

# PAUA INDUSTRY COUNCIL Ltd

NEWSLETTER 11 – FEBRUARY 2008

*Firstly a thousand apologies for the length of time between this newsletter and the last but resources at PICL are stretched to a maximum and newsletters keep getting pushed back down the priority queue. To help overcome this we have decided to produce fewer newsletters, but make them more substantial so we hope you find there is plenty of interesting reading enclosed.*



## What's Happening at PICL?

The board of PICL has now altered somewhat with a change of Chairman, one new director in place and one other still to be elected. John (Fred) Nicholls, Chairman of the Pau3 Industry Assn has retired from that position and Phil Richardson has taken his place as Pau3 Chairman and PICL board member.

Ed Arron has retired from the PauaMAC 2 executive and his role as Chairman – and he has retired as their PICL representative, so has also stood down as Chairman of PICL. The PIC Board wishes to acknowledge the huge amount of work Ed gave to his role as PICL Chairman. In the last three years PICL has come a long way to become

a highly respected voice for our Industry; this is in no small way the result of Ed's astute and dedicated efforts on our behalf. Thanks a million Ed, enjoy your retirement mate.

As laid out in the PICL constitution each of the PauaMACs nominates one director to sit on the PICL board, there being five directors in all. Most also name an alternate director in case the nominated person is unavailable.

The PICL board is now as follows: Chairman – Storm Stanley (PauaMAC5), Dave Baker (PauaMAC7), Allan Culverwell (PauaMAC4), Phil Richardson (Paua 3 Industry Assn) and Michael Corlett (PauaMAC2). By unanimous vote Storm Stanley, was elected to replace Ed as PICL Chairman.

## Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

The government's rollout of its MPA policy is looking to be a major threat to the paua fishing industry in the near future. For those who have not been following this policy development, it sets an ambitious goal in the name of protecting marine biodiversity. DOC and MFish are to collaboratively develop a network of MPA's that "...includes representatives of all our marine environments – from the common to the rare and everything in between" and is to take up 10% of NZ's total marine environment by 2010. PICL, SeaFIC and most other commercial stakeholders made submissions on the policy draft paper late last year.

On February 14 MFish and DoC released a final Classification, Protection Standard and Implementation Guideline for Marine Protected Areas. Check it out at [www.biodiveristy.govt.nz/mpas](http://www.biodiveristy.govt.nz/mpas)

Using the formula supplied by DOC and MFish in their latest document, New Zealand is divided into 14 bio-geographic regions, each of which could have 14 habitat types. It is possible that over 616 new marine reserves could be applied for around New Zealand. The tool that will achieve this is to be the cynical use of local community based Marine Protection Planning (MPP) forums. MPP forums are to be composed of about 14 local representatives, including recreational fishers, customary representatives, commercial fishers, environmentalists and so on. For environmentalists this will be the equivalent of offering a ham sandwich to a crocodile, as the Australians say.

The Chair of each forum will be by Ministerial appointment. On these forums commercial representatives will always be in the minority and to make matters worse, national representative groups such as PIC, RLIC and SeaFIC are not entitled to be involved in the forums. It is quite apparent that the two ministers expect the forums to act as rubber stamps to this Labour-Progressive party policy push.

The function of MFish and DOC in this has been stated as taking a 'facilitatory role' for the forums. However before the forum is selected, DOC is to have assembled an inventory of marine habitats for that 'bio-geographic region' to be considered. It will then catalogue what protection is in place and what the Ministries consider is required to meet the 10% target.

The members of that forum will then be asked to pick the most suitable sites for protection, or to fill in the gaps if there are already protected areas in place. If a forum cannot meet their quota of protected areas or reach agreement then, unsurprisingly, the Ministers will do the job – after due consideration of course. The timeline stated is that the MPA process be completed within two years. This will be a major battle for our regional PauaMACs and also for PIC, and all will need to boost their Rights Protection budgets accordingly.

## 2008 Industry Conference

Planning is well underway for this year conference. Unlike other years where we have 'gone it alone' this year we are combining with the inshore sector, the Federation of Commercial Fishermen, the Rock Lobster Industry, SeaFIC and TOKM to bring one big conference. Many of the sessions that have a 'cross sector' theme will be combined but we will still have paua only syndicate sessions.

