

# Fiordland Amateur Charter Vessel (ACV) Workshop

8&9 August 2019, Te Anau

## Meeting notes

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### Participants:

Peter Lawless	Facilitator
Rebecca McLeod	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Kerri-Anne Edge Hill	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Jon Clow	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Stewart Bull (day 2)	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Peter Young (day 1)	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Mark Peychers (day 2)	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Jerry Excell	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Ali Balantine (day 2)	Fiordland Marine Guardians
Larncé Wichman	Kaikoura Marine Guardians
Bill Chisholm	Island Escape Cruises Ltd
Tracey Excell	Real Journeys
Paul Mitchell (day 1)	Fiordland Charters
Leanne Fishburn	Legacy Fishing Charters
Stephen Fishburn	Legacy Fishing Charters
Maria Kuster	Pure Salt NZ
Fiona Lee	Breaksea Girl
Jason Carter	Fiordland Cruises
Richard Abernathy	Fiordland Expeditions
Rob Swale	Fiordland Discovery
Chris Lemin	Deep Cove Charters
Peter Archibald (day 2)	Pure Salt NZ
Mark Geytenbeek	Fisheries NZ
Alicia McKinnon	Fisheries NZ
Stephen Logie	MPI Fisheries Compliance
Rebecca Robertson	Consultant for Environment Southland
Richard Kinsey	Department of Conservation

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## Summary

The main points identified in the workshop were:

### Fisheries

- Fisheries sustainability regarded as the most important issue discussed during the workshop (based on red dot voting)
- Strong anecdotal accounts of localised depletion of valued fish stocks, particularly in the internal waters of the fiords.
- ACV operators acknowledging that they had contributed to this problem and a desire to now take leadership and demonstrate kaitiakitanga to address the issue and look after this special place for future generations.
- A desire to take steps to reverse the decline of these stocks and rebuild.

- It is possible for ACV operators to act immediately to move fishing effort to outer fiords and reduce the internal water take through a voluntary code of conduct.
- A culture of fish for a feed to eat onboard can be fostered throughout the industry.
- These voluntary approaches could be formalised and embedded through legally binding rules in the longer term.
- Paramount that FMG engage independent recreational fishers regarding the state of fisheries and options for addressing issues.
- Operators believed that licensing amateur fishers would provide a means to manage total take in the future.
- Acknowledgement that all use of regulation needs to be matched by compliance and enforcement capacity.

#### **Barriers to addressing issues**

- Constrained planning processes where long time frames do not respond in an integrated and dynamic way to deal with emerging issues are part of the problem.
- Complex bureaucracy to deal with due to multiple agencies having authority over the FMA.
- There was support for a surface water consent user group to help create inclusive engagement and collective problem solving.

#### **Rapid growth in visitors**

- Concern about increased visitor numbers exceeding the carrying capacity of the environment, impacting negatively on wilderness values and causing hazards.
- Infrastructure could be used to limit impacts by increasing services or limiting access.
- Willing from participants to ensure the Fiordland experience remains a high quality/premium experience for visitors

## Day 1

### Mihi, welcome and overview, workshop process and housekeeping, introductions

The purpose of the workshop is to support the Fiordland Marine Guardians in preparing advice for the Minister of Fisheries on issues connected with charter fishing in their areas of responsibility.

### History of Charter Fishing in Fiordland

Overview provided by Rob Swale, with support from other operators

Key points:

- Description of genesis of charter industry, originating in scenic tours.
- Development of fishing charters over time, with a focus of extractive tours mostly in Dusky Sound.
- Regulations introduced in 2,000's (resource consents, recreational fishing restrictions, registration of ACVs).
- Recently, demand for tours has increased, 10-12 ACVs operating in Dusky, majority of visitors to Fiordland have non-extractive scenic tours.
- Also noticed an increase in number of independent recreational vessels in Fiordland Marine Area (FMA) over time, and due to increased vessel size, many now visiting southern fiords.
- Clientele domestic and international. Higher end charters attract mostly NZ and European clients, fish for a feed.
- Notable shift in attitude of clients over the years, from catch-focused to more sustainable
- Recently, operators have found it harder for clients to catch fish, perceived localised depletion, particularly inside habitat lines

### Data on Charter Fishing in Fiordland - Fisheries NZ

Alicia McKinnon presented data that was drawn from ACV returns, focused on Fiordland only, from 2010 to present day.

