



Te Pānui Kaitiaki o Ata Whenua

Photo credit: Kerri-Anne Edge

In this issue, we farewell two long-serving Guardians, Jon Clow and Jerry Excell, update you on our fisheries sustainability mahi, and discuss the new \$2m funding boost for *Undaria* management in Fiordland and what it means for the region and the community.

We also outline the Guardians' position on providing written approval for new surface water resource consents in the Fiordland Marine Area (FMA).

As always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback.



Who are the ‘Guardians’?

The Fiordland Marine Guardians are an advisory committee that works with government agencies and their Ministers to manage the Fiordland Marine Area.

In this issue, we talk to Jerry Excell. This year Jerry steps down as a Guardian after 13 years in the role. But, Jerry's connection to the FMA spans a lifetime and his dedication to the philosophy of the Guardians and his endeavours to ensure protection and sustainable use of the area will continue.

I began by asking Jerry about where he grew up.

"I grew up in Nightcaps. I've always loved the water and boats, water skiing, diving, and jet boating.

My father and uncle built the FV Exporta in Te Anau when I was about 15. I helped with the build in the school holidays, which sparked my interest in engineering and led me to an engineering apprenticeship with Gough Bros in Invercargill."

Do you recall your first visit to the fiords? What was particularly memorable about that trip?

"The first time I went to Fiordland, I reckon I was about eight. It was onboard the FV Exenda with my father Nev, my Uncle David, and my brother Peter. Our 7-day trip turned into 14 days stuck in Dusky with bad weather. We ran out of stores and were living on fish, venison and lemonade! It was Heaven for a kid.

"We had heaps of holidays like this fishing and diving in the southern fiords and Stewart Island when we were kids."

When did you start working as a commercial fisher? What have you noticed over that time?

"I did a few trips as a bait boy when I was still at school. One trip started as a holiday, and when the crew didn't turn up, my brother and I ended up crewing for 10 days. It was bloody hard work for a twelve-year-old, but I think I made \$1000, so thought I was rich!

"I left Goughs when I was 21 and went fishing full time. It was a pretty tough industry back then. I wouldn't have thought the fishery would ever improve to where it is today."

What do you think are the most significant challenges facing the Fiordland Marine Area in the next 10 years, and what advice would you give our new Guardians?

"The biggest challenge for the Fiordland Marine Area is biosecurity because once shit gets in and takes a hold, you can't turn back the clock.

"Fisheries management is always a challenge, but it is achievable if everyone understands the drivers. And getting the new Coastal Plan right is another one.

"To our new Guardians, I would like to say good on you for getting in and having a go. It's a big responsibility but very rewarding, and you'll meet some awesome people along the way."

Describe your ideal trip to Fiordland. Where would you visit, and what would you do?

"My ideal trip is to go with a few mates and the kids with heaps of time and good weather."

"Make sure you get some time in the water. Exploring is the key, not trying to achieve bag limits; if I take people away that are only interested in filling their bag limits, it takes a lot of the fun out of it."

Jerry, tell us about your favourite kaimoana.

"My favourite kaimoana is definitely Bluff oysters. But I love all of it and learning new stuff all the time, like Stewart's cod head concoction! Cods' eyeballs – yum!"





\$2 million funding boost for *Undaria* in Fiordland through Jobs for Nature

In April, the acting Minister of Conservation, Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, announced a \$2m funding boost through Jobs for Nature – Mahi mō te Taiao to the *Undaria* programme in Fiordland. The Jobs for Nature programme helps revitalise communities through nature-based employment and stimulate the economy post-Covid-19.

The Ata Whenua Fiordland *Undaria* Control Programme aims to contain *Undaria* within Te Puaitaha Breaksea Sound and eliminate it from Taiari Chalky Inlet. Environment Southland is overseeing the programme and recruited the first intake of trainee divers in late May / early June.