Because we anticipate between 300 to 500 people will attend we are limited to where the conference can be held so we have settled on Te Papa (Wellington).

The conference will be held from May 14-16 (three days) – full registration details will be advertised in the Seafood Magazine, plus we will mail out to all paua quota and ACE holders. In the meantime put these dates on your calendar.

## Reseeding Programmes

**PAU3** The reseeded programme is showing good potential along the Kaikoura coast. In September last year 60,000 10-15mm juveniles were out-planted to the south and on checking some four months later were showing a remarkable 18mm size increase.

A further 20,000 were out-planted on the south coast in February this year with another 60,000 due out as soon as the weather permits. The Kaikoura divers involved in the grunt work of the reseeded programme are to be congratulated for their hard work.

The single hatchery supply of juveniles is concerning some, so Pau3 is investigating the possibilities of sourcing a percentage of future orders from a Tory Channel based hatchery.

**PAU4** Ongoing bad weather has delayed the latest out-planting of around 100,000 juveniles, but it is hoped to have them in the water within the next couple of weeks.

There are preliminary investigations going in to see if it is viable to spawn and or on grow juvenile paua on the Chathams for the reseeded programme.

**PAU5** This year's levy for re-seeding has been set at \$500 per tonne, as it was last year. All of the Pau5 seed is now being reared at the Ocean Beach Properties hatchery as Southern Seafood's Stewart Island have closed theirs down. Cooler sea temperatures in spring and early summer slowed the programme, however out-planting of seed has continued.

Fiordland has had two sites seeded, in total about 55,000 juveniles. Stewart Island a further 50,000 spread over four sites. The Otago/Southland coast has had a further 18,000 at one site added. Another 35,000 were recently out-planted at a couple of sites near Chaslands.

Unfortunately this year's programme has received a setback. The hatchery is now unable to deliver the full numbers of seed ordered for the 2008 year. As it stands there are about 12,000 – 20,000 ready to go out for Pau5D and these will be out-planted near Colac Bay in late February.

PauaMAC5 diver, John Hildebrand, has sourced more brood-stock for 5B and 5A which are now being conditioned for spawning and with luck will produce seed for late winter in sufficient quantities to meet project targets for the year. As in Kaikoura a secondary source for juveniles is now being checked out.

To help quota owners follow progress we are enlisting PIC help to map and catalogue all out-planting done in Pau5. This will include site monitoring details and more importantly estimated date of reaching harvesting size. The map will be available to all quota owners.

**PAU7** The reseeded project is continuing with 100,000 seed due to be put in the water shortly as weather permits. The idea is to choose bays that currently have low resident paua numbers but that were known to have supported strong paua populations in the past, to reseed in a big way and then to study the ongoing CPUE data from these bays.

It is hoped that this approach will reinforce the good survival rate data generated by the three year reseeded research programme carried out by Pau7.

Some residual funding will be used for research into the extent and availability of suitable habitat areas on the East Coast for future out-planting operations. There will also be ongoing smaller scale reseeded trials.

## The 2007-08 Fishing Season

The new season is now five months old. The first couple of weeks in October were very busy in most QMAs followed by a run of spring gales which kept many out of the water. Later, more settled weather closer to Christmas and shortly after meant that the big catch areas such as the Chathams and Paua5 were able to get the bulk of their catch in. This helped ease the pressure of an earlier Chinese New Year.

Reported opening catch rates for most areas seemed very promising and go a little way towards softening the impact of a resurgent New Zealand dollar, or more accurately perhaps, a weak US greenback. The level of the dollar is having a serious impact on our industry at a time when we should be experiencing a strong market in the run up to the Beijing Olympics in August.

## Fisheries Plans

MFish has now started work on developing Fisheries Plans for inshore fisheries.

The Fishplans will be comprehensive, in that Iwi and recreation will be involved in the overall plan. Main Industry input will be into the commercial fishing aspects of the plan, though of course we will be engaging with the other stakeholders where our interests are concerned.

We are confident that industry can usefully contribute to this process. It is very likely that we will draw heavily on work done in Pau7 to develop their commercial Fisheries Management Plan.

