit set for Doubtful, Thompson, and Bradshaw Sounds, to form part of the daily bag limit for blue cod in the internal waters of Fiordland.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) released a consultation document with proposed options for the fishery on 22 April 2015. Consultation closed on 18 May 2015. A decision document is currently being drafted following submissions and advice from the Guardians. The decision document will be sent to the Minister for Primary Industries, who will make a final decision on the rules. MPI expects any changes to be implemented in October.

The Guardians have not recommended that the recreational blue cod fishery in Milford Sound be reopened at this time, as they do not expect this fishery to sustain even a low bag limit.

Jenny Oliver, MPI, Wellington

On Email?

More and more people are opting to receive the FMG newsletter electronically. A large number have stated that the colour photography in the newsletter is a major reason for changing, as well as all the environmental aspects, which make this option very attractive.

Let Alison know your email address and your next newsletter will be emailed through to you.

Our email is: info@fmq.org.nz

Any Feedback?

We hope you have found this newsletter enjoyable and informative. We would welcome any suggestions for future articles, or indeed any stories relating to the Fiordland Marine Area that you may wish to share with us.

Just contact Alison on: info@fmq.org.nz