Key points:

- Steady increase of number of registered ACVs
- Increase over time of number of fishers aboard ACVs from ~5000 in 2010/11 to >10,000 2017/18
- Increase over time of number of blue cod (~8,000 in 2010 to ~16,000 in 2017/18) and number of crayfish (~8,000 in 2010 to >22,000 in 2017/18) taken by fishers aboard ACVs.
- Operators in room thought that the numbers presented were an under-estimate
- Discussion about what the trends over time were reflecting - i.e. improved reporting vs. increased effort
- Heat maps showing where fishing effort has focused, and changes over time.
- Blue cod effort focused mostly around habitat lines, operators agreed that seemed accurate. Discussion around distribution of effort by independent recreational fishers.
- Rock lobster effort, hotspots at fiord entrances, not outer coast.
- Discussion and concerns raised about other species - e.g. hapuku and jock stewarts.
- Regarding hapuku "Fifteen years ago, drop a hook anywhere and you'd get one straight away. Now, you'll be out looking for hours."

- Regarding jock stewarts: once plentiful, now difficult to catch. Used as bait.
- Discussion about age of fish (long lived, slow growing) and how much they contribute to breeding as they get older.
- Discussion about increasing popularity of spear fishing and how this could change distribution of effort; shellfish e.g. scallops

### The Kaikoura experience - Larnce Wichman

Larnce described the rapid growth in the ACV sector over the past 10-15 years.

Key points:

- Increase in size of fleet, frequency of trips and length of operating season. In 2004 ~5 operators running 1-2 trips/day. Now 11-13 operators, multiple trips per day.
- Change in clientele - increase in international tourists, and some operators now Chinese owned and focused (short duration, high frequency trips)
- Short duration trips tends to concentrate fishing effort, intense localised pressure
- ACV operators formed an association ~10 years ago and developed a code of practise. Not all the current operators are engaged with that association.
- Impact of earthquake on operations, demand, fish stocks etc.
- Competition between ACV/recreational and commercial effort

Discussion followed about what lessons from Kaikoura can be applied to Fiordland.

- Is the current situation in Kaikoura likely to play out in Fiordland?
- Could Fiordland expect increased demand for short duration extractive fishing charters?
- Differences in regulations - e.g. Southland Coastal Plan requires operators in Fiordland to gain a surface water consent to operate. Discussion of how this can/cannot temper growth
- Differences in clientele and products offered?
- An alternative view was provided that we should be encouraging growth of the ACV sector in Fiordland and make it easier for operators to get established.

### Issues identification

Small group workshop exercise. Participants generated notes in response to:

- What issues are we faced with now?
- What issues might the future bring?

They were then grouped into the following themes:

1. Depletion
2. Recreational reporting
3. Planning for the future
4. Communication and compliance
5. Mindset/attitudes
6. Biosecurity
7. Licensing/permits/consents
8. Wilderness and intrinsic values

These issues were developed on Day Two.

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## Day 2

### Reflections

Some thoughts shared included:

- Consensus that there are some real issues that need attention in Fiordland. There clearly are problems that need addressing.
- Fiordland as leaders - proven track record of leadership and innovative approaches. Time to think outside the square, and not be constrained by our perceptions of what is/is not possible in current legislation.
- What are the quick wins vs. long games?
- We need to distinguish between solutions specific to Fiordland vs. those that could be applied nationally.
- Collaboration - who isn't in the room that needs to be? We want to develop a comprehensive solution here, so need to engage appropriately. We must engage with independent recreational fishers.
- Confidence that we can produce effective solutions.
- Taking ownership - for the current state of fisheries inside the fiords, and for the future direction of ACV sector in Fiordland.
- Integrity as a central tenant to the way we do business in Fiordland.
- Social licence, social pressure.
- Fiordland Marine Guardians are ultimately responsible for ensuring the future fisheries and experience is maintained or improved - FMG need to act here and will do so.
- Let's think about what we are offering our clients - how the product has changed so far and how it could change in the future.
- Fiordland is a unique and precious destination on a global scale. It is a premium destination and should be treated as such.
- Consideration of market and direction - low end high volume vs. high end low volume
- ACV operators are ambassadors of the place and have the opportunity to shift public perception about how you experience the place. E.g. demonstrating philosophies such as kaitiakitanga and fishing for a feed.
- Alternative approaches we may consider: e.g. Fish Plans (eg. PAUA 7 and PAUA 4). These don't need to be single species in focus. Can be proposed to Minister by collaborative groups under Section 11A of the Fisheries Management Act. E.g. a Regional Fish Plan.