These plans will be a great opportunity for us to organise the management of our fisheries with buy-in from the ministry and other user groups.

PICL and MFish agreed that the first paua fishery to have a MFish lead fish plan should be Pau5a (Fiordland) as this fishery is leading the way re the industry agreeing on and implementing appropriate management. To date there have been three meetings between MFish, PIC and PauaMAC5 reps and other stakeholders – so far the process looks promising.

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## What's Happening in Other Abalone Fisheries?

Overseas the story of wild abalone fisheries is largely one of steady decline, the exceptions being in parts of Australia and of course here.

In Australia the state of each fishery varies from state to state. The state that has been managed longest, Tasmania, continues to be the world's largest producer of wild abalone at 2,500 tonnes annually.

Probably the saddest story internationally, the South African abalone fishery has been so devastated by rampant poaching over recent years that to prevent complete collapse the fishery is likely to be closed for a period of 10 years. The South African abalone fishery was once nearly the size of ours.

The small (50 tonne) abalone fishery in Dhofar is showing signs of over fishing and to try and combat this, the government has introduced a seasonal spawning closure and a new MLS of 90mm.

# Mataitai Applications

## Pukaroro (southern Wairarapa)

- Applicant: Ngati Hinewaka me ona Karangaranga.
- Proposed area: The proposed mataitai reserve is in the southern Wairarapa area, totalling approximately 6.5km.
- Status: The Ministry is awaiting receipt of the applicant's confirmation of proposed boundaries before publishing public notices that describe the proposed area and call for written submissions from the local community.

## Matakitaki a Kupe (Cape Palliser)

- Applicant: Ngati Hinewaka me ona Karangaranga.
- Proposed area: The proposed mataitai reserve is in the Cape Palliser totalling approximately 7km.
- Status: The Ministry is awaiting receipt of the applicant's confirmation of proposed boundaries before publishing public notices that describe the proposed area and call for written submissions from the local community.

## Tory Channel (Marlborough Sounds)

- Applicant: Te Atiawa.
- Proposed area: The proposed mataitai reserve encompasses all the waters within an area running from West Head, along the mean high water spring tide level to Deiffenbach Point, in a straight line to Ruaomoko Point, then along mean high water springs to East Head, then across to the point of origin, totalling approximately 29km and covering 81km of coastline.
- Status: Consultation with the local community has been completed. The Ministry is awaiting receipt of the applicant's response to local community issues before progressing the application.

## D'Urville Island (Marlborough Sounds)

- Applicant: Ngati Koata No Rangitoto ki te Tonga Trust.
- Proposed area: The proposed mataitai reserve encompasses the area from Halfway Point following a straight line to Old Man's Head, totalling approximately 3.2km.
- Status: In 2000 the Minister of Fisheries approved the application in principle subject to agreement over conditions that address concerns raised by Rangitane and Ngati Kuia. The Ministry is enquiring into this matter.

Washdyke Lagoon, Opihi and Orari Rivers (near Timaru)

A new application primarily focused on the eel fishery there.

We are awaiting copies of the application to assess implications.

## Moeraki Peninsula (North Otago)

- Applicant: Te Runanga o Moeraki.

• Proposed area: The application was originally submitted in 2001, and boundaries were subsequently amended in 2005 and 2007. On 10 August 2007 the application was resubmitted to encompass the coastal waters from the Moeraki Steel Wharf to Te Rapuka Creek, excluding the previously proposed area from Ngutukaka Stream to Smiths Rocks. The amendment reduces the total area to approximately 3.2km.

• Status: Submissions closed in December 2007. PauaMAC5 and a number of divers have opposed very strongly the application in their submissions and are hopeful that the application will fail the Minister's undue effects test.

## Puna Wai Toriki (South Otago)

• Applicant: Te Runanga o Awarua / Waikoau Ngai Tahu Runanga.

• Proposed area: The proposed mataitai reserve encompasses the area between Tirohanga and O-Waea (Campbell Point) south of Kaka Point, totalling approximately 2.34km.

• Status: Consultation with the local community and those who take fish or own quota has been completed, apart from a final meeting between commercial fishermen and Spatial Allocation staff in the first week in November. The Ministry is finalising the advice paper which is planned to be presented to the Minister any time now.

