

Peer Review: Social impact assessment on the potential salmon farm relocation in Marlborough

SIA report title	Potential salmon farm relocation in Marlborough. Social impact assessment
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Overall comments on peer review.

This SIA uses appropriate methods, is based on evidence and the arguments and consequent conclusions are clear. Overall it is an excellent SIA.

I have three modest comments on what might be done to improve what is already a high quality SIA:

- i. Discuss the potential social effects of the planning process (within Section 6). The planning process itself may generate social effects (as was seen in the 2011/12 Plan Change) and as yet they have not been addressed. Acknowledging the potential issues (or not, depending on the outcome of the assessment) will allow the assessor to consider if any mitigations are needed within the upcoming planning process itself.
- ii. Discuss the potential effects of construction. While these are likely minimal, for completeness, it would be helpful to discuss potential construction effects within section 5.
- iii. At present no mitigations are suggested. This is likely due to the minor (or lower) effects that have been assessed. An explicit discussion about the need for (or not) of mitigation is required in Section 5 and the Executive Summary.

Further, minor suggestions are in the following text.

Again, congratulations. This is a fine piece of work.

Introduction

The *Potential salmon farm relocation in Marlborough. Social impact assessment report* (the Report) provides an assessment of social effects of potential salmon farm relocations during the operational phases of the project.

The Report has a structure that sets out the executive summary, introduction, SIA approach and methodology, the proposal for relocation (project description), existing social environment, assessment of site specific social effects, strategic assessment of social effects, references and appendices.

The Report has been prepared by Taylor Baines & Associates Limited, well known practitioners in New Zealand. I have objectively reviewed this work based on the information provided in the Report. I have not edited the document for punctuation or grammar.

The same headings as laid out in the Report are used to structure this peer review of the Report.

Section 1. Introduction

The introduction usefully sets the background, purpose and outlines the structure of the report. My only suggestion would be to move the 'the purpose' of this social impact assessment (in the last paragraph of section 1.2.2) to earlier, and perhaps highlight with its own subheading.

Section 2. SIA approach and methodology

This is a very well written section. The methods chosen are well reasoned, building on previous studies. Importantly, a statutory and conceptual framework has been used for the work - this is sensible given the RMA focus. Many practitioners fall back on generic IAIA guidelines at this point and then do not deliver on them because not all aspects of the guidelines are relevant. Wisely, this has not been done.

Also, the method has focused on those issues of most importance. It is not the purpose of SIA to focus on every socio-cultural element, but instead to focus on critical populations and the issues faced by them. This SIA achieves that. A difficult aspect with SIA is then operationalising the measurement of social effect. The author has developed a useful way, based on previous evidence, to measure social effects. Cumulative effects are also difficult to consider in a social assessment, yet a practical approach has been proposed and used.

Importantly, the scope of the assessments (section 2.5) helps the reader understand what is in scope and what is out of scope (or covered elsewhere), and why.

Two issues that require some level of assessment but which are not yet included in the SIA are:

- i. the potential effects from the planning process. The planning process would fall under 2.5 (v) 'likelihood of changes in the level of wider community social benefits [dis-benefits]'. Section 1 of the SIA notes the level of tension created from the past consent process. As such, such an outcome may not be unexpected this time around as well (notwithstanding all the efforts undertaken). However, if the social effects of the consent process are not assessed, then no mitigations can be put forward to address the potential effects. No doubt much work and thought has already gone into this area, so it would be good to write about it in the SIA.
- ii. The potential effects from construction/farm relocation. While such effects may well be modest, it is good practice to consider and discuss, even if just to exclude or incorporate within an existing section.

Section 3. The proposal for relocating certain existing salmon farms

This section sets out the proposal adequately. This section also usefully sets out the assumptions which the author has relied upon. However, a map is needed in this section.

Section 4. Existing social environment

The author refers the reader to two previous documents. One is in the public domain and the other is not (yet). It would be helpful to ensure that the Baines and Quigley (2016) document is available prior to public release of this SIA.

Both of the referenced documents provide an appropriate description of the existing social environment, the Plan Change in 2011/12 and Best Management Practice Guidelines. These documents may not cover the full, relevant policy context however. From a social perspective it would be useful to know how the planned relocations line up with the aspirations of relevant local policy documents.

Further, site specific social context data is included in Section 5. While it is sometimes difficult to know where in a document/what section to place certain information, in this document it is clearly identified where the site specific social context is placed. In this instance, placing the site specific social context in the assessment section (rather than section 4) helps with the 'telling of the story', albeit making each of those assessment sections slightly longer.

Section 5. Assessment of site specific social effects.

This is the most substantial section of the SIA and includes a number of key aspects including scope and focus, and social context/assessments for the individual sites in the Waitata Reach group (section 5.3) and the individual sites in the Tory Channel group (section 5.4).

The scope is restricted to amenity, and consequent social effects arising from changes to amenity. This is a narrow scope, but is sufficient given the previous inclusions/exclusions. As described previously, discussion about construction effects would be useful at each of these sites for the sake of completeness.

The use of the 2011/12 interviews to form the basis of potential social effects, along with follow up interviews in 2016, is excellent. Identifying different 'catchments' of affected residents (different for noise, visual and odour) was also done.

Section 5.3 The Waitata Reach Group and Section 5.4 The Tory Channel Group

As noted by the author, a map would also be useful in each sub-section. If it could identify the residences and sites it would be ideal.

Presenting the tabular data on the separation distances for each site was very informative, as was the consequent summary of potential effects (note, without additional mitigation). The tabularised data allowed the reader to easily see how the summary effects were determined (which is not always the case with impact assessments – so well done). To further enhance the readability, the summary tables would benefit from site-specific headings being attached to them (i.e. Blowhole point sites: summary of potential effects...); and the Tables being numbered appropriately.

The comparison of existing and alternative sites is excellent. A novel method attempting to quantify the effects. It adds substantial value.

The assessment of cumulative effects is challenging in SIA, yet handled well here. The focus on amenity impacts has allowed for a discussion of simultaneous, successive and sequential effects.

The discussion on net effects is helpful. It allows the reader to draw overall conclusions which are then repeated/highlighted by the author in the executive summary.

What is missing from this section however is a discussion on necessary mitigation (if any). Mitigation is alluded to in the headings of the tables, but no further mention is made. An explicit discussion is required (albeit, it may be quite short, or direct readers to other assessments).

Section 6. Strategic Assessment of social effects from proposed relocations of existing salmon farms

This section is clearly set out and easy to read. The only omission is the potential effects of the planning process (as earlier discussed in this peer review).

Conclusion and recommendations

No such section exists. I understand the report is an input into the decision making process. What would be useful is to provide a 'placeholder' conclusion section (at the end of the document) directing readers to the Executive Summary.

References

Some of the references in the document are not listed here, and especially the references in the footnotes.