### Understanding the charter fishing system

Exercise to outline the roles and focus of different groups when it comes to charter fishing in Fiordland.

Included:

- Fisheries NZ (setting catch limits; assessing and monitoring stocks and fishing pressure; registration of ACVs; ACV returns/data collection; advice and support to Guardians).
- MPI Fisheries compliance (focus on compliance in Fiordland Marine Area; collaboration with other agencies on matters compliance; education; challenges with conducting compliance in Fiordland and role of operators in FMA).

- Department of Conservation (marine reserves; marine mammals; partner in biosecurity responses; National Park management - e.g. helicopter activity).
- Amateur Charter Vessel Operators.
- Environment Southland (regional council) (Southland Coastal Plan - implement and currently revising; surface water consents - issue these, reporting and compliance; consents around structures and moorings; biosecurity - e.g. Pathways Plan).
- Fiordland Marine Guardians - governance role, communication and engagement with users, coordination of focus and activities of agencies, risk identification, report to Minister for the Environment.

### Identifying solutions and opportunities

Group work - participants in each group focused on one theme at a time. Asked to summarise the issues within each theme, define the desired outcome(s), and identify opportunities and threats.

Groups worked on and reported in plenary on the following themes:

1. Localised depletion - desired outcome: to increase biomass in internal waters
2. Recreational reporting - desired outcome: more robust reporting of recreational take
3. Constrained planning process - desired outcome: Surface water consent user group forms to consult with FMG and agencies on risks/issues and solutions
4. Carrying capacity undefined - desired outcome: Better coordinated infrastructure management and oversight
5. Natural disasters
6. Climate change - desired outcome: that we have better predictions about future changes and can adapt appropriately
7. Infrastructure and moorings on the water - desired outcomes: mitigate localised depletion of fish stocks around anchorages and increase general use moorings as environmentally responsible option
8. Wilderness - desired outcome: Wilderness experience is maintained and Fiordland marine environment is unpolluted
9. Planning for the future - desired outcome: the Guardians vision for Fiordland is maintained
10. Communication and compliance - desired outcome: greater buy in to Guardians philosophies and vision, improved safety, increased compliance
11. Infrastructure/Access - desired outcome: providing access whilst mitigating harmful effects of increased visitor numbers
12. Seeking safe haven - desired outcome: Fiordland is a safe place to go boating
13. Biosecurity - desired outcome: prevent marine incursions in Fiordland
14. Mind set

### Further Discussion and Clarification

Open discussion on the following topics, for which the Guardians felt more information would be helpful:

- "Take outs" - vessel policies on clients taking fish home
- Taiapure as a potential management approach
- Formation of a collective body - ACV or surface water consent holders
- Appropriate bag limits for recreational fishers aboard ACVs

## Closing remarks - Fiordland Marine Guardians

Rebecca closed the workshop and thanked everyone for their participation and engagement.

Key points:

1. The Guardians have heard what you have had to say and greatly value your input.
2. The scope of many issues discussed over the two days falls outside the portfolio of the Minister of Fisheries. There are a number of actions that the Guardians will be taking to address these issues via other pathways (e.g. Coastal Plan review, advice to agencies other than Fisheries NZ).
3. It is clear that there are some significant issues associated with and experienced by the sector, and that operators are motivated to support the Guardians to champion action on these.
4. Given what we have seen with the pace of change in Kaikoura, many issues need to be addressed with a matter of urgency.
5. Operators (and agencies) appear to be open to considering quite innovative solutions and change to business as usual.
6. The Guardians are pleased to see that there is willingness to form a collective to represent Surface Water Consent holders. We support this move and think it will position operators nicely to have constructive input and improved engagement with the Guardians in the future.
7. Many of the issues discussed are highly relevant to independent recreational fishers and boaties and cannot be addressed solely by focusing on ACVs. We commit to engaging with independent recreational fishers in the near future so that we can go through a similar process of identifying risks and opportunities to ensure that the Guardians vision remains in reach.
8. The next steps: The Guardians will meet on the 22&23 August to consider the outputs of this workshop. The Kaikoura Marine Guardians will run a similar workshop with ACV operators in Kaikoura on 28 August (also to be facilitated by Peter Lawless and a Fiordland Marine Guardian will attend). The FMG and KMG will then work together to develop advice and recommendations to the Minister of Fisheries. A draft of this advice paper will be shared with ACV operators in late September, and you will have an opportunity to respond.