## Waikawa Harbour/Tumu Toka (The Catlins)

• Applicant: Te Runanga o Awarua.

• Proposed area: The amended proposed mataitai reserve encompasses most of the waters of Waikawa Harbour, excluding the channel entrance and wharf area, portions of Curio Bay/Porpoise Bay and the waters of the Waikawa River to a point approximately 1km north of the road bridge at Niagara Falls, totalling approximately 7.02km.

• Status: Consultation with the local community and those who take fish or own quota has been completed. The Ministry is currently drafting the advice paper which should be presented to the Minister in the first half of this year.

## Waitutu (Southland)

• Applicant: Waitutu Inc.

2006 the boundary was amended to encompass the area between Long Point and the mouth of the Wairaurahiri River, totalling approximately 4km.

• Status: Consultation with the local community and those who take fish or own quota has been completed. The Ministry is awaiting receipt of the applicant's response to some issues before progressing the application.

This application appears to be stalled.

## Quota Prices

Despite beach prices for paua being at less than satisfactory levels due to the ongoing strength of the New Zealand dollar, paua quota prices remain high.

Latest trades that we could get information on indicate that prices have declined a little from last year, the large number of trades late last year in Pau2 were probably the notable movement for the year. This would seem to indicate a confidence from buyers that paua fish stocks are generally in good health.

QMA	Latest traded price range (+gst)
Pau2	\$360,000 - \$380,000
Pau3	\$380,000 - \$390,000
Pau4	\$370,000 - \$390,000
Pau5A	\$400,000 (a catchable tonne)
Pau5B	\$400,000 - \$420,000
Pau5D	\$370,000 - \$390,000
Pau7	\$380,000 - \$390,000

# Fine Scale Data and the Use of Data Loggers

To maximise productivity of paua stocks and ensure long term sustainability we have to move from being 'harvesters' to 'farmers'. That means instead of just harvesting paua as has been done for the last 30 years we need to manage how we harvest and implement management that maximise the paua stocks. Think of a vegetable garden – if you simply left enough plants to self seeding and you do nothing to your garden except harvest your produce the crops you would get would be minuscule compared to if you 'farmed' your garden (sow seeds, transplant, remove weeds, water, remove bugs / predators etc).

It is exactly the same for paua stocks – if you just harvest and depend on mother nature to do everything the production will be way less compared to if you manage the stocks (size limits that protect the spawning bio-mass, reseeding, translocation, spreading catch effort and harvest caps to ensure not too much stock is taken from any one area etc). All other primary produces (orchardists, farmers, foresters, cropping etc) learned centuries ago that the only way to ensure sustainability and profitability is to farm and manage their land. However fishermen are harvesters – even though stocks are decreasing we still are of the mindset that next year will be better. We have to change and get more involved with farming and managing the resource. It's not that hard and already in most paua QMAs we are seeing that initiatives we have in place are showing that we can make a difference and that paua stocks will increase if we manage them.

Marine scientists around the world tell us that the key to managing paua stocks is implementing management at an appropriate scale. What is an appropriate scale? It is when you have fishing and biological data at that scale relevant to the populations that make up the stock. We know as fishermen paua populations can vary in their population dynamics over very short distances, ie: fast / slow growing or big fish / stunted fish or low / high recovery. Paua populations don't move and there is much of the coast that has no paua, so the scale we are talking is reef by reef – not QMA or not MFish statistical zones. This is where data loggers come in. They provide us with the tools to collect a large amount of data centred around the effort that goes into the fishing (harvesting) and at a very fine scale (we are talking metre squared and breath by breath). Once you have very high resolution fine scale data this can be amalgamated until you have an appropriate scale, ie: if a metre squared is too fine a scale but 100 square metres is more appropriate, then you combine 100 of the metre squared data so it is then at the 100m<sup>2</sup> scale. Different management decisions will require different data resolution so you have the field covered if you start with fine scale data and amalgamate it as necessary.

Having fine scale data has a twofold benefit – firstly it allows you to analyse which is the most appropriate tool to implement (ie: is increasing the size limit or reseeding more appropriate to rebuild the bio-mass on a particular reef). The second benefit is it allows you to monitor the effects of the management decision (ie: did it achieve what it was suppose to and does it need some fine tuning etc).