The Fiordland Marine Guardians advocated strongly for the Government to fund a more comprehensive programme to control this invasive species in the Fiordland Marine Area. Although *Undaria* is now commonplace around much of Aotearoa New Zealand's coastline, the Guardians are not prepared to accept it as a feature of the underwater world in Fiordland.

Fiordland is renowned for its stunning, colourful and fragile marine life. Without intensive effort such as that afforded by this funding, we fear that *Undaria* will smother and displace iconic species like the black coral, changing the ecosystem forever.

We are excited to see this fund resulting in local people becoming skilled underwater biosecurity technicians. In collaboration with local vessel operators and tourism companies, the community can come together to protect Fiordland from what would have been an inevitable ecological disaster.

Will Pinfold is the Biosecurity Coordinator (Marine) for the Ata Whenua Fiordland *Undaria* Control Programme.

This position is new, funded through the Jobs for Nature – Mahi mō te Taiao fund, and provides a critical coordination and oversight role for the programme out on the water and among the operators and contractors supporting the work. Will is a graduate of the University of Otago whose research focused on methods for quantifying seaweeds in Rakiura Stewart Island and Fiordland. While studying, Will also contracted to the Fiordland *Undaria* Control Programme. He is passionate about protecting the unique marine ecosystems we have around Te Wai Pounamu South Island and is looking forward to relocating to Te Anau from Ōtepoti Dunedin this winter as diver training gets underway.

Our experience with *Undaria* has taught us it's difficult and expensive to get rid of marine pests once they're in the FMA. So please do your bit to keep pests out! **Have you renewed your Clean Vessel Pass for 2021?** All vessels in or entering the Fiordland Marine Area are required to have one. Applying for a Clean Vessel Pass is a simple process that can be completed online at www.es.govt.nz/fmpp or by calling Environment Southland on 0800 76 88 45 to receive a hard copy form.

Guardians' position on resource consents

The Fiordland Marine Guardians continue to be concerned about the cumulative effects of surface water activities (SWA) on values of natural character, remoteness and wilderness in the Fiordland Marine Area, and the shortcomings of the current Coastal Plan to address these concerns.

We are responding to a high number of applications for SWA consent applications in the FMA. There are consequential risks of evaluating a large number of consents whilst the Southland Regional Coastal Plan review is underway.

Specifically, we do not consider that we can adequately assess the cumulative effects of SWA consents in the FMA. Furthermore, we are not satisfied that the current Coastal Plan can adequately manage these cumulative effects. The risk is that collectively, a growing amount of surface water activities (ie, charter vessels) together with the latent effort that sits within current consent holders will negatively affect the special character and values of the FMA. We also have concerns about navigational safety, such as the risk that all vessels will not be able find shelter during adverse weather events due to the limited amount of space in 'all-weather' anchorages.

We believe that the natural character values of the FMA are at risk of being degraded should consents for SWA continue to be issued whilst there is a high degree of uncertainty existing around the cumulative effects of multiple consents being operative.

We are firmly of the view that to continue to provide our written approval for consents in the absence of this information would preclude us from meeting our statutory responsibilities for the FMA.

Therefore, we will provide written approval for renewals of existing consents with the condition that the term of the consent is 15 years, so long as the applications do not request an increase in the level or scope of activity.

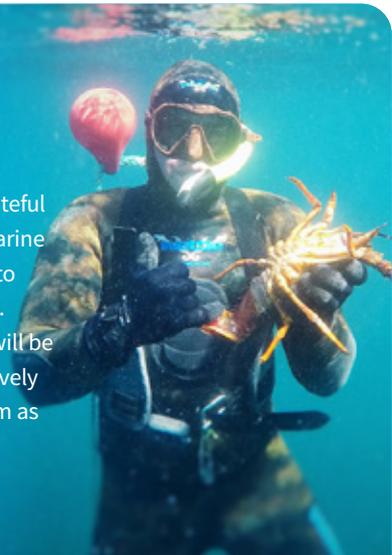
We will not provide written approval for new applications for SWA consents (other than above) until such a time that the cumulative effects of that activity– on the values of natural character, remoteness and wilderness in the Fiordland Marine Area – can be adequately assessed.

