

## **Marlborough Sounds Scallops Under Threat from Over Exploitation**

Scallops in the Marlborough Sounds are being decimated by excessive commercial exploitation.

Local organisations listed below believe that the current management system for Marlborough Scallops is not working.

The table below, supplied by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) under the Official Information Act, records a serious decline in the scallop resource from over-fishing by commercial operators.

<b>Fishing Year</b>	<b>Actual Catch (meatweight tonnes)</b>
2009/10	120.5
2010/11	84.6
2011/12	60.4
2012/13	47.8
2013/14	42.9
2014/15	21.5

NIWA's survey of Marlborough Sounds scallops undertaken earlier this year records that the biomass is at an all time low.

Despite this serious state of affairs, the proposed 2015 harvest plan prepared by the commercial scallop industry is for 34 tonnes, which has no scientific or sustainable basis. If anything like this quantity is approved by the Minister of Fisheries, then it is highly likely the scallop resource will not recover.

In addition, an MPI draft report indicates the scallop resource is clearly stressed showing various indicators of poor condition and health in a number of areas.

We need a new sustainable management system to replace the current unsustainable exploitive system which we believe will see the end of a viable scallop resource in Marlborough to the detriment of all.

**This Media Release was jointly prepared by the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association Inc.; the Pelorus Boating Club Inc.; and the Marlborough Recreational Fishers Association Inc.**

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## Background

1. **Current Scallop Management Structure:** The Marlborough Sounds scallop fishery is managed by an industry company called the Challenger Scallop Enhancement Company Ltd. (CSEC) under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CSEC and the Ministry for Primary Industries.
2. **How it Works:** In May of each year CSEC commissions NIWA to prepare a scallop biomass survey. CSEC then carries out the survey. This year it was done under the supervision of NIWA observers. NIWA then collates the survey data and presents the results to a combined meeting of CSEC representatives, MPI and stakeholder representatives. Based on this report, CSEC prepares a proposed harvest plan and presents it at public meetings. Once that consultation is finished, CSEC is required to present a harvest plan to the Minister by mid-July. The Minister reviews the harvest plan in consultation with MPI and accepts the plan with or without modification. Commercial dredging then commences around late-August.
3. **Exploitation Rate:** As a result of increasing concerns expressed by recreational groups, last year NIWA carried out a review of best practices in other jurisdictions with managed scallop resources. This led to the realisation that the previous practice of using an exploitation rate of 45% was way out of line with international best practice. This year NIWA settled on 22%, although recreational groups still believe that to be too high and a better rate would be around 15%.
4. **What Happened this year:** NIWA confirmed that the Marlborough scallop biomass was at an historic low and trending down. Nevertheless, multiplying the available biomass by the exploitation rate (22%), NIWA arrived at a suggested level of harvest for the commercial operators of around 23 tonnes. We believe it should be no more than 15 tonnes, although in an ideal world there is good scientific basis to close the fishery to see if it will recover. Ignoring NIWA's advice, CSEC took this report and came up with a harvest plan of 34 tonnes. Naturally, recreational stakeholders submitted strongly against this reckless proposal. We understand that CSEC are strongly pursuing this harvest plan in discussions with MPI.
5. **An Alternative Management System is Needed:** We believe that the current management system is not resulting in sustainable management of the resource as required by law (Fisheries Act 1996). An immediate suggestion would be to close the fishery to commercial dredging for at least this season. In the longer term, the scallop fishery in the Marlborough Sounds should be the subject of a thorough review of all fishing practices, so as to maximise the chances of achieving a sustainable resource for the future. The consequences of present practices look bleak.