PICL are the first to acknowledge that the collecting of fine scale data will be a lengthy process and there is so much

that needs to be learnt along the way, however you have to start somewhere and over the last few years much progress has been made.

At the end of last season 60 data logging kits were made up (they were purchased by Pau2, Pau4, Pau5 and Pau7). Each kit included a Garmin GPS data logger in a waterproof box and a ReefNet Depth logger. These units are placed in a pouch that is attached to the back of the diver's wetsuit. They then record the GPS coordinates each time the diver is on the surface (between breaths) and the depth profile of each dive. These two units collect an incredible amount of data that can be converted to information such as square metres worked; number of dives (breaths) – including the length (time) of each dive; its depth profile and surface time between breaths; location of dive event, etc. The information produced will allow paua stocks to be managed and fished at a reef scale which is where all of the Australian abalone fisheries are heading.

What we are trying to do this season is to get divers use to having these units – switching them on etc. Unfortunately the bottleneck this season has been having enough people trained to download the data off these units. While it is a very simple and mostly automated process, we have been lacking enough download cables and cradles which have recently been ordered.

Eventually having the majority of paua harvesting being recorded by data loggers will put us into a new paradigm re fisheries management. The days of Quota Management Area (QMA) stock assessments and implementing QMA wide management actions will be left behind and we will be in the position to farm paua on a reef by reef basis.

The Cawthron Institute has produced a paper for PIC titled 'Recommendations for changing Paua Stock Assessment methods'. The conclusion of this paper sums it up by saying....

**4. CONCLUSIONS** – *The key feature of this new approach to paua stock assessment is that data is collected on a fine spatial scale, allowing the dynamics of catch and effort within paua fishery to be tracked both temporally and spatially. At this small spatial scale, commercial catch rate is more likely to be proportional to stock abundance and therefore useful as an index of relative abundance. Given the logistic constraints and high cost of research surveys, the new approach could provide the only realistic way to monitor the paua stock. In time, these data could become the single most important asset in the assessment, enabling better management of paua fisheries. Importantly, they could also facilitate the introduction of fine-scale management. For example, based on the indicator/variables in Table 2, the imposition of different minimum size limits, closures and local limits to catch can be imposed. Although there are formidable challenges facing managers and industry in establishing such fine-scale management, collecting data at the smallest practicable scale is the way of the future and puts the paua industry in a better position to contribute to accurate and timely information and data to inform the stock assessment process.*

# Australian Abalone Virus Update

In 2005 an onshore abalone farm in Portland, Victoria, had its stock wiped out by a mystery disease.

Since that event the disease has spread into the wild abalone population and in the space of two years or so has infected abalone populations over much of the Western Zone of the Victorian coastline. It has now been found within 20km of the South Australian border.

The agent causing this disease has since been identified as a herpes-like virus called ganglio-neuritis, AVG. It is a virulent disease killing up to 90% of the abalone on any reef it spreads to. The virus is spread through the water column in mucus exuded by the dying abalone. This means that it can be carried on dive equipment which has been in contact with infected abalone beds if the gear is not thoroughly disinfected and dried. The damage to Victorian abalone fisheries has been so severe that the TACC in the Western Zone has been halved this year.

There is real concern that the epidemic will spread to Tasmania, the most productive abalone fishery in the world. As a consequence the market price for licenses and quota in Tasmania has dropped dramatically.

Biosecurity NZ were slow to acknowledge the threat of AVG but because of pressure from PICL, SeaFIC and MFish there are now steps in place to keep this epidemic out of the

country (stronger import restrictions and border controls).

The message is simple – viruses like AVG need a host to survive for any more than a few days. By educating the New Zealand public to return to New Zealand with 'clean and dry' clothing / footwear / equipment, all but eliminates the risk of AVG getting to New Zealand (this also applies to other viruses that could potentially infect animals etc).

For the latest news on AVG you can go to the Victorian Abalone Divers Association web site – [www.vada.com.au/virus/virus.htm](http://www.vada.com.au/virus/virus.htm). PIC is in contact with Australian abalone scientists who are keeping us up to date on developments. The latest information sheet produced by BioSecurity NZ is available for download from the PICL website.