Recreational Fishing App to be trialled in Fiordland

Since 2019, Fish Mainland has been working with MPI officials and others to develop a system for collecting recreational data, starting with the blue cod fishery. The system will collect data that provide broad signals, or indicator statistics, about trends in catch and effort that will help legitimise colour changes in the National Blue Cod Strategy's traffic light system (eg, colours change as available data suggest the state of the fishery is improving or declining).

Fish Mainland is grateful for the Fiordland Marine Guardians' input into the system's design.

Later this year, we will be working collaboratively to launch the system as a pilot project in the FMA.



Fish Mainland is a new not-for-profit organisation with the aim of providing a unified voice for the marine recreational fishing community in the South Island and Stewart Island.

Fish Mainland acknowledges recreational fishing is a valuable and integral component of South Island fisheries, as are commercial and Māori non-commercial customary fishing, and that a healthy marine environment is crucial to the wellbeing of all sectors and interests.

Visit: fishmainland.nz and on FB [facebook.com/fishmainlandnz](https://www.facebook.com/fishmainlandnz)



Fisheries sustainability update



In February, we launched an online survey for people who fish recreationally in the Fiordland Marine Area (the FMA). Over 200 people responded (thank you!), contributing valuable knowledge and accounts of fishing in the FMA to our ongoing assessment of fisheries sustainability for Fiordland and the wider fishing experience.

Our focus on recreational fishing stemmed from concerns about the serial depletion of fisheries within the inner fiords, where commercial fishing has been excluded since 2005 with the enactment of the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Management Act.

We now have a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of different fisheries and what people's experiences are on and under the water when fishing and gathering kai moana in Fiordland.

Now, our job is to evaluate the survey results alongside outputs from face-to-face hui (Tangata Tiaki, Amateur Charter Vessel operators, recreational fishers) and the available fisheries science data.

What we know so far:

- The fisheries inside the habitat lines (and in specific areas beyond the habitat lines) show signs of serial depletion, with several species-specific issues identified. This conclusion is backed by scientific information and anecdotal evidence.
- Recreational fishing pressure continues to increase, particularly in the southern fiords.
- The fishing community are concerned for the future of fishing in Fiordland. There is an appetite for more restrictive measures to ensure the fisheries are sustainable for future generations.
- There is a very high level of support for developing and using an App for reporting recreational catch.

As Fiordland Marine Guardians, we are mandated under the Act to ensure "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." Therefore, it is our responsibility to advocate for measures that will rebuild fish stocks impacted by overfishing. That means working through a process to identify and describe the key fisheries issues for the FMA, with a horizon well beyond the next 20+ years, and provide recommendations to the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries, Hon. David Parker in the coming months.

Stay up-to-date on this important work! If you would like to receive a copy of the Fisheries Sustainability Survey Report, please email info@fmg.org.nz.

Come and have a yarn with us at Southland's next boat show

Look out for the Fiordland Marine Guardian's stand at The Rock Southland Boat Show.

Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th August 2021, ILT Stadium, Invercargill. Come and have a chat with us about the FMA, our role and the work we do, and the issues you feel need attention. Take home a copy of the latest edition of **Beneath the Reflections – A user's guide to the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area** and be in to win one of several stunning books we are giving away over the weekend.



Farewell to Jon and Jerry

In February, we farewelled Jerry Excell and Jon Clow, appointed as Guardians in 2007 and 2012. Although, they have both stayed on to support our mahi while Minister Hon. David Parker concludes an appointments round initiated late last year.

Our March 2019 issue (3) features a story on Jon. In this issue, Jerry shares some early memories of the FMA and sage advice to our newest Guardians, which we hope to welcome in the second half of this year.