We have had feedback from NZ based dive charter operators that their clients coming via Australia are being routinely stopped and checked at the airport by border control staff. This has also been the experience of several New Zealand puaa divers returning from Australia who have contacted us.

Biosecurity NZ are also now flat out developing diagnostic tests and will be sending one of their scientists to Victoria shortly with puaa for susceptibility trials. See their website [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pest-and-disease-response/pests-and-diseases-watchlist/puaa-avg-virus](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pest-and-disease-response/pests-and-diseases-watchlist/puaa-avg-virus)

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## WEATHER SITES

Picking the weather correctly remains one of the keys to a successful and profitable fishing trip for any fishery. Puaa diving is no exception, and in fact can be more difficult than most other fishing operations as even a small increase in roll can make good areas un-diveable. With the advent of the internet and the improvements in accuracy now being made in weather forecasting it has become a lot easier to spot incoming weather patterns which might provide good diving conditions. Listed below are some of the better internet sites around you might want to check out to help plan your trips.

NZ Met Service	<a href="http://www.metservice.co.nz/default/index.php">www.metservice.co.nz/default/index.php</a>
Victoria University	<a href="http://metvuw.com/nzweather">metvuw.com/nzweather</a>
Australian Met Service	<a href="http://www.bom.gov.au/products/IDG00074.shtml">www.bom.gov.au/products/IDG00074.shtml</a>
Buoy Weather	<a href="http://www.buoyweather.com/wxnav6.jsp?region=NZ&amp;program=Maps">www.buoyweather.com/wxnav6.jsp?region=NZ&amp;program=Maps</a>
Met NZ – Rosie Weather	<a href="http://met.net.nz/cwx.html">met.net.nz/cwx.html</a>
European Forecasts	<a href="http://www.ecmwf.int/">www.ecmwf.int/</a>

*If you have any favourite sites you are willing to share, please email [jc@puaa.org.nz](mailto:jc@puaa.org.nz) and we will put them on the PICL website.*

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## PAUMAC UPDATES - 'Round the Traps'

All PuaaMAC organisations rely heavily on feedback from the working divers in their areas. You should phone your chairman or one of the executive for a yarn about the state of the fishery or any other matter that is relevant to your industry when you can.

**PAU2** Rough weather in the early part of the season has meant that near the end of the season quite a bit of puaa was still to be landed. Fortunately a good weather window in mid September meant that the full TACC was landed in time. As already mentioned Ed Arron stepped down as Pau2 Chairman at the December AGM.

The reopening of the South Coast issue is still being progressed, negotiations with local Iwi seem to be holding the promise of a resolution of this sooner rather than later.

Some Pau2 divers will be carrying data and depth loggers this season to improve information flow, which in turn will go some way towards helping deal with any proposed coastline closures, be they customary or marine reserves.

This information will also be a major contributor to improved management of the fishery.

Two new mataitai are being talked about for the Wairarapa.

Work is to be started this season in conjunction with PIC to look at spreading fishing effort in Pau2.

While the PAU2 QMA covers much of the lower North Island only the Wairarapa coast is fished to any extent. This has the potential to lead to serial depletion.

A number of mechanisms, including stunted stock area fish-downs will be investigated this year.

**PAU3** Long standing Chairman of the Pau3 Industry Association, John (Fred) Nicholls has stood down and is being replaced by Phil Richardson. Many thanks Fred for all the great work you have done and welcome aboard to Phil.

Incidentally, Fred has shed one work load only to take on another as the Chairman of the Kaikoura Coastal Marine Guardians, Te Korowai Te Tai o Marokura.

Fish stocks in the Northern two zones are responding well to the catch spreading sub-division which has been in place for the last four years.

Divers have been happy with the increased catch size of 127mm in the two northern zones and have found little impact on their catch rates. This is to be re-assessed in 2008 with a view to increasing it to 130mm in the 2008/2009 season. At the same time consideration will be given to raising the Conway to Amberley Beach zone from 125mm to 127mm.

On February 16 the Minister of Fisheries, Jim Anderton and new MFish CEO Wayne McNee, attended the highly successful official launch of the above mentioned Coastal Guardians group which has been at work for the last two years. This initiative brings together the local community to ensure the ongoing health and protection of the Kaikoura coastal area.