Their combined knowledge and experience of the Fiordland Marine Area, marine navigation and safety, and commercial and recreational fishing have contributed enormously to our work as an advisory group. Most importantly, both are still very active on the water, which means they see first-hand changes and trends in marine life and the physical characteristics of the FMA and user activity.

Jerry and Jon now join the Guardians alumni, and we expect they will continue contributing to the Guardian's vision for Fiordland in numerous ways.

Jon is a keen rec fisher who is eager to see our work on fisheries sustainability deliver meaningful and practical solutions to the serial depletion of fish stocks. Jon fishes out of Milford Sound Piopiotahi and these days is a regular visitor to several of the other northern fiords.

Jerry continues to fish commercially for rock lobster and was recently appointed Chair of CRA8 Management Committee, a collective of crayfishers and quota owners, including a Ngāi Tahu representative that actively monitors and manages the fishery. CRA8 is currently undergoing a substantive stock assessment, the results of which will be out late October. Jerry also undertakes other commercial work in the FMA and enjoys time spent there with family and friends.



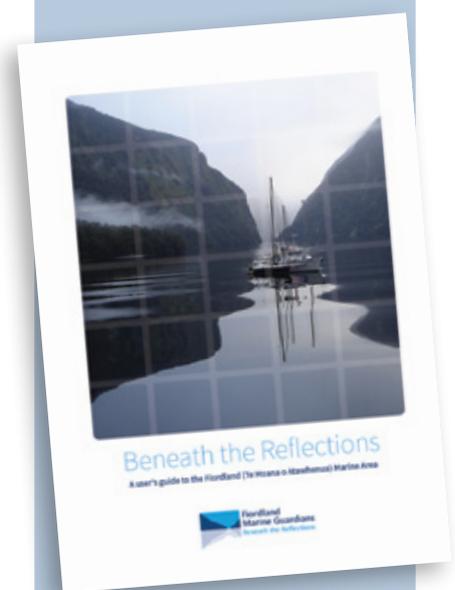
Fiordland user's guide

This July we are releasing a new 2021 edition of **Beneath the Reflections – A user's guide to the Fiordland (Te Moana o Atawhenua) Marine Area**. Our guide is packed with information, stunning images, and some essential updates. We encourage people to replace their current copy to ensure you are up-to-date with all the rules and regulations. The guide is available online at www.fmg.or.nz, or you can purchase a hard copy from DOC's Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre:

Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600
Phone: +64 03 249 7924
Email: fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz

Printed copies cost \$25.00 if collected from the visitor centre.

Inquire about postage rates within NZ and overseas.





Keeping in touch

As always, the Guardians will work hard to facilitate community-led, proactive approaches that are informed by the best scientific and anecdotal information available. We place a high value on the experiences and knowledge of the Fiordland community and encourage you to share your thoughts with us.

Our website fmg.org.nz is based on the content and layout of the *User Guide: Beneath the Reflections* and provides helpful and informative information for those wanting to get out on the water.

You can email us at info@fmg.org.nz

FMG-AGENCY MEETINGS 2021

NEXT MEETING

Mon 9 August, Invercargill
– Environment Southland,
Council Chambers

Agenda items by Tues 20 July

Board reports by Fri 23 July

For more information visit

www.fmg.org.nz

All welcome

Our quarterly FMG agency meetings are open to the public and agenda items for discussion at these meetings can be brought to the Guardians. The agenda is set three weeks in advance of a meeting.

Te Pānui Kaitiaki o Ata Whenua is available online at www.fmg.org.nz or via email.

In the interest of sustainability we encourage people to opt for an electronic copy. Please email info@fmg.org.nz to update your contact details or to switch to electronic communication with the Guardians.



Te Rūnanga o **NGĀI TAHU**



Biosecurity New Zealand

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Fisheries New Zealand

Tini a Tangaroa

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Thank you!

The Guardians would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for photographs used in this issue: Louise Bennett-Jones, Graham Dainty, Kerri-Anne Edge, Jerry Excel, Fiordland Expeditions, Grant Thomas.