From an Industry point of view this will go a long way towards dealing with upcoming threats such as MPA's, mataitai and the shared fisheries policy.

Finally work will be carried out to see if fishing Banks Peninsula stunted stocks at a lower MLS is possible.

**PAU4** Despite a very slow start to the season an estimated 70% of the TACC was out of the water by December. At the December AGM Lea Clough was elected Chairman of PauaMAC4, once again many thanks to the outgoing Chair Nick Preece for his time at the helm. The harvesters have agreed to a voluntary minimum size limit increase of 127mm across the whole fishery.

Discussions have begun with MFish to:

1. Change the quota system in Pau4 from green weight to meat weight (this will allow better utilisation of the fishery i.e. the low recovery stocks that are plagued by the encrustation build up on the shells).
2. Allow the use of UBA in Pau4 (this will allow better utilisation of the fishery ie: stocks that are out deep). UBA will also offer some protection for harvesters against sharks whose numbers seem to be in the increase.

MFish is to have an initial scoping report out by the end of February which will outline whatever legislative or regulatory pathways will need to be followed. This will be followed by an outline of resources available to MFish for the issue and a preliminary timetable for action.

## Stock Assessments

Stock assessments are scheduled for the following paua fisheries this year:

**PAU7** – This is not going to be a full dive survey assessment. Rather a 'desktop exercise' which will essentially review data such as standardised CPUE trends and shell length frequency. The results will be reported at shellfish working group meetings in (later on in 2008) and if necessary on to the plenary meetings later in the year.

**PAU5A** – A full dive survey is to be carried out in the Northern Areas of Fiordland this summer. However it will not be up for working group assessment until 2009.

**PAU2 and PAU3** – Mfish will be carrying out a fisheries characterisation work programme this year in these two QMAs. The objective, in a nutshell, is to look at CPUE and other data to see if it can be used as a performance indicator for the fisheries

For the 2008/09 season both **Pau5D and Pau4** will be up for full stock assessments.

*So, that's it till the next PIC newsletter. If you have any suggestions, requests or wish to contribute a short article please contact PIC at [info@paua.org.nz](mailto:info@paua.org.nz). In the meantime we wish you all a safe and profitable fishing season.*

**PAU5** The weather has once again impacted on fishing patterns. While Pau5A and Pau5D fished well early in the season, a strong Westerly pattern and associated high seas has meant 5A divers are still working to finish their ACE in September.

Reported catches have been good for 5D and 5A, with some very good feedback on the state of stocks on Stewart Island particularly.

In 5A, while catch rates are still high, divers and quota owners are to meet before Winter next year to assess how things are looking in Northern Fiordland.

A number of changes have been made in the catch regimes in Pau5:

- In 5D there is to be a dual size limit. Paua North of Warrington Beach are to be caught at 127mm and to the South at 130mm.
- Pau5B is to have its catch size raised from 130mm to 133 mm.
- Pau5A will have catches in the Fishing Zones 'North Coast' and 'George' amalgamated. The 130mm catch size is now to include the 'Mid Coast' zone while 'George' and 'North Coast' remain at 127mm.

**PAU7** Start of season – the early season signs in the PAU7 fishery look encouraging with increased catch rates and signs that the stocks are continuing to rebuild. It seems that the PAUAMAC7 members' commitment to three years of ACE shelving is now paying off.

West Coast Area Closure – Every year since 2001 an area on the West Coast has been voluntarily closed to commercial paua harvesting. These closures have been very effective in improving the relationship between industry and the local West Coast communities. At the AGM the members agreed that area 794 should continue to be voluntarily closed for the 2007/08 season.

East Coast Minimum Size – At the AGM, the members agreed to a one year trial to voluntarily raise the minimum harvest size of paua to 127mm in the area from the Wairau River to the Clarence River. This size limit raise is a voluntary initiative designed to improve the long term reserves of paua stocks on the East Coast.

Paua7 has been engaged with the Sounds Guardians group to ensure that the interests of commercial paua fishers are represented.

This newsletter was produced by the Paua Industry Council Ltd for the Paua Industry

That's all from us this month.

The Paua Industry Council Ltd.

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